

**Supporting School Career Education
with an Online Community**

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Supporting School Career Education With an Online Community

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of a participatory action research project, involving several interventions with school students in a series of iterative stages, exploring ways to take school student career education out of the confines of the schools themselves and into the wider community; to introduce person centeredness as a core value in career education; and to explore the effectiveness of using online social and community networks to support career education generally.

A software probe was developed consisting of a series of career education web pages linked to asynchronous online discussion. In the final data gathering trial, 40 people (including 30 school students from two Edinburgh schools and 10 adult 'community' participants) contributed to a six week career education programme involving cycles of face to face classroom work followed by pseudonymous, asynchronous, online discussion between the school students and the community participants.

The data analysis shows that despite the open and relatively unconstrained format of the discussion, topics normally covered in mainstream career education classes were covered spontaneously by the participants. In addition, however, discussion ranged more widely, taking a more holistic perspective in some cases and following the personal interests and issues of concern of the participants (such as balancing occupational and family concerns). The participants went further, problematising many of the discourses of conventional career education and explicitly challenging received wisdom about the value of early occupational choice and the rational decision making process. The conventional career education curriculum was both extended and contested.

There is analysis of the benefits of pseudonymity, the role of the adult contributors, the online forum, and the experience of the student participants. Ultimately the thesis raises questions about the humanist values underpinning career education (such as person-centredness, holism and emancipation) arguing

that Career Education and Guidance can be about value creation as much as transmission of dominant values.

Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis turned out not to be the solitary activity I had been warned about. There were times when I needed considerable institutional and social support, sometimes I found myself enmeshed in complex networks where I was completely reliant on cooperation from many individuals - in particular, when working in schools and when getting to grips with the nuts and bolts of the information technology.

The school students, adult participants, guidance teachers and career advisers who collaborated with me on this project were, in a very real sense, co-authors. Their enthusiasm, good spirit and openness to experimentation were what made this research possible. Making career education a more social activity was itself a social activity and that is what made this work so involving, so much fun, and ultimately sustainable over several years. I would like to thank my collaborators for the many hours they spent working in the Futureperfekt online career education forum – and for the many thousands of words they contributed to the discussion.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. a. General Comments

**‘Every act of understanding is itself tied to its point in time; thus we are continually seized by flowing time, which ceaselessly brings forth something that is always new and always unique – viewpoints, perspectives, visions, ideologies in unceasing sequence’
(Safranski, 1998 p. 51).**

This thesis is the culmination of a five-year project exploring aspects of school student career education. At its heart are three objectives:

- to find ways to take school student career education out of the confines of the schools themselves and into the wider community;**
- to experiment with introducing person-centeredness as a core value in career education; and**
- to explore the effectiveness of using online social and community networks to support career education.**

A series of trials were conducted using modern communications technologies to involve ‘community’ participants in school student career education and, in particular, to help school students themselves set the agenda for their own career education discussions. The final iteration of what was a contingent, localised and evolving exercise in participatory action research, with several stages of data gathering, involved 40+ participants in a 6-week online career education community learning exercise. The research has led to a theoretical challenge to each of the central elements. The value of core concepts such as ‘community’ and ‘person-centeredness’ was questioned. New understandings of the central elements of the research emerged, ultimately leading to a re-contextualisation of the role of career education in wider educational and political debates and a

refocusing on the importance of understanding the contested values in Career Education and Guidance (CEG) and creating space for the creation of new values.

My views, the views of the participants, the role of the technology, and the structure of the Careers Service in Scotland all changed throughout the course of this long project. The changing landscape of the research provided a powerful stimulus and although the objectives established at the outset eventually unleashed what Feyerabend (1993) calls an ‘anarchy of convictions’ (knowledge as an ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives), the fundamental importance of career education is ultimately reinforced by the wider controversies that circumscribe it.

This thesis is, therefore, the product of many iterative cycles of understanding and interpretation. Its objectives and eventual conclusions do not neatly dovetail. The objective of finding new and productive ways to enrich career education has been constrained by four important theoretical and philosophical challenges that became increasingly pertinent as the research evolved and can be summarised as follows:

- The emerging technical-rational, managerialist, culture in Careers Scotland (the main employer);
- Networked community building in career education and guidance;
- The tension between social research influenced by enlightenment values, designed to emancipate and liberate (moving towards social justice), and research influenced by post-modern thinking, seeking to expose and unsettle power structures in a process of fragmentation and deconstruction but viewing ‘progress’ as illusory and inequality as inevitable; and therefore
- A tension between methods seeking to establish rules and procedures (for fairer and more ‘effective’ career education) and methods seeking to expose the power structures operating in career education and create space for new values to be created and expressed in career education.

Career education and guidance in Scotland is in the grip of 'New-Managerialism' (Randle and Brady, 1997), a variety of 'scientific' management that relies exclusively on quantitative indicators to evaluate success (e.g. examination pass rates, progression to higher education); in the case of Careers Scotland a professional class of managers determines the outcomes of guidance centrally. Contrary to this trend, there have recently been debates about professional versus community helping (Blustein et al, 2005, Barker et al, 2005) that suggest positive outcomes need to be determined by the communities being served rather than bureaucracies. Should parents and relations be involved in career education and guidance, or must it be left to professional helpers (Irving, 2000)? Put simply, if the wider community is to be involved in career education and guidance, some power is inevitably shifted from the guidance professionals to non-professionals in the community. The community orientation runs counter to the managerialist orientation.

Secondly, the relationship between education and technology was found to be problematic. On the one hand Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer 'Informatics' solutions to educational problems; automated testing; ready access to information; distance learning etc. These solutions to educational problems tend to be rigid and quantitative, creating a world of precise definitions, measurement and exact answers – people interacting with computer programmes. On the other hand, ICTs also provide powerful new modes of person-to-person communication (one to one, many to many, many to one). ICTs seem to provide both the clarity and certainty of the world of machines, records, routines, programmes, but also to facilitate a creative, almost chaotic mass of discourses, an ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives. Career education has been strongly influenced by infomatics (e.g. Sampson, 1994, 1997) in line with the new-managerialist ethic, but there is little evidence of the expansion of the career education agenda to include the multiple (community) voices that communications technologies promise.

Thirdly, a tension emerged in the research itself that can only be properly understood in a philosophical context, and which has been characterised in this thesis in terms of the debate between the:

- modernist thinkers who see progress, emancipation, enlightenment and even historical determinism as driving forces in the development of education - dialectic progression in the direction of perfection (Critical Theorists, Critical Realists e.g. Habermas, 1985); and
- those post-modern thinkers who are suspicious of the idea of 'progress' and see power plays as underpinning all change; they seek to expose these at every turn in order to deconstruct, to undermine, to re-construe all aims and values; to cynically examine and contest all understandings (eg Lyotard 1979).

What, after all, does it really mean to be emancipated? Will good career education and guidance (CEG) lead to enlightened, emancipated students in control of their own destinies, or can it at best hope to expose the ways our destinies are shaped for us by social forces more or less outwith our control, helping us understand the world in personal, radical and unpredictable new ways - resisting both idealism and the hierarchical and authoritarian systems in which our lives are embedded (Foucault, 1984, Lyotard, 1979)?

Finally, the last and perhaps greatest difficulty was the problem of *how* to proceed with research in this field. Choosing a methodological approach that was both ethically sound and productive in this politically charged arena was difficult. In many ways the methodological points made below reflect the philosophical dilemma outlined above – what is CEG for, and how can we know when it is effective? Are there simple criteria for measuring outcomes or will the outcomes themselves be unpredictable?

Out of these four issues, blending practical, epistemological and theoretical concerns, emerged some fascinating and helpful insights into fresh ways CEG can be managed; ways in which the wider community can contribute to the evolving understandings of school students; and also many practical findings about ways communication technologies can be embedded in education. Critically, a by-

product of the research has been a fundamental re-valuation of the values that underpin CEG and suggestions for a radical extension of current career education and guidance practice.

The thesis concludes with some cautionary points on the implications of bureaucratically controlled career education and some notes on the value of using new technologies safely to expose school students to an 'ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives', not as an alternative to current career educational practice, but as a lively new component. A post-modern, pluralist underpinning might plausibly, it is argued, complement the humanist person-centred values of some current career education. The research has ultimately enabled a wide-ranging critique of the values that underpin CEG in the UK.

The first part of the following introduction outlines the professional, social and personal context of the research, (reflexively) exposing values that underpin the work. It includes comments on the values that have driven recent developments in CEG in Scotland; difficulties balancing the social and the personal in CEG (meeting the various needs of society, communities and individuals); and the impact of ICTs on guidance. The second part takes a broader perspective, situating CEG in a wider, more global context.

1. b. Professional, Social and Personal Context

1. b. i. Recent Developments in CEG in Scotland

Working for 7 years in career guidance, and since then, 10 years training guidance teachers and career advisers, fundamental tensions in career education became apparent to me in very practical ways. Since being established in the early seventies, the Careers Service in Scotland has been restructured in two phases. The 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act (House of Commons, 1993) transferred the duty to provide a career service from Local Authorities to the Scottish Office, which was then to invite tenders for the provision of the services. In 1995, therefore, the Careers Service was removed from the control of Local Education Authorities and effectively privatised, with the boundaries of

each new career service company changed to reflect Local Enterprise Company areas, and thus were formed 'Careers Service Companies'. This first upheaval was designed to remove career guidance from the control of public servants and local elected councillors, and to address a perceived bias in favour of education. The goal was to create a commercially oriented competitive business model for guidance that would ensure career advisers addressed the needs of local businesses. In line with the new-managerialist project, targets were set for career advisers to 'place' young people in training schemes, employment, and in local college courses. Rapidly, the competition between companies led to secrecy, good practice was rarely shared and diverse management practices led to uneven service delivery across the country. Pressure to meet targets (e.g. for placement in training and employment) began to call into question the impartiality and client-centredness of the service. As Howieson and Semple (2006) note, this resulted in 'more attention to policies and systems, to resourcing and cost benefit analyses of services, quality assurance and client evaluations and marketing' (p. 35). A government review of the service set up by the Scottish Parliament (Careers Service Review Committee, 2000), a result of withering criticism of the 'cluttered landscape' of guidance, recommended a second reorganisation just a few years later. Eventually, in 2002, the Career Service Companies were merged into a single national organisation, called Careers Scotland (with the exception of Highlands and Islands Careers Service), under the control of Scottish Enterprise, the national parent body of the Local Enterprise Companies. The Scottish Enterprise remit is to develop the Scottish economy, and this new layer of business-oriented management has in turn accelerated the shift from a public service culture.

Many of the elements that characterise modernity came into play – centralisation, standardisation, and a shift from qualitative outcomes to easy to evaluate quantitative outcomes based on government and Enterprise Company target setting. Career adviser's primary clients became the business sector and the government (Jeffrey and McCrea, 2004), person-centeredness (where the clients, such as school students, receiving guidance set the agenda,) gave way to a focus on the economy. The tremendous multiplicity of possible outcomes of guidance submitted to a small number of key quantitative measures. The career education

and guidance programmes that Careers Scotland staff deliver in schools were in turn centralised and standardised; for example, a single package of career education lessons (aptly named 'Career Box') was bought in for staff who, as recently as 2004, were instructed only to deliver career education lessons from this central resource. The geographical and economic context of the schools, the catchment areas, the profile and interests of the school students, and the skills and abilities of the school career adviser no longer influence the structure and content of the career education programme; the same lessons are delivered throughout Scotland. As the career education lessons now come from a central resource, unqualified employment assistants deliver much career education instead of the career advisers (normally qualified at post-graduate level). As there is no requirement to develop CEG lessons in context, there is no need for career advisers to be involved. The opportunity to deliver standardised services more cheaply is 'paid' off against the more expensive process of customisation to the specific needs and contexts of the clients by a highly qualified career adviser.

This process of centralisation and standardisation challenges the nature of the impartial and person-centred career education that Careers Scotland promises; the objective of ensuring that every school, every school student and every client receives a standard, benchmarked service with clear measurable outcomes takes priority.

1. b. ii. Communities and Person-Centredness

Career guidance is struggling in a precarious position between advice and counselling (see below). The pull of the more directive and advisory approach of guidance has prevented a formal move from 'careers advice' to 'career counselling'. Although much literature argues for a move towards a counselling oriented and holistic approach (indeed arguing that such a move is inevitable, e.g. Herr, 1997), the useful bureaucratic role the careers service can play in managing the labour market (necessitating some 'direction' of clients), and the lack of confidence of some career advisers in their own ability to operate holistically as counsellors, has prevented this shift happening in the UK. In many strands of counselling, person-centredness is a top value, but in guidance person-centredness

is normally balanced against institutional concerns. In the case of Careers Scotland this reflects the organisation's remit to facilitate economic development; the business and enterprise sector is a privileged community of interest.

To continue with the example of school career education used above, there is currently little focus on the specific community context of individual schools. As noted, school career advisers in Scottish Enterprise only deliver career education lessons from the Career Box resource, there is little flexibility for particular schools. Furthermore, career education, the part of the school curriculum that aims to help young people plan their path through life, is delivered exclusively in terms of a DOTS framework (Law and Watts, 1977). Devised in the seventies, and discussed in much more detail below, DOTS is an acronym for decision-making skills, self-awareness, opportunity structure (jobs, training and college courses) and transition skills. Despite evidence (see results and discussion) that school pupils resent pressure to choose an occupation too early; that they often see themselves as unformed and in a process of 'becoming' (making the kind of static assessment that normally constitutes 'self-awareness' a counterproductive exercise); that decisions made at school rarely reflect the final destinations of the students (Roberts, 1977, 1997); and that some more holistic concerns (e.g. family planning) are important; DOTS still structures most career education. Vocational choice is strongly emphasised as the key component of career planning even when school students themselves consider this inappropriate. Critically, although research suggests parents (Irving, 2000, Whiston and Keller, 2004), and role models from the wider community (Law, 1981), are the biggest influencers of young people's occupational choices, formal career education normally involves only guidance teachers, career advisers and the school students themselves. Parents and representatives of the wider community are not involved. Formal career education is pre-packaged in Career Box and takes place in an institutional black box; outside interventions are not held to be legitimate. It is clear that community interests circumscribe person-centredness; but only the interests of very specific communities hold sway – e.g. the business and enterprise communities.

Even school student work experience placements with local employers are under threat. This is a consequence of a culture of risk aversion, which makes health and safety the overwhelming priority; the difficulty of getting cooperation from employers; and the withdrawal of career service support for the organisation of the placements in schools and the resultant increase in administrative pressure on the schools. Whatever the difficulties, it is interesting that a key opportunity for school pupils to mix with older generations (and the wider community), outside the school boundary and as part of the school curriculum, is in decline.

CEG is therefore unlikely to be customised to a specific school or the school's community in general. In recent years both the content and mode of delivery of career education have been controlled centrally in the same way that the academic curriculum is. Neither the local community, nor the school pupils themselves, are involved in setting the career education agenda. Person-centredness and wider community interests are *both* circumscribed.

1. b. iii. Professional Status of Career Advisers

Before finishing these introductory comments on 'person-centredness' in career guidance, it is important to comment on training issues in career guidance that underpin difficult questions relating to the professional status of career advisers. In some parts of Europe (e.g. Finland), career counsellors are chartered psychologists, and in North America the job titles 'career counsellor' and 'vocational psychologist', reflecting very specific psychology based training, are common. In Scotland, for 30 years, the main route into professional career guidance has been a 1 year postgraduate masters level course at one of the three universities accredited by the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG). The ICG has its own set of learning outcomes that post-graduate students must meet (through completion of a portfolio) together with the normal university masters level requirements for a post-graduate diploma. Those diplomates who go on to be employed by Careers Scotland must then complete five units of a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in guidance at level 4 (although those who go on to work for other guidance providers are unlikely to be asked to do so).

It is clear that the tension in practice, between the technical-rational approach that dovetails with new-managerialism (learning outcomes prescribed in advance, vocational orientation, concern with managerial goals and targets) and between a professional model (reflected in an emphasis on theoretical underpinning, ethics, unique personal learning outcomes for students, professional autonomy and pluralist practice etc.) is reflected in the training of career advisers. Career advisers are required to meet the sometimes conflicting demands of a university, the ICG and an SVQ (Jeffrey and McCrea, 2004).

Students are recruited from a wide range of backgrounds and so do not have a common undergraduate degree, and in some cases no higher education qualification. They undertake a 9 month training course, which aims to equip them to work as professionals, but a course that is in effect a battle ground between the academic requirements of a university, the need for the main professional body to retain an element of control, and the desire of the main employer to ensure potential recruits are tailored as closely as possible to their current managerial aims and objectives. Diverse theoretical positions that might support the development of a more holistic (but perhaps uneven) guidance practice are resisted by the more instrumental focus of the main employer, Career Scotland, which operates a single model of guidance (which all staff must use) that is tightly oriented to education and training issues in keeping with its economic development objectives.

As Howieson and Semple (2006) dryly note, the future qualification of Careers Scotland staff is 'currently a live issue'. Careers Scotland have recently (2005) commissioned an independent consultancy to do a study of training for career guidance which found that the current courses are 'not fit for purpose' and is currently working with the Scottish Qualifications Agency to develop a new qualification customised to meet their organisational needs.¹

It can, therefore, be seen that recent political and organisational changes have led to a less holistic, more tightly controlled model of CEG, closely focused on the

¹ Chapter 2 (c) includes detailed comments on difficulties managing the CEG qualification base.

needs of the business and enterprise sector. These developments have in turn impacted on key debates about the nature and role of guidance, preventing a long predicted shift from career advice to career counselling. Contextual constraints run counter to the ethos and the training of some CEG practitioners. There are tensions in the training of career advisers; between professional and more technical, instrumental approaches. As Howieson and Semple (2006) ask, 'to what extent can we still say there is a career guidance profession in the UK?'

It is now time to turn to a third deeply ambiguous influence on guidance culture, computers and ICTs.

1. b. iv. ICTs, Guidance and Counselling

New technologies have affected the guidance community in profound ways. Online 'counselling' has become fashionable (Kraus et al, 2004), challenging many of the most cherished beliefs about counselling and the face-to-face (FTF) intimacy it is normally associated with. If online counselling is possible then online guidance too might also be possible. Career services around the world have begun experimenting with online services, ranging from 'email-guidance' (heavily biased in favour of information giving about work and education, Offer 2004), placing in employment or courses (vacancies can be put online), and information provision (online data bases). Careers Scotland, the Connexions service in England, the Wales Careers Service and many services abroad have developed online services leading to interesting new issues for guidance, for example, what kind of services depend on closeness, sharing the same physical space, and what kinds of services can be delivered remotely? Significantly, the implications of the routinisation, 'automation', or the 'mechanisation' that the delivery of online services implies (informatics applications) has important consequences. Computerisation dovetails with a model of guidance focusing on economic as opposed to personal development goals - managing the labour market by streaming large numbers of clients. Online assessment, where remote clients receive a personal profile outlining strengths and weaknesses, or 'online matching', where psychometric tools recommend occupational choices for clients, are both available on the Internet. The scene is set for career guidance focused on

what Flyvberg (2001) describes as 'those properties of human activity by which humans most resemble machines or Weberian bureaucrats'. The interesting question, therefore, is whether or not technological developments might further undermine the person-centredness of the service. Rather than facilitating a holistic counselling approach, it is possible the technology will facilitate more technical-rational elements of the guidance process; assessment, advising etc.

While a move to 'career counselling' hints at a process of 'up-skilling' of career advisers and a reinforcing of their professional status (Krumboltz, 1996, Irving, 2000), the computerisation of advice and guidance hints at the opposite; career advisers interpersonal skills becoming less important than their role as mediators of technological solutions - implementing a standard selection of career education and guidance tools (e.g. Career Box) provided centrally; a systematic process of de-professionalisation and disempowerment (in which post-graduate 'career advisers' can be replaced by technician level 'employment assistants').

Watts (1996), writing about the impact of ICTs in guidance, raises the possibility that the technologies have the potential to move career guidance out of the control of professionals and directly into the hands of the public. Sampson (1999a) argues 'the Internet is making an enormous amount of resources available to individuals without a counselor or guidance professional acting as an intermediary.' (p. 2). The potential impact of clients using guidance resources without recourse to the guidance professionals who traditionally control access to resources is significant.

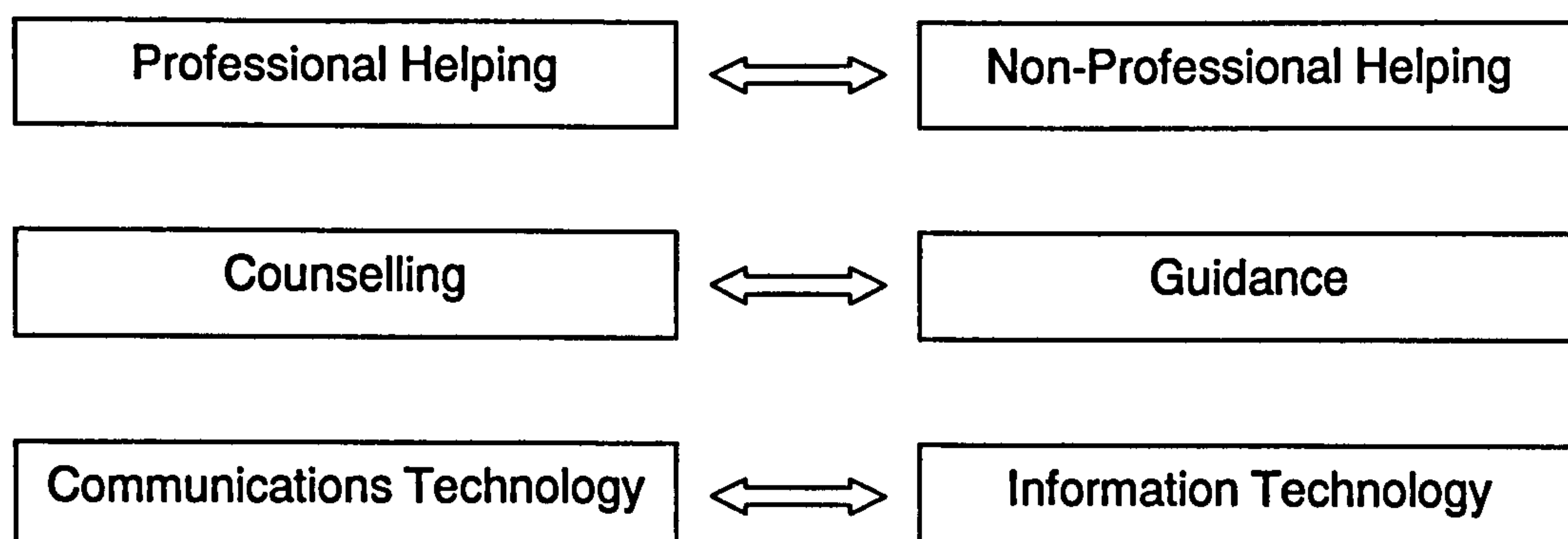
It seems that ICTs have the potential to further stall the development of a career counselling culture in the UK, and, if some writers are to be believed, routinise and streamline so much guidance that FTF help might rarely be needed.

These technological pressures, like the process of bureaucratisation and new-managerialism, increase the tension between guidance and counselling in career work, and between professional and non-professional helping. The practical implications to date have largely been the development of quantitative, measurable aspects of career work online, such as psychometric testing

(assessment and self-assessment), vacancy handling and information provision. The application of new technology has in fact bolstered guidance (where institutional goals mediate the helping provided) and a technical-rational approach, to the detriment of career counselling (where person-centredness is a top value) and professional artistry (Schön, 1983).

Many significant theoretical influences on career guidance, mainly from psychology and especially counselling theory, such as the work of Carl Rogers and Gerrard Egan, inter-alia, emphasise the *process* of helping; the dynamic relationship between two people. This interpersonal dynamic is, so far, much less well supported by ICTs. A key question for career advisers will be how to develop services that utilise the communications potential of the technology, so far largely ignored in career education and underused in career guidance, but already being utilised in counselling.

There is ample evidence of helping communities springing up on the Internet, often unmediated by professionals (Rhiengold 2000, Delanty 2003, Castells 2001). A good example of this kind of forum is the well-established 'Shared Experience' cancer support site (www.sharedexperience.com accessed 010206). In online recruitment there are already web sites that offer participants the opportunity to engage in active discussion and informal para-professional helping. If the technology makes many traditional guidance services available to the public unmediated by professional helpers (information, psychometrics, vacancies) and is also beginning to create informal networks of non-professional helpers, the guidance community may need to re-evaluate what it means to be a professional guidance worker. Perhaps one option is to develop new skills as facilitators of helping communities.



There are indications that communications technologies might facilitate new kinds of person-to-person helping (discussed below). Ultimately a lot will hinge on how successful 'online counselling' is in the long term, but especially on how professional people can interact with the helping communities that spring up on the Internet (and other contexts). The extent to which the technology can support rich and complex inter-personal and inter-group communications will be an important factor in the final impact of ICTs in career work, and on the extent that career advisers find their role as helpers enhanced or marginalised.

1. b. v. Summary

Career work in Scotland is in an uneasy position between guidance, where advice giving is normal and where professionals might have to balance an institutional agenda with person-centredness, and counselling, where impartiality and a holistic and person-centred approach are top values and where advice giving is resisted.

The impact of technology on CEG has so far been to assist with guidance activities such as psychometrics, information provision and placing services, but the communications potential of the technology, which might ultimately support a more counselling oriented approach to career work, has been poorly developed. In addition, ICTs might reverse some of the centralisation of career education and guidance, making information and matching resources accessible to everyone, including non-professional helpers such as parents, and making possible new kinds of helping communities, which can exist independently of professional helpers.

The complex pressures on Career Guidance in Scotland invite consideration of radical solutions:

- Politically, the career service has attempted to balance two arguably incompatible objectives; managing the labour market to assist with development of the Scottish economy; and providing a public service based on person-centred guidance.

- Professionally, career advisers are torn between a guidance culture (which might include advice giving, teaching, institutional objectives (targets) and counselling (impartial, person-centred, holistic).
- Technology has so far facilitated career advisers' traditional guidance activities, such as psychometric testing, interest guides, placing services and information provision, but has also made those services directly accessible to non-professionals in career work, such as teachers, parents and the clients themselves. The communications potential of the technology in career education, and the opportunities to support new kinds of informal helping communities, have barely been explored.
- There are questions about the ways the professionalisation of helping disempowers informal helping communities (Furedi, 2004, Dineen, 1999), and the ways that the communications potential of technology might help career professionals to deliver counselling-style services online, or even to facilitate the lay and para-professional helping communities already in evidence on the Internet.

These tensions are not unique to CEG. They reflect wide and far-reaching changes in the modern world; the relationships between individuals and the state; between professionals and non-professionals; between communities and society; and between our social and cultural values and our technologies. The ways we choose to apply technology reflect ethical concerns, choices about the right way to live, and, as such, our choices about how to apply technological solutions in CEG reflect political changes and questions of cultural values. Turning away from our neighbours and speaking to distant voices in cyberspace might have a profound impact.

It is remarkable that the communications potential of ICTs has been so poorly explored in school CEG, when ICTs have been so actively adopted to provide information. The cultural commentator Myerson (2001) quotes Karl Jaspers (p.

12) 'Philosophic truth sees all human beings as possible others with whom it remains our task to communicate' and wonders why this universal communication has not arrived. He too (like Bauman, 2001) sees ICTs as undermining communal understandings and despairs that modern communications technologies, 'the most rich of technological developments', redefine knowledge as information: 'To learn now means to have the right information pushed at you as efficiently as possible' (p. 58). For Myerson, the global reach of technology undermines knowledge as locally constructed community understandings and he calls on Heidegger to explain: 'communication is good when an answering voice arises not far from the initial utterance, not far in space or time maybe, but more profoundly, not far in human understanding' (p. 49). Clearly the application of new technologies in CEG is at the cusp of issues about the future of career guidance, whether or not career advisers are to be de-professionalised, and whether or not CEG is bureaucratically centralised and standardised rather than customised to respond to the needs of multiple communities.

When we consider the social forces that are unfolding around us, Careers Scotland's tight focus on the labour market (and perhaps a concern with CEG generally) might seem parochial, almost quaint. The Scottish labour market is increasingly dependant on global forces (and multinational companies) and the influence of an organisation like Careers Scotland must be at best marginal. In fact, for many, career guidance should be a process of helping people consider their place in the world; understanding the influence of wider social forces. It makes a difference whether or not, to borrow from Habermas (Myerson, 2001), people are glued together by common procedures and rules (system integration) or whether they stay together through shared understandings (social integration). For social integration, shared understandings, career guidance needs to involve consideration of personal and social values as much as labour market information.

If a career is a 'path through life', then global forces that limit or extend available paths (or even our ability to imagine alternative paths and 'ways of being') must be taken very seriously. The following discussion develops these points and exposes some of my own perspectives and values; it is influenced by rhetorical analysis of the role of technology in society and is intended to show that the value

conflict engulfing CEG in Scotland reflects wider, but closely related, global concerns.²

1. c. General Context: Changing World

1. c. i. Globalisation, Community and Technological Determinism

1. c. i. I. Somnambulistic Globalisation

Career Education and Guidance is responding to dramatic social forces, and the application of ICTs in guidance is inextricably linked with the ways in which the technologies support (or perhaps determine) a process of globalisation. For example, the EC allows Polish workers the right to live and work in Scotland (although without the same employment rights as Scottish workers), and access to the same services, including career services. Equally, Scottish services compete with European, and worldwide career guidance services on the Internet. This process of globalisation is not something that policy makers can control in any significant way; it is not subject to votes and approval by the Scottish Parliament. It seems inevitable, unstoppable. In terms of both ICTs and social policy, globalisation profoundly affects the nuts and bolts of CEG at a local level. CEG is being transformed by global forces entirely out with democratic control as it is normally understood.

Arguments for and against globalisation can become circular and alienating. Ironically, in order to prevent nation states annexing each other, we submit to annexation by bureaucracy; ‘voluntarily’ join larger political units with more and remote bureaucratic control of the regions. National currencies are giving way to a single currency, there is talk of European tax harmonisation, indeed writers on the liberal left (e.g. Monbiot, 2003) are calling for a world government to replace the United Nations. The decisions that affect our daily lives are being made more remotely, further away from the citizen than ever – centralisation, standardisation, and ‘free trade’ are the major political themes in Europe. As states merge, the

² The methods adopted in this research emphasise the importance of reflexivity – see chapter 3 (e.g. 3.a.i. p. 98).

'state' is expanding. Government is closer than ever on a micro level, regulating our smoking, drinking and eating habits, our childcare habits, recording our personal digital communications (Investigation and Regulatory Powers Act, 2000), just as on a macro level it seems increasingly remote.

Foucault (1991, fp. 1975) anticipated many current arguments about the relationship between government and technology. It can be argued that new technology supports both globalisation (through unlimited communications and commerce) and the creation of more and more powerful and effective state apparatus (through databases and surveillance). He carefully demonstrates the way surveillance (and examination) supports the 'means of correct training' of citizens (in institutions such as schools, prisons, religions). Recent UK Government and European legislation on the recording of personal digital communications represents a powerful intensification of surveillance. Drawing on the English philosopher Bentham (1999), Foucault points out that 'The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly' (p. 173). He argues that the effect of intense surveillance 'is to induce a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of powerthe surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action' (p. 201). All it takes to make us censor our own communication is the knowledge of the possibility that it is being surveilled, as on the Internet. Poster (1984), contrasting Foucault's 'mode of information' with Marx's 'mode of production', notes that 'surveillance is the flow of information from the object under scrutiny to the authoritiesthe existence of this network of information and the awareness of it by the scrutinised population constitutes the technology of power' (p. 163), but rather than simply appropriating labour as in the mode of production, in the mode of information it is our consciousness that is appropriated:

The reversal of priorities Marx saw in the factory whereby the dead (machines) dominate the living (workers) is extended by the computer to the realm of knowledgeLike mechanical machines, the computer shapes the mind of its user; unlike older contrivances, it engages the users consciousness. Its powers seem to enchant users who become absorbed by

the capabilities it offers. Which is the subject, computer or individual? Which has the capacity to generate knowledge, has the greater mental powers? (pp. 166-167)

In Foucault's analysis the technology of power (the Internet in this case) actually appropriates our consciousness; the values of the state and commerce become internalised and increasingly difficult to question.

Baudrillard too dwells extensively on the ways government relies on technology. Suspicious of the idea that progress has to mean bigger, more centralised, more controlling government, Baudrillard (2002) is eloquent about the ways centralised government and technology are linked. European governments 'follow their course in spite of any opinion to the contrary' (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 82). Events do not unfold in response to ethical and moral choices, they appear value-free, technology and government, the real and the virtual, merge:-

Europe as it is emerging is a simulation model projected into a scene of social desertification – an obligatory virtual reality, to be slipped into like a data suit. (Baudrillard 2002, p. 82)³

A perfect example of this process of standardising everything (which Baudrillard, 1983, calls the 'curse of the self-same'), is the recent attempt by the OECD to establish a common definition of the (apparently unsatisfactorily)⁴ plastic concept 'career guidance' – this enterprise hints at both the importance state bureaucracies place on influencing the career development of individual citizens, but equally, given the role of the OECD, at the desperate need of capital ('a monstrous,

³ 'Europe is a fine example. It is the archetype of the contemporary event, the vacuum-packed event, the vacuum-packed phantasmagoria. Europe will not have happened in the heads, dreams or natural inspiration of anyone whatsoever. If it has happened it has been in the somnambulistic space of the political will, of the dossiers and speeches, the programmes and calculations... Europe as it is emerging, is a simulation model projected into a scene of social desertification – an obligatory virtual reality, to be slipped into like a data suit.' (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 82.)

⁴ The implications of this 'plasticity' will be returned to in Chapter 6, Discussion p. 240.

unprincipled exercise' Baudrillard, 1981 p. 15) to guarantee the economic productivity of the next generation. The OECD did not consult career advisers in the UK, some of whom define career guidance in terms of personal, rather than economic, development. The OECD definition belongs to a virtual space, 'the somnambulist space of the political will'.

So CEG must be uniform and standardised. 'Progress' implies that the state, or even more remote organisations such as the OECD, should arbitrate the hopes and dreams, the life plans, the careers, of young citizens. Inevitably the role of parents and local communities in setting the guidance agenda is marginalised. CEG provides a clear example of the ways questions of community and identity are disturbed and reframed by the forces of technology, global capital and political bureaucracy. Distinct communities with particular values (for example, the UK Muslim community) are increasingly difficult to accommodate in the monoculture of global 'society'.

1. c. i. II. Community

Society and 'community' are sometimes seen as being in opposition to each other. The extent to which the global village, 'society', will replace our communities remains to be seen. Bauman (2001) suggests that community only ever existed in a perfect, impossible past. Hobsbawm (1996) argues 'never has the word community been used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life' Certainly the idea of community as a warm circle, a naïve immersion in human togetherness, seems bizarre and romantic in our modern world. But psychologists (and guidance workers) cannot neglect the social environments into which our lives are stitched, despite the fact that what constitutes our notion of community is evolving.

Kurt Lewin, a key figure in 'action research', formulated the famous equation $B=f(P,E)$, behaviour is a function of the person, the environment and the interaction between the two (Orford, 1992), to remind us that individual behaviour cannot be understood outwith the social systems in which it is expressed. While

sociologists have agonised over how to define community and whether or not it is 'real', psychologists have tended to adopt a pragmatic approach; communities are simply groups of people with something in common, geographically based, as in neighbourhoods, or relationally based, interest groups, friends, religious congregations etc. For Sarason (1988), one of the earliest Community Psychologists, what mattered was the *sense* of community and the *social capital* (Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2005). Community has four domains according to McMillan and Chavis (1986): membership; influence; integration and fulfilment needs; and shared emotional connection. We live in multiple, and overlapping, communities, which intersect and compete over the four domains. Bourdieu (1986) argued that an individual's position in social space relates to two coordinates, the volume and composition of the capital they detain, that capital having three principle dimensions; economic, cultural and social. For Bourdieu social capital is the resources accrued by virtue of membership of groups – or communities. Communities, as well as individuals, have 'social capital'; social capital can be seen as 'the potential of communities to improve the well-being of their members through the synergy of associations, mutual trust, sense of communication and collective action' (Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2005 p.95). This intersection of community and social capital provides a context for CEG, a way of seeing clients, not as socially isolated individuals, but as keyed into multiple communities each with their own social capital. Community resources become as important as personal resources.

The Community Psychology approach links 'community' to issues both of power and of 'emotional connection'. Communities stand or fall in relation to their ability to improve the well being of their members. They increase the power of individuals through collective action as well as providing an emotional connection and sense of integration that might be important for our sense of identity.

Debates about 'community' are brought into stark focus by powerful effects of globalisation. The destruction of communities in the face of an overpowering global society is seen by some as an assault on the social capital of minority groups. If a traditional requirement of communities has been that they are distinctive (having an element of us and them), small (insiders interacting in an

all-embracing way) and self-sufficient, then the global village presents a challenge to each aspect. The Internet is, therefore, part of a process that has seen 'community' increasingly problematised. Despite the potential for the Internet to create new forms of community ('communities of interest'), celebrated by, amongst many others, Rheingold (1993), Bauman (2001) takes a very different tack, arguing that the open and free flow of information is a factor in undermining a key component of communities; the 'shared understandings':

The mortal blow to the 'naturalness' of communal understanding was delivered, however, by the advent of informatics: the emancipation of the flow of information from the transport of bodies. Once information could travel independently of its carriers and with a speed far beyond the capacity of even the most advanced means of transportation, the boundary between 'inside' and 'outside' could no longer be drawn, let alone sustained. (p.13)

The role of the Internet, as a facilitator or as a destroyer of community, is controversial. Some see it as a radical way for marginalised people (or people with marginal interests) to network (and thus gain social capital). Others see it as a tool for transforming knowledge from Feyerabend's (1993) 'ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives' into new law tables, universal prescriptions about the right way to live (if a word is not recognised by the computer spell check – there can be no such word!) and, therefore, as a mortal blow to 'community'. As such, the application of new technologies in career education further complicates already difficult philosophical questions that underpin the ways our school students prepare for their paths through life and the role of CEG in mediating aspects of individuality and conformity. Every level of bureaucracy, from our schools to the OECD, has an interest in this fascinating social question: how can we manage our paths through life?⁵

⁵ Discussion of implications of Futureperfekt for community in CEG can be found in Chapter 6(b) p. 249.

1. c. ii. Technological Determinism, and Indeterminacy

The complex relationship between technology and education was hinted at above with regard to Myerson's view that ICTs facilitate the process of information supplanting knowledge. Many commentators go much further, arguing that technologies are challenging what it means to be human, beyond the normal evolutionary processes. It is sometimes hard to step outside ourselves and see just how deeply technology has changed the way we live, as Sosnoski (1999) notes: 'although humanists sometimes oppose the use of various technologies in their work, they often misread the ways the technology infiltrates their everyday lives' (p. 128).

The language of the debate about technologies is often extraordinarily colourful, at times bordering on apocalyptic. Many theorists have considered the dramatic consequence of the momentum to develop and apply more and more sophisticated technologies, including Jurgen Habermas (2003, *The Future of Human Nature*), Fukiyama (2002, *Our Post-Human Future*), Baudrillard (1981, *Simulacra and Simulation*) and even Ulrich Beck (1999, *World Risk Society*). Genetic engineering is of interest in this regard of course, but it is the growth of cyborgism, our increasing intimacy with our technologies, that is most significant for this thesis.⁶ The ways we interact with machines are changing the quality of 'human-ness'. Indeed the decline of humanism, and a reappraisal of the relationship between humans and knowledge, has been a strong theme in post modern thinking. Foucault concludes in 'The Order of Things'(1970):

As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end. (p. 387)

Wearable computers and mobile phones (communicating with aural implants using bluetooth technology) wired into clothes are available already. Biometric identification will become standard in passports within a decade and biometric ID cards will soon be compulsory in the UK. Greenwood (2005) writes (sceptically)

⁶ 'Progress has enabled humans to reproduce like potatoes' Baudrillard, 1981, p. 95 (e.g. Cloning)

about a future ‘of constant surveillance, enabled by ‘truth technologies’ where biometric identity cards, global positioning systems and two-way screens allow malevolent forces to track you wherever you go ...the authorities control society through one vast, ongoing, stop and search operation.’ In the light of the rapid changes that are taking place, it might not be too fanciful to argue that humanist values (such as person-centredness, traditionally at the core of CEG) may well be out of place in a world where what it means to be human is as much a consequence of engineering as evolution.⁷ A CEG philosophy premised on the humanist value of person-centredness must be questioned.

These forces may represent an irresistible social trend, but will certainly have unpredictable implications. One of the earliest and most celebrated contributors to the debates about our relationship with machines and what has been dubbed ‘cyborgism’, Haraway (1991), in her ‘Cyborg Manifesto’, takes a thought provoking perspective. In cyborgs she sees creatures of a post-gender world, the resolution of the feminist struggle might be, as she puts it, the ‘final appropriation of women’s bodies in a masculinist orgy of war’. Just as some of our current concerns, such as sex and gender discrimination, might become redundant, new concerns are emerging. She writes:

Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally defined... Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves are frighteningly inert. (p. 293-4)

For Haraway, the boundary between the physical and non-physical has become ‘eerily imprecise’. Ultimately, the danger, she says, is that the coming together of man and machine in the most intimate ways will be about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet. To return to the comparatively prosaic world of the use of technology in CEG, it seems that on the one hand there is a view that new technologies can augment and enhance what it means to be ‘human’, perhaps in relation to our communications for example, and on the other that there is a

⁷ See Conclusions, Chapter 7 (b)

danger of us becoming steadily less human and more like the machines we are now so intimately involved with. Harraway is adamant that our task in taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing metaphysics of anti-science and a demonology of technology; we must, she argues, reconstruct the boundaries of daily life.

Even as long ago as 1984, Turkle (p. 320) writes that computers ‘challenge our ideas about what it is to be human, to think and feel. They present us with more than a challenge. They present us with an affront, because they hold up a new mirror in which mind is reflected as machine.’ The ways we use new technology to tackle social and educational problems have already had far reaching implications for western societies. It is perhaps arguable that the technology itself is neutral, but it is incontrovertible that the ways we choose to apply it are politically charged; will have dramatic implications for all levels of society; and are statements of values. In considering the politics of this process, and particularly in considering how the technologies might be applied in CEG with due regard for questions of social responsibility, scientific methodology alone is insufficient.

1. c. iii. Methods

Appropriate responses to technological determinism (or the crisis in ‘community’, or the impact of Globalisation) will not be clarified by scientific enquiry alone. Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that science has ‘not contributed to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests, which is the prerequisite for an enlightened political, economic, and cultural development in any society and which is at the core of phronesis’ (p. 3). The Aristotelian concept of phronesis is useful, practical wisdom and judgement that goes beyond analytical and scientific knowledge, technical and practical knowledge, it involves ‘judgements and decisions made in the manner of a virtuoso social and political actor, it is a kind of prudence and practical wisdom’. Like many earlier philosophers, such as Shopenhauer and Nietzsche (Cates, 2003), Flyvbjerg argues that many writers have overemphasised scientific and technical knowledge at the expense of practical judgement and ‘wisdom’. Too much weight, it is argued, is given both to the empirical nature of

thought and the passion for classification that has become an end in itself.⁸ Aristotle (2004) insists that ‘man is a social being’ (1097b10) and that ‘questions of conduct and expedience have little fixity about them... admit no precision... do not fall under any professional tradition’ and that ‘agents are compelled at every step to think out for themselves what the circumstances demand... as in the arts’ (1104a5). Over emphasis on empiricism, classification, and ‘objectivity’ are at the core of what Flyvbjerg dubs the ‘rational fallacy’; ‘raising analysis and rationality into the most important mode of operation for human activity, and allowing these to dominate our view of human activity...’, and, as noted above, ‘focussing on those properties of human activity by which humans most resemble machines or Weberian bureaucrats’ (p. 22-23). The point, of course, is that the application of science and technology in CEG can be evaluated in terms of efficiency, productivity, and economic benefits, but it also needs to be evaluated in terms of social responsibility (questions of conduct and expediency). How does it actually make life better, and what will that mean?

A greater emphasis on practical wisdom might usefully inform methods to tackle the complex social, political and ethical dilemmas that the application of technologies in education, and in CEG, imply. In order to ‘reconstruct the boundaries of daily life’ we need to tackle questions of values and judgement as much as those of episteme and techne. Questions of daily life must be seen as ‘context dependent’ – in terms of an ‘open ended, contingent relation between contexts, actions, and interpretations’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001). This position suggests that ultimately, reflexive analysis of goals, values and interests is a precondition for an enlightened development in any society. This is not a task suited to science. With phronesis, practical wisdom, one has the ‘knowledge of how to behave in particular circumstance(s) that can never be equated with or reduced to knowledge of general truths. Phronesis is a sense of the ethically practical rather than a kind of science’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 57). One way of addressing the dominant values of modernity, and the consequences of the emphasis on rationalism and

⁸ Nietzsche, with characteristic bluntness, calls this ‘a rut minded addiction for the routine combined with a herbaristic passion for collecting data and drawing up indices’ Cates 2003 p. 204.) Baudrillard (1983, p. 81) warns, ‘microscopic observation promotes such an alteration in the object that knowledge of it becomes imperilled.’

empiricism is to develop an equally strong emphasis on judgement, ethics and, especially, of reflexive analysis of values and the creation of new values.

A key element of this thesis is an exploration of the underpinning values of CEG, particularly in terms of the ways CEG applies technologies, and the ways it mediates the contested ground between society and community. For the task of ‘reevaluation of all values’ we need to cultivate ‘the art of dividing without making inimical; mixing up nothing, ‘reconciling’ nothing; a tremendous multiplicity which is none the less the opposite of chaos’ (Nietzsche, 1908, p. 43).

1. c. iv. Summary

Emphasising values, this thesis considers the ways in which ICTs might influence the delivery of career education and guidance and the implications of shifting patterns of values for all the parties involved, in particular the tension between databases and networks; it will investigate the possible application of ICTs to establish a sense of community and stakeholder involvement in career education; and it will explore ways in which career education might become more person-centred and less reliant on institutional (and social) agendas.

Without losing sight of the wider context of the research, and the political and philosophical debates that enmesh it, the core objectives remain clear:

- to find ways to take school student career education out of the confines of the schools themselves and into the wider community;
- to experiment with ways of preserving person centeredness as a core value in career education; and
- to experiment with using emerging technologies in career education.

Underpinning this investigation is a tension in wider society, between the idealism of modernist thinkers and a post-modern spirit of deconstruction, iconoclasm and

analysis of power. The methodology is situated in a hermeneutic framework and although empirical (generating data), it has resisted the subject/object divide and the positivism of science in favour of a reflexive, constructionist approach that emphasises the political nature of the social sciences; psychology as a moral science.

The project is an attempt to take up the challenge laid down by Haraway (1991, above), amongst others, to find small ways to reconstruct the boundaries of everyday life and (to paraphrase Foucault) play with 'the order of things'.

The next chapter reviews a wide range of relevant literature. The focus is on the special place of guidance, which is situated uneasily between the more directive process of advice giving and the normally non-directive process of counselling. Particular attention is paid to the implications of the application of technologies in CEG. It was also essential to note some of the main issues arising from the related and highly relevant literature on the social psychology of the Internet, online learning, and the changing nature of community.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. a. Orientation to CEG Literature

2. a. i. Career versus Careers, Counselling versus Guidance

The language of guidance and counselling can seem arbitrary and confusing, in particular, the jumbled use of the words ‘career’, ‘careers’, ‘guidance’ and ‘counselling’. Indeed, there has been a strong anti-theoretical stance in career guidance that is reflected in the professional journals (Heaviside, 1995, Closs, 2001) and some professionals and writers would argue that worrying about this terminology is irrelevant semantics. Closs (2001) writes ‘Practitioners are often introduced to theories during their training but make no use of them in their day to day work... Advisers should concentrate on getting on with the job’ (p. 38). The language writers choose to use is rarely accidental and is often underpinned by implicit theory and a political, value driven perspective, for example, both Closs and Heaviside were in favour of the traditional terms ‘careers officer’ or ‘careers adviser’. Closs was an early advocate of computerised matching systems (matching people to jobs) which many once feared might make guidance workers redundant, and Heaviside, Head of the Careers Service Branch of the DFEE in the 1990s, was instrumental in unsuccessful moves to shorten the training of careers advisers (therefore making it cheaper) and to lower the post-graduate status of the job, referring in print (1995) to ‘the craft of guidance’.¹ The combined impact of the computerisation of guidance work and moves to ‘deprofessionalise’ guidance workers have not yet made career guidance workers redundant, but in England (although not yet in Scotland and Wales) the term ‘careers adviser’ is already redundant in some areas – replaced by the more generic term ‘key-worker’. The terminology used is highly controversial and has important implications for the roles of the guidance workers.

Those from an ‘anti-theoretical’ position use language as carefully as those who want to develop consistent, theoretical perspectives to underpin guidance. It is

¹ Both these issues, length of training and professional status, are still live, see below, p. 55.

important for the purposes of this thesis to be clear about what is certainly confusing nomenclature. Many writers use the terms career adviser, careers adviser, career counsellor, careers counsellor, career guidance, careers guidance, guidance worker and adviser loosely and interchangeably, while yet others have a strong preference (Watts et al, 1996, for Career Adviser, and Herr, 1997, for Career Counsellor). Further confusion is caused by differences in Scottish and English educational systems (in England schools have 'careers teachers' but not in Scotland, and in both countries schools employ guidance teachers).

Choice of the word 'career' versus the word 'careers' essentially reflects a broader debate about holism in career(s) guidance. Those preferring the traditional use of the word 'careers' tend to see careers guidance/advice as being focused on occupational and educational choices; often the words 'careers' and 'jobs' come to mean practically the same thing in this context. The alternative position, of those who prefer to drop the 's', argues that you do not 'choose a career' – your career is a 'path through life' which is a consequence of a sequence of choices about occupations, education, and lifestyles. Of course you may still 'choose' a job, or a college course. This position is associated with advocacy of a holistic perspective: career guidance cannot be separated from occupational, social, family and lifestyle issues, there is a need to work with the 'whole person' and occupational choices must be made in a broad social context (Herr, 1997, Watts and Kidd, 2000, Watts et al, 1996, Peavy, 1992).

In a revealing development, the Institute of Careers Guidance changed its name, after years of debate, to the Institute of Career Guidance in 2000, a controversial move at the time. Even leading academics have been unsure how to proceed with the issue of nomenclature; in 1996 the authors (Watts et al, 1996) of a key text book, 'Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance' argued that although they preferred the term 'career' they would use the term 'careers' throughout their text book as it reflected current custom and practice (reinforcing the status quo).

Debates about the relationship between guidance and counselling are similarly entrenched, the choice of the words advice, guidance and counselling has far reaching implications for the ways workers practice. Some see counselling as a

guidance activity, and one of the most widely used definitions of guidance, produced by the Standing Conference of Associations for Guidance in Educational Settings, includes counselling, along with teaching, informing, feeding back, assessing, enabling, and advising, as a guidance activity (SCAGES, 1993). However, the British Association for Counselling (BAC, now the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) was completely independent of both SCAGES and the Guidance Council (Watts and Kidd, 2000). Many counsellors view counselling and guidance as quite separate activities, believing counselling to be 'non-directive' and guidance 'directive'.

Watts and Kidd (2000) argue '... guidance and counselling need to maintain their links with one another. Counselling is a critical part of guidance provision. Counselling skills underpin good guidance practice. There is much congruence of core values across the two fields.' (p. 493). Herr (1997) argues that there is so much overlap between guidance and counselling, and such a compelling argument for a more holistic perspective in both career and educational guidance, that it is inevitable they will converge and likely that the term 'career counsellor' will become increasingly accepted in the UK as it has been in the USA. But, as noted in the Introduction, 10 years down the line there is no evidence of such a shift in Scotland. Indeed, the current political climate is such that Careers Scotland have abandoned the term Career Guidance altogether in favour of the even narrower 'Career Planning' (Howieson and Semple, 2006) in keeping with their focus on economic development.

Throughout this thesis the word career will be preferred to the word careers except where 'careers' refers to a job title, book or article title, or is included in a direct quote. Generally the term 'guidance worker' will be used to include any professional helpers, and the terms 'counsellor' and 'counselling' will be reserved for people or organisations marketing themselves as solely concerned with counselling activities.

It is considered helpful to see counselling and guidance as broadly overlapping activities, the key difference being that guidance workers combine a client-centred perspective with institutional and political concerns (those employed by

Enterprise Companies or Local Education Authorities, for example, have an institutional agenda) and counsellors as being accountable only to their professional associations and their clients.

2. a. ii. Outline of Literature Review

The literature on applying ICTs in CEG is already a substantial body of work, with articles regularly published on the topic since the beginning of the ICT revolution. Indeed, an important landmark was the 1978 Journal of Occupational Psychology (V58, No.1) symposium on the theme of 'Computers in Vocational Guidance'.

Many of the key themes raised in this early special edition journal continue to be preoccupations of the guidance community. It is the purpose of this chapter to review developments in the applications of ICTs in guidance since then, emphasising that infomatics applications outnumber applications using the communications potential of the technology. In particular, the significance of the shift in emphasis from 'Information Technology (IT) to 'Information Communications Technologies' (ICTs) has not yet been reflected either in the career guidance research literature or the practice of the UK guidance community. The review will underline the fact that the communications potential of the Internet has still to be tapped in career work and the implications for guidance are as yet poorly understood.

In parallel to the growth of ICTs, there have of been significant developments in guidance and counselling theory in the last 20 years, developments that have emphasised the power of communication and social interaction, storytelling and the cultural context of the helping strategies (Chen, 1998, Peavy, 1992, Cochrane 1997). Kidd et al (1994) argue 'The dominant models (underpinning career guidance) have changed over the last two decades, in favour of ones which emphasise interpersonal and relationship skills'. The theoretical developments emphasise generic guidance skills over expert knowledge as the basis for professional practice. The literature suggests that the application of these 'interpersonal and relationship skills' using communications platforms emerging

on the Internet may prove to be of fundamental importance to the development of guidance. Indeed, some evidence suggests that a model of professionalism based on 'expert knowledge' may risk the downgrading of guidance work to technician-level tasks, given the effectiveness of ICT infomatics applications in guidance. There is a further danger that computer based solutions to guidance problems reduce the 'person-centred' focus of career guidance, leading to the imposition of standardised and mechanistic ways of working that are practically the same for all clients rather than tailored to individual needs.

Given the inter-disciplinary nature of the research, it has also been necessary to pay attention to the rich literature on online learning, the psychology of the Internet, and research into online communities generally. Online learning has developed so rapidly that there are already whole universities that offer online courses exclusively. The lessons learned from these exercises in computer-assisted learning are inevitably helpful when applying ICTs in CEG, especially with regard to understanding the ways in which learning is changed by the technology. Similarly, psychological research into online aggression, disinhibition, dépaysement, and anonymity and pseudonymity has much to tell us about the benefits and risks of Internet communication. Lastly, it was necessary to consider the work of those researchers who are particularly interested in the nature of online communities (or networks), given the objective of using ICTs to embed CEG in the wider community.

2. b. Technology of Guidance

2. b. i. Pioneers in the applications of IT

Computer technology is often parodied as impersonal and cold, facilitating technical processes while ignoring human dimensions. In fact, the tension between nomenclature, 'IT' and 'Information Communications Technologies', reflects this schism. Information technology perhaps suggests coldness, precision, accuracy, facts and truth, while 'communications' technology suggests tools for bringing people together and places the computer in a historical perspective that links it with postal services and the telephone as technologies harnessed to facilitate our human need to communicate. This tension is reflected in the earliest work in the field of guidance, where, as would be expected, a great deal of stock is placed on personal contact.

It is remarkable looking back to 1978 just how prescient many of the writers in the guidance community were. Donald Super (1978), for example, clearly foresaw the significance of attempts to devise computerised guidance systems that do more than manage information and the traditional process of matching people to jobs. He reports on research which, even at that stage, was attempting a 'painstaking logical analysis of the *counselling processes*' (p. 26) to identify functions best performed by computers. Watts (1978) discusses the need for computers to be used as a learning tool and used on an interactive basis to underpin guidance for 'career development through which individuals define who they are and the kind of lives they lead' (p. 39). At the earliest stages of the development of ICTs there was immediately an interesting tension between the use of computers to facilitate the technical components of guidance and the counselling components.

There was also an early view that computing technology may be more or less appropriate depending on the theoretical models of guidance preferred by the practitioners and that computers were often best suited to supporting information driven and matching (best fit of people to jobs) approaches. Closs (1978), for

example, reflects on the way computer systems may or may not fit into the preferred models of guidance workers (e.g. directive; non-directive; matching; developmental) noting 'they will judge the acceptability of a system in so far as its design concept accords with their philosophy' and argues that it may be possible to develop a programme structure 'which permits a maximum degree of flexibility in style of usage to accommodate such different philosophies' (p. 45). This echoes Closs's position, noted above, that theoretical differences are best addressed by simply 'getting on with the job'; computers it seemed, could provide solutions no matter the theoretical perspective of the guidance worker.

The potential of the new technologies to facilitate the counselling approach to career work rather than just the information and matching (advising) approach is a key issue for this thesis and key theme in much of the literature.

It will be impossible to comment in detail on the increasingly sophisticated software being developed to facilitate matching, assessment and placing. There is a wealth of research on the effectiveness of widely used tools such as Matchpoint, Cascade, Jiig-Cal, and Centigrade. As Closs (1978) noted, use of this type of software will not be acceptable to all guidance workers, but it is certainly here to stay. It meets the needs of some clients, but most significantly, as Gothard (2001) points out 'The number of systems has expanded greatly, partly because of the Government seeing them as cutting the cost of guidance' (p. 133). So matching software, for better or worse, is firmly established. Access to some of the most established tools such as Holland's Self-Directed Search are readily available on the Internet, where clients can use them with or without the support of a guidance worker.²

Many of the themes identified below are hinted at in the pioneering papers of 1978 and are themes that are regularly revisited by subsequent authors (e.g. Mallen and Vogel, 2005), despite the fact that when this particular journal was written the Internet was embryonic and the potential of computing technology to facilitate interactive communications applications was unimaginable.

² <http://www.self-directed-search.com/>

2. b. ii. Centre for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development

The work of James Sampson and the Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development at Florida State University has been influential and his extensive list of publications widely cited.³

In a 1994 paper in the *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Sampson echoes Closs' (1978) examination of the 'promises and pitfalls' of computers in career guidance. Sampson (1994) reflects on 'factors which facilitate and factors which inhibit' effective computer assisted careers guidance (CACG). In 1994 the Internet was only just beginning its insidious journey into every aspect of our daily lives, so Sampson's paper emphasises information processing as opposed to communications. Reductions in the cost of hardware and the increasing power of processors are cited as important factors facilitating usage. In the early 1990s computers were expensive and still more closely associated with workplaces than with home and personal use. At the time of writing, the cost of computers continues to fall and, of course, the personal computer is now ubiquitous at home and at work.

Sampson argued that:

- practitioner experience of the (relatively) new technology was on a steep learning curve;
- the emergence of a set of professional standards and codes of ethics; along with
- increasing developer responsiveness to feedback,

³ Sampson was especially influential in the development of Careers Scotland's service delivery model, and has been invited to speak to staff at several CS events. CS has adopted his 'Differentiated Service' model, which attempts to categorise client need in order to deliver services more efficiently. An extensive list of references can be found at <http://www.career.fsu.edu/documents/bibliographies/CCIS%20Bibliographies.htm> (July 2006).

were some of the factors which might allow the rapid development of 'computer assisted guidance systems'.

To some extent it is possible that guidance workers, generally social and 'people' oriented workers (Holland, 1997), were unlikely to be early adopters of new technology. Despite the fact that information databases and computerised matching systems were being developed and implemented in the mid 1980s, Sampson identifies resistance to mechanisation of the guidance process by some guidance professionals, along with the limited technical ability of some staff, as holding back implementation in the UK.

In relation to ethical standards for the use of ICTs in guidance, Sampson notes several north American initiatives to establish guidelines for practitioners 'The ethical standards of several professional associations include specific standards related to the design and use of computer applications in counselling and guidance' (p. 94). As yet, there are no widely used standards or ethical guidelines in the UK and there has been practically no national debate about the increasing computerisation of guidance. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy has a set of guidelines for online counselling but these are not widely used by the guidance community. The European Commission's Socrates programme recently funded production of 'Guidelines for Web Based Guidance' (Aridane, 2004) but these devote only three pages to ethical issues and in the main simply reiterate Beauchamp and Childress' (1983) classic four principles of ethical practice (beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and justice) and note that 'many ethical problems have no solutions'.

Regarding increasing developer responsiveness, it is useful to note that the evidence given for responsiveness focuses on the systems themselves rather than the ways in which they are used, and is exclusively related to the technical components of guidance. Sampson identifies the development of larger occupational and educational information files, increased flexibility in generating occupational alternatives (matching), and additional support materials for users and practitioners. In short, better information and more sophisticated matching

are given as the outcomes of increasing developer responsiveness. This reflects the position of career guidance in the UK both in 1994 and to a large extent subsequently; there are very few interactive Internet based communications systems in use in the UK and so little opportunity for a feedback loop to emerge.

Sampson also writes enthusiastically in the same paper about the potential of interactive-video disc technology. His remarks indicate how powerfully guidance applications are driven by the technology. In the 12 years since he was writing interactive DVD technology and CD-ROMS have been rapidly deployed, but, simultaneously, there has been a dramatic increase in Internet bandwidth allowing faster data transfer and the emergence of video streaming technology. It is likely that in the next 10 years, live streaming technology, which allows synchronous communication and remote interactivity will make the 'hardcopy' represented by CD-ROMS and DVD's obsolete before there have been significant applications in guidance. The advent of commercially viable online gaming, and even facilities to download entire movies (both of which require huge bandwidth) suggests that this process is already well underway.

The pace of technological change is reflected in the ways Sampson's work develops. Three years later, some of the issues relating to the communications potential of the technology were beginning to be addressed. A growing sense of caution about the implications of the technology is reflected in the headings used in the work, from Closs' earlier 'promises and pitfalls', to Sampson's 'facilitating and inhibiting factors'; 1997 finds Sampson writing with colleagues about future 'possibilities and potential problems'; now the focus is on the potential of the Internet to facilitate career counselling.

Sampson et al's (1997) paper is a mature survey of what was still an embryonic field and identifies a number of important issues of relevance to the guidance community. In particular, it deals with communication issues, and especially the opportunities for counselling on the Internet. The authors give a detailed account of the available mechanisms for Internet counselling, dealing with a range of the tools available such as on-line chat, file transfer, video-conferencing etc., all of which can be combined to provide a multi-purpose toolkit for information sharing

and knowledge creation. The authors do not discuss the nature of the processes involved, and there is no evidence about the effectiveness of these methods or about the ways in which they differ from conventional methods. This is significant to the extent that it points in the direction of the convergence of communication and information tools.

The authors draw attention to two other important aspects of the technology; the opportunity to use the Internet to deliver self-help resources that may reduce the need for personal guidance (or free guidance workers to work more effectively with a smaller group of clients); and the opportunity for professionals to use the technology for supervision and case conferencing.

There are other examples of how more sensitive personal guidance issues began to be tackled. The (Sampson et al, 1997) paper raises a series of important ethical questions that the authors believe need to be addressed if Internet counselling is to be developed. These include issues about the security of Internet communications, confidentiality, the quality of information available, and inappropriate or poor quality counsellor interventions (for example by over-estimating the computer literacy of the client). Two other issues raised directly affect the value of the Internet as a tool for addressing social exclusion and geographical isolation; the risk that the cost of the hardware, software and Internet access make this kind of help out of the reach of the poorest sectors of the population; and the more subtle problem of world wide access to counselling services creating difficulties arising from cultural and social differences that could undermine the credibility of services (some minority groups may not relate to a global cultural context). These particular ethical problems are certainly not unique to Internet counselling, some apply equally to face to face (FTF) counselling - but it is important that innovators are aware of any ethical issues relating to computer mediated communication (CMC) and as noted above, this awareness raising of subtle ethical and professional practice issues has only just begun.

A presentation by Sampson to the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (Sampson, 1999) provides more evidence that interest in

ICT applications in guidance was beginning to shift away from an exclusive focus on technical applications and 'mechanisms'. He raises more questions about the communications potential of the technology, arguing, without going into details, that there will be interesting opportunities for group and co-operative learning arrangements. He continues, 'The Internet has the potential to change the way people learn and communicate' (p. 2), a position already well established in the wider educational community (online learning is discussed below). Sampson does provide helpful suggestions for further research topics, but strangely does not include new ways of 'learning and communicating' amongst them. It is significant that, practically for the first time, he comments on the political and management issues the technology raises for guidance workers.

The core of Sampson's (1999) concerns is as follows: - 'the Internet is making an enormous amount of resources available to individuals without a counsellor or guidance professional acting as an intermediary' (p. 2). The impact of clients using guidance resources without recourse to guidance professionals who have, in the past, controlled access to resources is potentially dramatic. In addition, Sampson also argues that the opportunity for anonymity the Internet affords may encourage many people who previously have been reluctant to seek assistance to seek out the resources and services they need (one of the earliest mentions of the important issues relating to anonymity and pseudonymity on the Internet which are addressed in more detail below).

This (1999) paper dwells on the potential limitations of Internet services and especially the implications of cutting out the 'intermediary' (professional helper). Sampson (1999) is concerned about unintended negative consequences:

- Confusion between well validated assessment and information resources and those with no evidence of validity;
- inadequate account of significant cultural differences between users;
- services that do not indicate when FTF counselling is needed;

- breaches of confidentiality; and
- clients becoming overwhelmed by the information available.

The issue of protecting clients from poor quality resources (unmediated by 'professional' help) is echoed in Sampson's concern about helpers with inadequate credentials offering help and support. Suddenly, issues of professional demarcation and control are evident and suggest the emergence of a tension between, on the one hand, the role of the Internet as a facilitator of group and co-operative helping, and, on the other, as a source of poor quality resources and helpers with inadequate skills and credentials. This is one of the most thorough early expositions on a central concern of this thesis. At its simplest the problem is simply one of the 'legitimation' (Habermas, 1973) of knowledge. The information and database resources being developed for clients project a comparable legitimacy, despite often being contradictory and partial. Equally, the professional and para-professional help that is provided by online networks (communities) has a very similar problem with legitimation, the decontextualising and levelling effects of Internet communication mean that it is not always clear who speaks with 'authority', legitimately. The social networks are reflexive, evolving and open to contest and challenge in ways online databases are not – they facilitate interactivity and debate. Sampson's remarks suggest that the ways power and authority are expressed in online communication are becoming a central concern in CEG.

Very significantly, questions are left open about how ICTs might affect debates about the balance between guidance and counselling in career work and the role of informal communities of helpers. If advice and information-giving (guidance) is the main orientation of career advisers, then it is clear that ICTs might, to a large degree, undermine any sense that they have something special to offer. On the other hand, if career advisers are moving towards a career counselling orientation, then Sampson's concern about ICTs 'potential to change the way people learn and communicate', and the related potential to create a wider community of helpers,

become very important in the context of finding a more counselling (perhaps a groupwork) approach to developing the professional skills of career counsellors.

Whilst Sampson's 1999 presentation indicates important changes of emphasis, in particular by acknowledging the communications potential of the technology in guidance, there is a sense of an emerging threat to the profession as a whole. Clients can bypass 'officially sanctioned' and quality controlled services and he argues that there is, therefore, a need for 'urgent monitoring of what is out there by guidance professionals and the provision of a free 'consumer protection' service that reviews examples of what is on offer' (p. 8). Rather than celebrate the opportunity to create a new, decentralised form of community helping in career guidance and counselling, Sampson's response is to indicate that professionals need to find new ways to reassert control. Although he recognises the communications potential of ICTs, he does not discuss the ways in which the processes of personal development might be different using CMC compared to FTF communication. There is no indication of the potential advantages that the new communications applications provide, such as widening the range of participants in the guidance community (both clients and helpers) and developing new communication networks generally. Rather, Sampson urges 'the effectiveness of the use of the web sites can be improved by systematically integrating web sites into existing services'. New players in the guidance networks are characterised as constituting a potential threat to professional delivery of services and must be integrated in a top down 'tree' structure. The potential of the Internet to create a network of help in a rhizomatic pattern that might leave career advisers to compete with non-professional helpers is a threat.

2. b. iii. NICEC

The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) is a UK organisation aiming to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice in career education and counselling.⁴ It is a network organisation with a variety of sponsors. In the UK, many of the published papers on ICTs and guidance have been written under the aegis of NICEC or its members. Leading writers in the field include Tony Watts (the director of NICEC) and Marcus Offer, both of whom have had close links with Jim Sampson of the Florida based Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development (and indeed they have published joint papers together).

NICEC has reported some empirically based research, but the bulk of its publications relate to reviews of the development of ICT applications and have until recently been focused on Information Technology as opposed to communications (e.g. Watts et al, 1996). Even the earlier work reflects some of the themes already identified above, especially the concern with the potential effects of independent use of the new technology. Referring to 'stand-alone versus assisted' computerised tools, Watts (1996) is concerned about the ethics of 'allowing' clients access to systems that do not involve the participation of a professional guidance worker.

Quoting the American Association for Counseling and Development, he raises the spectre of clients accessing the technology who are 'intellectually, emotionally or physically' incapable of using it; clients using inappropriate software; and the possible difficulty following up clients and 'correcting mistakes'. Watts also outlines a number of alternatives to the 'stand alone' model, including a 'supported model' (shoulder to shoulder as opposed to face to face) where the client and adviser work together, a model where the computer application is

⁴ The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) was established in 1972 by the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (est 1964) at Hatfield Polytechnic, with support from the Leverhulme Trust to extend guidance research, development and training. Prof. AG Watts became NICEC's Director. A list of NICEC fellows is available at <http://www.crac.org.uk/nicec/fellows/fellows.htm> (July 2006)

'incorporated' into another guidance intervention, and a progressive model where computer resources are 'integrated' into a programme of guidance interventions. In a single sentence in this lengthy article Watts makes a fascinating comment that is left undeveloped (p. 276); 'The peer-counselling opportunities offered by paired usage seem to offer particularly rich possibilities which can be effectively harnessed within a group context.' Although it is clear he has in mind use of matching software rather than Internet communication tools such as online chat or bulletin boards, the possibility of peer to peer helping, facilitated by the communication aspect of ICTs and supported by the information aspect is left as an intriguing possibility.

This debate, resurrected by both Sampson and Watts, can be traced to Holland (1966) the *Psychology of Vocational Choice*, and the associated development of Holland's 'Self-Directed Search'. This influential paper-based (now computerised) matching tool was designed as a stand-alone mechanism (i.e. it did not require the intervention of a guidance worker), to provide a profile of the vocational personality of the client and suggest occupations worthy of consideration.⁵ The development of this tool was based on the premise that many clients do not need 'career counselling' but simply an indication of their 'vocational personality' and some related occupational suggestions. Holland argued that this better met the needs of some clients and allowed the professional career counsellor to devote time and attention to those most in need. Holland's SDS was one of the first of many matching tools to be made available online. Since then, there has been rapid deployment of 'self-help' career guidance web sites online, driven partly by the success and proliferation of recruitment sites such as Monster and Stepstone. The debate about the ethics of standalone services is, in some ways, now redundant. There is no possibility of limiting client access to the huge range of formal and informal services already available. The key question has become; how should formal guidance services respond to these developments that are, essentially, outwith their control.

⁵ <http://www.self-directed-search.com/> (July 2006)

A landmark NICEC publication, which clearly recognises the potential for interactivity and communications potential of computing technology, was 'The Internet and Careers Work' (Offer and Watts, 1997). Essentially a briefing paper for practitioners and instructional in tone, it is important because it acknowledges the potential development of communities of self-helpers although, interestingly, it places online chat, email, and bulletin boards firmly within a context where they are either gateways to professional help or at least moderated by professionals. Implicit in this seems to be the concern noted above about the marginalisation of professional helpers as a result of the networking potential of the technology. They argue that chat and email provide 'a warm up: a safe way to sample the relationship with the counsellor before embarking on a personal contact' (p. 4), and emphasise that newsgroups and bulletin boards should be moderated:- 'newsgroups where contributions are monitored before posting, offer a new way of encouraging group members to learn from each other, with help from a facilitator' (p. 4).

They also note that matching software and information provision are already available and can be accessed without the intervention of guidance workers 'Through file transfer or direct access to remote databases, the Internet could make it possible to access the full range of computer-assisted guidance systems 'online', not just what happens to be available in the local school/college or careers centre. Such systems might then be used without mediation or support from a guidance worker' (p. 3).

The team at NICEC has been very effective at proselytising communications applications of the technology in guidance and the work has been both visionary and practical, but like the examples given from Sampson above, it neither addresses the potential effectiveness of self-help communities, nor gives advice about the management of such services. The challenge to professional helping by informal services is identified but left unexplored.

2. b. iv. British Educational Communications and Technology Agency

In some regards, the above mentioned NICEC briefing, in its educational and instructional tone, is a forerunner to two high-profile British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) publications, 1998's 'Connecting Schools, Networking People – ICT Planning, Purchasing and Good practice for the National Grid for Learning', and 2001's 'Connecting Careers and ICT'. Both these publications, the first primarily aimed at schoolteachers and the second career services, focus on demystifying ICTs and providing an insight into applications via instructional material and case studies. Neither is intended as an academic or theoretical treatise, and evidence of the effectiveness of the applications is restricted to the short (but helpful) case studies that provide anecdotal evidence of successful outcomes.

'Connecting Schools, Networking People', provides an indication of changing attitudes to the role of ICTs and the importance of the technology. Without providing detailed evidence, it shares a vision of a new kind of school, a 'networked school' where boundaries are dissolving, using the technology to provide close links to other schools (locally, nationally and internationally), local homes and the local community. It is technologically oriented and full of practical advice, but does not discuss the effects and impact of the new 'networked school' or make a detailed case for the educational advantages. The later 'Connecting Careers and ICT' is a similar publication with broader scope, and it does not pretend to evaluate the educational or social benefits of the technology. It is focused exclusively on advocacy and implementation of networked solutions.

Sampson's work in Florida, NICEC's work in the UK, and BECTA, all open up questions about the ways communications technology will begin to change CEG and link schools and communities in new ways. The legitimization of information resources and databases; the legitimization of online helpers and online helping communities; the facilitation of peer support; the relationship between professional and para-professional helping; the possibilities of online career

counselling; and the possibility of many new stakeholders involved in career education, have, amongst many other issues, all been raised as by this work.

2. b. v. The wider context: The Internet and Castells

The value of the work of the authors and organisations discussed above is obvious in terms of orienting guidance practitioners to the Internet. However, there is a tendency to be unreflexive about the pros and cons of Internet based guidance; the broad theoretical context provided by Castells, widely regarded as one of the foremost thinkers on the 'Age of the Internet' helps contextualise the guidance research.

Castells argues that in our 'networked society' there is a fundamental tension between the network and the self (Castells, 1996). In the Internet Castells sees the rise of 'networked individualism'; each of us individually builds virtual and corporeal networks related solely to personal values, interests and needs. Networked individualism, therefore, reduces the ways our social world is based on geographical proximity or ethnic and familial identities and may, as Rhiengold (2000) also suggests, radically call into question the nature of community (Balganesh, 2004). BECTA's objective, 'Connecting Schools, Networking People' might, therefore, seem paradoxical in this context in the sense that the network frees the individual and undermines the community of the school. It is possible that networked individualism might prove detrimental to corporeal sociability.

For Castells, the Internet is a 'space of flows', the interconnection of many different kinds of networks and a place where various kinds of social organisation can be constituted and expressed. In particular, the space of flows is a space where powerful managerial and bureaucratic forces can organise. Power is embedded in this space of flows and is not susceptible to local control. This new formless, geographically rootless, space presents a challenge to our sense of self and ultimately reframes questions of identity. We can have our identity legitimised by the managerial and bureaucratic structures that are expressed on the Internet, or it can be a place where people co-operate to develop 'resistance

identity' (1997) based on oppressed groups forming communities of interest, or it can allow us to enjoy forming a sense of identity through a common project (such as environmentalism or disability rights). The balance between identity legitimisation and resistance identities will be key to the ultimate power of the Internet, and Stalder (1998) is concerned that the means for power to be expressed in a global scale implies that traditional democratic interests (i.e. the 'civil society') are being voided of meaning and legitimacy.⁶ Castells (2001) argues that the discourse of power and control now revolves around control over the Internet (the key medium of communication) and that the possibility of some 'local' control for people will be key. Indeed, Castells raises the spectre of the 'electronic panopticon' and individuals ultimately internalising the process of censorship, unable to resist the powerful managerial and bureaucratic forces.⁷ Balganesch (2004) writes 'The Internet is therefore today's site for the liberation challenge – but the principle challenge is not from civil society to state, but from the state and commercial interests to civil society' (p. 9).

The sense of the impact of the Internet on our wider values and social organisation that Castells, amongst others, gives us is absent from most of the research on guidance and the Internet. BECTA's objective of creating a 'networked school' with closer links to homes, the local community and nationally and internationally is very ambitious but unreflexive. As Castells warns us, the 'local' and the 'community' may themselves be under threat from the networked individualism of the Internet. Indeed the Internet may be opening schools up to impossibly powerful discourses of control; the electronic panopticon, the state, and the world of commerce. Both NICEC and BECTA neglect consideration of the values that might ultimately underpin Internet based guidance.

There is a need for careful testing of the pros and cons of opening up schools to the 'space of flows' and thoughtful and critical consideration of the implications. What will it really mean if BECTA succeed in 'networking' people?

⁶ Calling to mind the comments on globalisation, technology and government by Foucault and Baudrillard noted in the Introduction (p.19)

⁷ See also note on Foucault (p.19)

2. b. vi. Applications of Information and Communications Technologies in CEG

It can be seen that many of the main writers and organisations involved in guidance have recognised the significance of the communications potential of ICTs, but it is rare to find detailed consideration of either the likely long term effects or evidence about the benefits (although there is a growing body of research investigating applications in counselling and psychotherapy).

The 'technical' components of guidance, especially career guidance, characterised in the SCAGES definition (detailed above) as teaching, informing, and assessing, are already extremely well catered for on the world wide web (WWW).

2. b. vi. I. Information

Previously inaccessible and in some cases, expensive, information is now freely available on the Internet. An interesting example is the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) occupational information, which at one time was only readily available to a small sector of the population (mainly students). The excellent AGCAS web site now has a searchable database of occupational information that is freely accessible to anyone (AGCAS, 2001). On a grander scale, there is evidence of large, national, web sites beginning to offer public access to a mass of labour market and occupational information, a good example being the US Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook (US Dept. of Labour 2001), which provides employment projections along with detailed occupational information. Similar resources are being developed in the UK with the DFEE's Datasphere (DFEE Datasphere, 2001) and Skillsbase (DFEE Skillsbase, 2001) web sites. There are now many competing sources of information across national boundaries. Although there is as yet no empirical data on the effect of the Internet on searches for career-related information, it is possible that for many clients the formal career guidance services will not necessarily be the first stop for occupational information in the future. In fact, it may be difficult for local career service companies to compete with the large

organisations already providing excellent on-line information. A key issue long term will be ease of access; unless the data available is manageable, easy to understand and access, it is unlikely that the majority of the population will find it useful without mediation by a professional guidance worker.

The effect of this peculiar combination of fragmentation (many suppliers of information) and centralisation (single sources of information instantly updated and available globally) is to call into question the role of career service providers as suppliers of 'impartial' information. In future it may be necessary for career guidance services to change their emphasis from validating information sources as 'accurate' or 'impartial' (as suggested by Sampson above), to helping clients choose from a range of information sources appropriate to their particular needs and values.

2. b. vi. II. Assessment and Psychometric Testing

Assessment and matching tools are some of the earliest guidance resources to be made available on the Internet. Professional interest groups have tightly controlled this lucrative area of applied psychology. In the UK the British Psychological Society (BPS) maintain a list of 'approved', qualified, psychometric testers. Their code of good practice for testers insists:

People who use psychological tests in occupational settings are expected by the British Psychological Society to take steps to ensure that they are able to meet all the standards of competence defined by the Society for the relevant Certificate(s) of Competence in Occupational Testing, and to endeavour, where possible, to develop and enhance their competence as test users.

Naturally the BPS offers training in occupational testing. Many career companies have paid large amounts of money to have career advisers trained as 'Level A' psychometric testers. There is a strong element of professional and commercial ownership; the 'right' to use psychometric tests is carefully managed in case the

tests should be misused. On their web site the BPS argues (British Psychological Society, 2001) that users must:

Store test materials securely and ensure that no unqualified person has access to them.

In contrast the Internet is providing alternatives for those unwilling or unable to pay the high price of training for testers or the high price of the tests themselves.⁸ It is unlikely that any single professional group could control or even monitor all the testing resources available on the web. The tests are numerous, spread around the world and accessible to everyone. Clients no longer need guidance workers to provide and administer tests for them, and the service providers may not need to invest expensive resources in managing paper-based tests when there are appropriate Internet resources. Use of the tests cannot be restricted to those with qualifications and it is likely that a whole new set of guidance issues will emerge as a result of the proliferation of accessible tests. This is, obviously, evidence of another key guidance activity (assessing) that is being dissipated by services on the Internet. Once again it is a 'technical' process – one that mainly involves the client interacting with computers rather than people.

2. b. vi. III. Placing Services

Career guidance has traditionally had matching processes at its core, both matching people to jobs, and matching people to education and training opportunities. Managing local employment and training vacancies for school leavers has been a long-standing function of career companies. Local career companies are in a good position to understand the needs of local employers, and

⁸ Many varieties of test are already available on the www, from occupational interest guides to intelligence tests. The standard of these resources varies, but, significantly, alongside the usual nomothetic tests there are interesting examples of attempts to provide idiographic tools in a new interactive way e.g. Career Storm (Career Storm 2001). The 'Career Key' (Career Key 2001), a free public service to help people make sound career decisions, based at North Carolina State University, sits seamlessly beside University of Central Lancashire's personality and career management quizzes (Department of Education and Employment / University of Central Lancashire 2001) on the web. Tests that categorise, assess and label clients are available alongside more ambitious tests that attempt to profile clients.

those employers have valued the pre-selection process offered by career companies. In recent years there has been criticism of the ethics of mixing placing and guidance activities, some arguing that information gathered in confidence for guidance purposes should not then be used to pre-select candidates for interviews by employers. Until recently, it was quite possible that a job seeker may not hear about a good vacancy unless the career service company (now Careers Scotland) contact them to offer an interview slot. On the other hand, hard to fill (less attractive) vacancies were advertised openly in the career service offices. Parents, and teachers, and anyone else who has difficulty accessing the office itself, were unlikely to have a clear picture of what vacancies were available locally, and even inspecting the career service vacancy notice boards themselves may not give a clear picture.

ICTs now provide the opportunity to make all vacancies public and accessible out with career service offices, using on-line databases. By implication, pre-selection for vacancies may either have to end, or at least become transparent and subject to challenge by the clients themselves. So far, career companies in the UK have been slow to put vacancies on-line and until recently there were few operational examples, but one or two have offered a sophisticated service (eg. Grampian Careers 2001).

It is possible to speculate that the reasons for delays implementing online placing in the public service (unlike in the commercial sector) might include a desire to control the information about vacancies, a desire to secure the opportunity to offer employers a pre-selection service (therefore encouraging employers to use the career service providers to fill vacancies) and lack of time and resources to maintain web pages daily. It is also likely that, in areas where there are few vacancies, a very modest selection of vacancies on the web may undermine the credibility of the career companies as an essential portal to vacancies.

There is evidence that this attempt by career companies to maintain their placing function by controlling access to local vacancies is unsustainable. The UK government's Employment Service has already made the decision to put all its vacancies on-line (UK-Online Worktrain, 2001). And the proliferation of

commercial on-line recruitment agencies indicates the increasing attractiveness of this kind of job-hunting and the extensive marketing and advertising of these services is further evidence of their growth. Indeed some are marketing themselves aggressively as alternatives to statutory services (Monster.com used the tag 'For Real Career Guidance' in a recent TV campaign) and it is possible that youthful career service clients are a segment of the population most likely to experiment with on-line job search. It is also inevitable that parents will soon want the facility to browse for suitable vacancies with their children from the comfort of their home.

The impact of this fragmented picture and uneven delivery of service is that the career service's role as a placing agency is being challenged. Information technology makes the process of matching clients to databases of vacancies so much simpler to manage that yet again one of the processes of guidance is being removed from the day-to-day activities of guidance workers and centrally managed and controlled using technological solutions. In 2006 Careers Scotland decided to stop taking job vacancies for under eighteen year olds altogether, but will retain a placing service for training vacancies.

It can be seen that many of the core areas of career guidance work are being influenced directly by the application of ICTs. Furthermore, the technology is challenging demarcation between professions and creating new levels of competition both within the UK and internationally between service providers.

2. b. vi. IV. On-line guidance and support

Despite the proliferation of on-line counselling (National Board for Certified Counsellors, 2001) and even on-line psychotherapy (The Road, 2001), there are practically no examples of on-line interactive CEG services in the UK other than invitations to make face-to-face appointments or to request information by email. This contrasts with Finland and Canada for example, where there are entire on-line career development courses, supported with synchronous chat, bulletin board services, mailing lists and web based exercises underpinned by hypertext. In the UK there is widespread suspicion about the dangers of losing the opportunity to

read body language and develop empathy by face-to-face (FTF) communication. However, provision of new services need not replace face-to-face client contact but can operate in addition to it, enhancing provision and, for example, enabling online follow-up contact after face-to-face guidance. Some research (Sampson, 1997, Sampson, 1999) suggests that provision of on-line, computer-mediated services actually creates extra demand for FTF contact. It is possible that having become accustomed to contact with a guidance worker via email or on-line chat, clients may be encouraged to seek out FTF contact.

Other evidence suggests that by using the Internet to network and make contacts, support groups can emerge that are able to provide help unmediated by professional helpers. Miller and Gergen (1998) quote a user of a bulletin board as saying 'I can honestly say that in some cases it's better to talk to your peers. Someone going through what you're going through' (p. 199). Indeed, they highlight the fact that the potential for users of these support groups to be able to help others in a similar situation is therapeutic in itself; 'several participants mentioned the help they had received by virtue of their being able to help others' (p. 199). Rather than seeing these kinds of emerging peer support networks as a threat, leading to de-professionalisation, the career services may be able to develop an understanding of online helping communities, perhaps finding a new role bringing together isolated job seekers; not simply as expert mediators, but as facilitators of self-help and support groups. Indeed, the Internet might support a shift from 'professional' guidance to 'community guidance' or 'community helping', a model where the career adviser (or career counsellor) is one player in a network of helpers with a wide range of perspectives (see below).

2. c. Dominant Underpinning Theory in CEG

It is out with the remit of this thesis to undertake a full review of the theory underpinning guidance work, but developments in theory, gathering pace over the last 20 years, have impacted on the issues raised by the applications of ICTs in guidance. The dominant practice (and implicitly the dominant theory) has tended to be technical-rational, facilitating an economic development model of guidance

and perhaps repressing some alternative theory. Some writers have begun to reject the more 'technical' aspects of career guidance, such as provision of information, assessment and matching, in favour of a more person-centred, humanist, model, which sees individuals as social beings and attempts to place them in a wider social context. Guidance skills are seen as being generic, and specialisms, such as marriage guidance or career guidance, are resisted on the basis that one cannot separate and disentangle the different components of people's lives in a neat way; choosing to get married is very much an aspect of a career for example (see 2. d.). In much of the recent literature, constructivist, social-constructionist and narrative approaches to guidance are emerging (Chen, 1997, Brott, 2004), influenced by developments in counselling⁹. Harris (1999) takes an unusually sociological perspective to policy in career guidance and her work is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 (p. 246).

Underpinning theory in guidance generally, and especially career guidance, has tended to be divided between models of personal and career development, and models of helping. On the one hand there are theorists (such as Donald Super) interested in the typical stages that describe career, and on the other there are theorists who are interested in helping strategies (such as Gerard Egan). Kidd et al (1994), in a thorough examination of the use of theory in career guidance, identify three broad types of relevant theory:

Theories of guidance and counselling

- Roger's Client Centred Model
- Egan's Skilled Helper Model
- Rodger's Seven Point Plan

Career Development Theory

- Developmental Models (Super, Gottfredson etc)
- Trait and Factor Models (Holland, Dawis and Lofquist)
- Psychodynamic Models (Roe, Klein)
- Opportunity Structure Perspective (Roberts)

⁹ Discussed in more detail in 2. f. below.

- Community Interaction Theory (Law)
- Social Learning Theory (Krumboltz)

Related Psychological Theory

- Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly)
- Transactional Analysis (Berne)

One of many interesting findings in this major study was that the ‘theories which are primarily influential upon their interview practice are guidance models, rather than theories which attempt to explain how career development occurs’ (p. 402). Structural explanations of career development were less useful than models of helping - it is the models that focus on the process of helping, such as Rogers (Person Centred Counselling) and Egan (Skilled Helper Model) that are most influential for career advisers. These process-oriented models are precisely the models that form the basis for ‘generic’ guidance skills, that is, they are common to all guidance workers (not just career advisers). ‘The dominant models have changed...in favour of ones which favour interpersonal and relationship skills’ (p. 402). Matching models, which simply focus on ‘knowledge of the person, knowledge of occupations, and true reasoning to find the best match’ were the least preferred models. Paradoxically, matching is still the dominant approach to career guidance in Scotland, where, with the emergence of a single national organisation for public sector delivery of career guidance, a standardised framework of career planning – the Career Planning Continuum, based on the Nottingham Trent model of ‘well-informed, realistic decisions’ (a revisionist matching model) has been implemented. It is also important to note the limited representation under the general heading ‘Theories of guidance and counselling’, there is no mention of social-constructionist, psychoanalytic, narrative, community and emancipatory communitarian perspectives, for example, all of which were strongly influencing counselling (and some guidance) practice even in 1994.¹⁰

¹⁰ Of course, some theory, such as psychodynamic models, can provide both career development theory and models of helping useful in guidance and counselling.

The institutional emphasis on well-informed, realistic decision making regarding occupational and educational choice (matching) is, according to Jeffrey and McCrea (2004) underlined by the Institute of Career Guidance's recent definition of career guidance:

Career guidance is a process of interventions designed to empower individuals to make realistic and well-informed decisions about work and learning which are right for them. Career guidance practitioners must maintain a unique set of skills, knowledge and personal qualities to enable them to support clients in making transitions throughout their lives. The process has benefits to both individuals and to society. (ICG 'Front Line', 2002)

This technical-rational definition limits 'career' to 'work and learning'. Schön (1983) argues that, 'in the process of seeking professional status, aspirant professions seek to resist theoretical confusion and diversity and show that their knowledge base is specialised, firmly bounded, scientific and standardised, downplaying craftsmanship, creativity, artistry and the uniqueness of specific problems or clients in order to generalise, to create diagnostic and problem-solving techniques' (p. 23) – moving relentlessly towards a 'technical rational' position'. The ICG definition, Jeffrey and McCrea (2004) argue, is information based and appeals to the common sense view that there is a 'real world' on which we can all agree. The emphasis on being well informed is itself problematic, 'information' can never be seen as objective, it is always selective, partial, and representative of a particular perspective. Does being well-informed mean recognising the truth of one body of information, or view of 'reality', over another, or does it mean challenging and questioning the basis of all information provision? The concept 'realistic' is also problematic, hinting that what we believe to be real is not simply a consequence of our own search for meaning, our history, culture, power relationships and values, but an expression of objective reality. Despite Kidd et al's (1994) research, showing practitioners value models of helping over structural theories, there is still an institutional focus on applying a formula, perhaps in order to resist theoretical confusion (and pluralism).

The debates have been rumbling on for very many years with no sign of any conclusion until recently. Indeed, it can be argued that theory has simply diverged further and further from practice as theoretical positions have diversified and evolved while practice has been relatively static. In 1986, 20 years ago, the University of Cape Town published a leaflet containing the text of the inaugural lecture of a new professor of applied educational psychology, R B Burns, titled 'Career Education in South Africa – social control or a subversive activity'. This leaflet gives a snapshot of the difficulties providing career education in a society riven by turmoil and change, demonstrating how the emphasis in career education and guidance tends to be on social control. In particular, Burns exposes the way guidance was used 'to entrench the racial and occupational privileges of whites and teach blacks their place in society' (p. 14). The political tensions and social forces he sees underpinning guidance in South Africa, and especially his concern with the ways in which the values of the dominant social classes are expressed in the delivery of career guidance, are still relevant. They hint at the difficulties career advisers in the UK have moving towards a person-centred and counselling oriented perspective and away from the social engineering and labour market management perspectives that focus on matching people to jobs and managing skill shortages.

Burns (1986) argued that there is massive shift underway from a traditional reductionist view to a more holistic paradigm. 'Career guidance needs to be about a sort of life rather than a Monday to Friday sort of dying'. Within this more holistic view, according to Burns, the focus is on the quest for meaning, the expression of values, and lifestyle choice. Anything that pertains to lifestyle can be drawn within the career guidance net - leisure time, dealing with stress, interpersonal skills, value systems and so on. In his powerful lecture he complains that 'the shift from a Cartesian, mechanistic model to a more holistic model based on values and meaning has barely been started in South Africa', noting that while more attention is being given to the whole person, the lingering notion persists that the worker should fit the work place. 'It is as if life should be in the service of work rather than work being in the service of life.' (p. 4). Over 20 years later, the shift he refers to has barely started in the Scotland. In fact,

career guidance is increasingly being seen as technician level work, and matching is still at the core of much practice.

The shift to a value driven approach that Burns refers to is well represented in the literature, but in current Careers Scotland practice, as in much of the rest of the UK, there is *more* than a lingering notion that the worker should fit the workplace.¹¹ The technical-rational model of guidance underpinned by a matching approach is alive and well in current practice, and evidence of competence based, technician level approaches to training (as opposed to a professional artistry model advocated by Schön, 1983) is easily found in the Scottish Qualification for Career Guidance.

Jeffrey and McCrea (2004) cite the influence of competence-based learning in the training of career advisers as an important factor in preventing practice evolving in response to new theory and limiting the possibility of adoption of a (professional) reflective practice. Attempts by the Institute of Career Guidance to control the qualification in Career Guidance by prescribing lists of learning outcomes, and attempts to match learning outcomes in the qualification with Scottish Vocational Qualification benchmarks have embedded a 'competence' model. There are unresolved tensions between those who support a competence-based mode of training versus those who prefer an academic post-graduate mode. For many the competence-based mode reflects common sense and practicality, just as the academic route is seen as elitist and filled with irrelevant theory (Ecclestone, 1996). In fact there is evidence that there is suspicion of theory within the career guidance community and that it is often seen as the weakest part of training courses (Kidd, 1994). The converse argument is that competence-based models are weak on dealing with the higher-level skills that are needed to enable reflective practitioners to question ethics, values and underpinning theory; the basis of professional practice. Critics of competence-based models argue that they do not encourage a critique of existing knowledge or support the active elaboration of new knowledge.

¹¹ Economic development underpins all Careers Scotland's activities.

The arguments against the competence-based model can be summarised as follows:

1 Both the content and the outcome of learning are predetermined (determined from 'above', often by policy makers). There is little room for any real dialogue, and a tendency to discourage a questioning attitude and creativity. This process favours routine and predetermined ways of knowing and acting rather than creative approaches, innovative strategies and knowledge creation. The kind of transformative and emancipatory knowledge described by Schön (1983), Mezirow (1991), Habermas (1985) and Freire (1972), amongst others, cannot be described in terms of competences because the outcomes are necessarily unpredictable.¹²

2 The goals and interests of employers replace educational goals as the determinant of learning outcomes (Alexander and Martin, 1995). One of the consequences of this is that professional autonomy is displaced by discourses of management. Competence standards tend to reflect the values of employers and marginalise those of other interests (e.g. the learner, the wider community or society as a whole) whose needs are not necessarily identical to those of employers.

3 The focus on performance downgrades the importance of understanding and wisdom. In the competence model, knowledge is not characterised as being problematic, the contestability of the truth of knowledge is submerged, inhibiting debate and evaluation. Skill becomes separated from judgement (Barnett, 1994).

4 Lastly, the type of learning the competence-based approach encourages can be seen as being atomistic and individualistic (for example, separated, itemised and unrelated learning outcomes, with each learner learning at their own pace), rather than generating communities of practice (Edwards and Usher, 1994).

Competence-based learning, according to some commentators, can produce an instrumental and reductionist model of professional development that overlooks

¹² See Methodology Chapter 3 section 3a. (p.96) for further discussion.

the crucial role of underpinning theory. In fact it recalls Closs' attitude to theory, quoted at the beginning of this review, that it is more important just to get on with the job.

The focus on performance can inhibit explicit attention to alternative values and a collaborative search for wisdom, and helps to explain the uneasy relationship between theory and practice in career guidance in the UK.

The lack of explicit theoretical underpinning, and the tension between technician and professional level work, is causing some alarm amongst some commentators. Howieson and Semple (2006) conclude their very gloomy review of career guidance in Scotland with the following sobering question to which they have no answer: 'But to what extent can we still say there is a career guidance profession in the UK?' (p. 50).

2. d. Generic Guidance versus Specialism: Holism

One of the most interesting issues following from the above discussion of divergence between theory and practice, and institutional pressures on career advisers to implement structural and formulaic models, is the question of whether we need specialist guidance workers at all. How is 'career' guidance different from marriage, or educational guidance? The implication of the practitioners preference to focus on interpersonal skills and models of helping (Kid et al, 1994) is that the knowledge and information base in guidance is less important than helping skills. One of the key arguments in favour of specialised career guidance workers has been the need of certain clients for specialised information. As noted, there is evidence of tension in professional practice between guidance workers who seek to retain provision of information as a key component of their professional expertise, and those who are keen to focus more on interpersonal helping skills. Kidd et al (1993) found that career advisers who favour an information-based approach claim to be relatively uninfluenced by reading or college study of theory. But the retention of information provision as core work

of specialised career guidance workers is challenged by the increasing ease of access to information that ICTs are already delivering.

Many believe that increasing access to information on the Internet, and the availability of other online services and resources means that there is a decreasing need for professional intermediaries to control and manage information. There are various groups of professionals, particularly in the public sector, who argue that guidance and counselling skills are a core part of their work; youth and community workers, adult guidance workers, community education services, social workers, and, of course, school-based guidance teachers. These professionals now have direct access to the same information resources as career advisers; given their sophisticated generic guidance skills, it is hard to imagine that they will not ultimately compete with career advisers to provide 'career guidance' in its broadest sense.

Therefore, the spread of generic guidance skills across sectors, and the new ease of access to specialist sources of information, calls into question the need for *specialist* guidance workers. There are calls in the guidance literature for a more 'holistic' approach to guidance and counselling. For example, Herr (1997), Irving (2000), and Peavy (1992), amongst others, have argued, that it is impossible to give career guidance without considering the wider social context of the client and the impact of personal, relationship, family and financial concerns for example. The work of Peavy has been instrumental in introducing social-constructionist techniques and practices to career counselling/guidance, but while this work has had considerable impact in countries such as Canada and Finland, it has been marginal in the UK, although the intellectual basis for a more holistic, and complex approach to guidance is being explored.¹³ For example, recent articles in 'Constructing the Future' (the ICG's peer reviewed journal), have questioned the assumptions that underpin the concept of 'realism' in career guidance and even the impact of globalisation (e.g. Colley, 2000).

¹³ In North America social-constructionist approaches are sometimes called 'socio-dynamic', emphasising the social element in opposition to psycho-dynamic approaches.

In summary then, the last decade has seen the emergence of theories of guidance and counselling based on constructivist, social-constructionist and narrative perspectives (Chen, 1997, Peavy, 1992, McLeod, 1997, Cochrane, 1997, Lynch, 1997). The scene is set (academically at least), for new models of career education and guidance that engage both with the wider community and other helping professionals in a more creative and constructive manner. These new ways of working offer an alternative to the apparent de-professionalisation of career guidance caused by the introduction of competence based training and the application of ICTs that support information based, matching and advice giving models. ICTs offer possibilities for as yet unexplored forms of networking that may assist with the implementation of recent academic and theoretical thinking calling for a more social and community orientation to helping.

2. e. Community Guidance

The concept of community in career guidance is becoming increasingly important. There are three, connected, ways in which the term 'community' is being applied:

1. In terms of seeing our clients less as 'individuals' and more as 'connected beings', belonging to networks of family and relationship ties with varying levels of social capital.
2. A community orientation is challenging conventional thinking in psychology generally; treating psychology as a moral science in which 'values' such as emancipation, justice and 'community' take precedence over positivistic methods derived from the natural sciences.
3. Career advisers have been encouraged to begin to work more closely with other public service professionals in order to deliver 'joined-up' services.

2. e. i. Working with Networks of Relations

There have been calls for new models for involving carers and parents in the career education and guidance of school students. Despite a series of compelling papers on this topic (e.g. Irving, 2000, Schultheisis, 2001), in Scotland there has been no systematic attempt to develop career guidance at an institutional level to respond to the calls to work more closely with our clients' networks of relations. Although there are some examples of good practice, these efforts are often short lived and there has been no considered policy development. A useful example of thorough evaluation of a novel project is provided by Perkins and Peterson (2005), whose report on a Parents as Career Transition Supports (PACTS) programme in Australia found that practically all parents believe it is important to be involved in their child's career planning; 92% wanted to discuss their child's options with a career adviser or similar professional; most school pupils want to discuss their career thinking with their parents; about 48% want their parents to be involved in the actual decision making, and 47% of pupils wanted their parents present at meetings with their career teacher. The evaluation involved only 110 out of a possible 336 parents participating in the PACTS programme, but some of the qualitative comments from parents are revealing, they valued 'Listening to other parents and knowing that we are not alone with this careers dilemma', and 'Working in groups and getting a different perspective on matters.'. The PACTS programme established a community network of parents that was highly valued. Clearly online communication provides a potential mechanism to experiment with involving networks of relations in CEG and addressing the concerns of many writers who feel too little is done in this area in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

2. e. ii. Community Guidance

There is a growing body of literature calling for a broader, more social conception of career guidance operating on a community level. Rather than individualising our clients, separating them from their social world, some writers argue we need new models of guidance that are less psychological and more sociological.

Twenty five years ago, Law (1981) was already making a strong argument for involving the wider community in guidance, citing workshops for school leavers

run by 'working coaches' in association with trade unions and employers, bringing together working people and young people who formerly 'were inhabitants of different worlds, whose values and whose attitudes to life appeared to be incomprehensible, in many respects, to each other'. Law (1981) advocates using 'paraprofessionals' and members of the wider community to assist with career counselling. Whilst being influential in terms of some aspects of the Connexions Service in England, and informing the thinking behind various programmes to train 'para-professionals' in guidance skills (Watts and McCarthy, 1998, Barker and Watts, 2005, Career Scotland's Community Guidance Programme e.g. Careers Scotland et al, 2005), this community approach has begun fully to mature academically only in recent years, in response to the Critical Psychology movement (e.g. Smail, 2005), but especially, the related Community Psychology movement, which is itself beginning to impact on counselling psychology.

Some counsellors and psychologists are beginning to see their work as potentially oppressive, implicitly situating wider social problems in the hearts of their clients (Dineen, 1999, Furedi, 2004), playing down the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of the social world. Community Psychologists (psychology as a moral science that must put questions of ethics, values, and social justice to the fore) want to emphasise participatory and social action that focuses on emancipation, anti-oppressive practices; professional people working in partnership with diverse communities for social change (Orford, 1992, Prilleltensky, 2002). The community psychology agenda is beginning to find its way directly into debates about career and vocational guidance (Blustein et al, 2005, Borgen, 2005) and is a dramatic shift from the traditional focus in career guidance on the psychology of individual differences (nomothetic and individualising; psychometrics; interest guides etc); it is an assault on what Illich (2005) calls 'Professionals asserting secret knowledge about human nature, knowledge which only they have the right to dispense' (p. 19).

Community psychologists' more decentralised and democratic approach avoids some of the pitfalls hinted at by Barker and Watts (2005) who describe an attempt at career guidance 'capacity building' (spreading guidance skill into the

community). Their model hints that funding community groups to deliver career advice might lead to a kind of privatisation of career guidance; groups might be seduced into financial dependency on a particular strand of funding, potentially diverting them from their key aims and goals; and the risk that training community groups leads to the imposition of an institutional agenda and a bureaucratic centrally controlled model of guidance. The challenge is to make psychology (and career guidance) responsive to the needs of different communities, to serve community interests, and allow communities themselves to set the agendas for the helping professionals who must in turn adapt their services to meet community needs.

2. e. iii. Joined-up Working

Career advisers who adopt a more 'joined-up' approach to working with other professionals are also associated with the holistic perspective. Although there is still extensive demarcation between the different professionals in the 'helping' community (as evidenced by the range of distinct and mutually exclusive training and qualification routes - despite considerable overlap in the curriculum), there are moves to encourage inter-agency co-operation and joint initiatives. The Scottish Executive's response to the recent *Duffner Report Review of the Career Service in Scotland* (Scottish Executive, 2001) commented:

The Executive's strong preference is to see the current fragmented service established as a coherent national delivery structure which embraces the careers service, adult guidance and education business links. (p. 12)

The establishment of the 'Connexions' guidance service in England has been an attempt to restructure career services and to bring together professional helpers to co-operate in the delivery of new social inclusion programmes (DFEE, 2000):

The new Service will be delivered primarily through a network of Personal Advisers linking in with specialist support services. They will be drawn together from a range of existing public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations, and build on best practice. These organisations will

come together to form new Connexions Partnerships to develop and coordinate the delivery of support services for young people. (para. 6:1)

The extensive application of infomatics that seems to dominate use of technology in guidance tends to highlight questions about the relevance of generic 'interpersonal and guidance skills' of workers in the guidance sector, skills that encourage a holistic perspective that acknowledges the inter-relationships between family, financial, educational and career concerns. It is possible that specialisms reliant on 'expert knowledge' and information will become increasingly redundant and therefore that demarcation between some public servants will be increasingly unhelpful.

Ellen Lent (1996) writing about the need for more person focus in career counselling comments:

The artificial dichotomy between career and personal counselling ... will fade. The useful focus on how clients make meaning from all parts of their lives will drive the change, and the objective descriptions of the labour market and individual interests will not crowd out more personal evaluations of one's role. (p. 118)

The theoretical focus on holism (2. d.), and the preference of guidance workers for models of helping (and interpersonal skills based work) rather than structural models of career development and information driven methods (2. c.), appears to dovetail neatly with an emerging interest in community based models of guidance, and all three appear to have the potential to facilitate government policy concerns about reducing demarcation between professional people and providing joined-up services.

2. f. Lessons from Career Education from Online Learning

Career education should be able to position itself to benefit from more general developments in online education, and this section looks at some of the thinking behind developments in online learning and possible links to the issues already

raised, such as the tension in CEG between infomatics and communications applications of ICTs. The ways in which information is linked into Internet based assessment and personal guidance resources will be important. Robinson et al (2000) argue that Internet resources should ultimately foster a greater sense of confidence in negotiating the career planning process and must not lead to a sense of bewilderment. They conclude:

It is critical for Internet based systems to contextualise the use of career information within a larger career development framework and to offer links directing users to sources of practical advice or counselling. (p. 52)

It seems that ease of access to information may not reduce the need for guidance, and it may, in fact, increase it. CEG has much to learn about the relationship between knowledge and communication online, and the specialist literature on online learning is a good place to start.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to review the entire literature in the still burgeoning field of online education, which includes investigation of online distance learning, guided study using web pages, synchronous and asynchronous online discussion, video conferencing, online assessment and more. One aspect of this research in particular is of interest; the movement to utilise the communications technologies for what might loosely be called a constructivist approach to education. Looking at a range of writers in the field from a variety of disciplines, this section surveys some of the most salient work on asynchronous online communication and communities in education generally. Although there is considerable overlap, some of the literature relating to the social psychology of the Internet generally, and online community building in particular, are also discussed below. Inevitably, many of the findings of researchers working in 'education' are similar to those of 'guidance' researchers such as Sampson (discussed above).

2. f. i. Social-Constructionism Online

Starting with theoretical perspectives, it is probably not going too far to identify 'social-constructionism' in particular as representing orthodoxy in some circles of educational research. In common with many areas of academic life, the nomenclature can be confusing and sometimes rather arbitrary.¹⁴ Use of the word 'constructivist' is most often associated with a view that each of us uniquely constructs the world around us (implying that each of us lives in a unique, personal world) as a result of internal contradictions resulting from environmental interactions. This difficult psychological position is sometimes taken to imply that there is no 'real' world that is common to us all, a position that is, philosophically speaking, ancient, but in recent times can be traced to Nietzsche (1889) who had no time for fundamental truths, 'The 'real world' – an idea grown useless, superfluous, consequently a refuted idea: Let us abolish it!' (p. 50). The emphasis is very much on the ways individuals make sense of their perceptions and experiences. It is often seen as a tough-minded cognitive position with a strong focus on the individual. Those unwilling to reject the certainties of the 'real' world often moderate a radical constructivist position by defining it as a process whereby we construct our own *understanding* of the world (this position is sometimes called 'critical constructivism', Kanuka and Anderson, 1998).

There are many names associated with the development of constructivism in education, the psychologist Piaget, and the educationalist and philosopher Dewey for example, but broadly speaking, constructivist perspectives in educational psychology are usually now traced to the work of Vygotsky (fp in English 1978) who saw learning as a process of social interaction and acculturation. His theory of a 'zone of proximal development', suggests that group interaction is able to

¹⁴ See notes on social-constructionism in Chapter 2, c. (p.55). There are many contradictions in the ways the terms constructivist, constructionism and constructivism are used in the literature. Here 'constructivism' is used when referring to broad psychological theory relating to the ways individuals construct a personal view of the world, and the term 'social constructionism' is used to describe educational theory and practice which attends to the way meaning is created in social groups. Alternatives (e.g. critical constructivism, social constructivism) have been retained only when authors under discussion prefer them.

develop learners' understanding more effectively than they can individually; our thinking is seen as a consequence of what we say to one another. Conversation is 'internalised' as thought, so the need for conversation implies that a social environment is essential for effective learning.

The phrase 'social-constructionist' is most often used to describe a constructivist approach that emphasises the social, communicative and discursive processes in learning, which are often inexorably grounded in 'talk' (Duffy and Cunningham, 1976). The emphasis here is very much on the way individuals interact socially to generate knowledge and construct the world. From a sociological perspective, the social-constructionist position acknowledges that we are ourselves products of our society, it is therefore equally important to see the social world as 'made by men, inhabited by men, and in turn, making men'(sic) (Berger and Luckman, 1967 p.189). Kanuka and Anderson (1998 p.59) argue that 'social-constructivism' is 'currently the most accepted epistemological position associated with online learning'.

It is unsurprising, given the widespread interest in social-constructionism in education that researchers have leapt on the potential of CMC to extend social networks, generate new learning experiences and facilitate distance learning and education. As Duffy and Cunningham (1996) put it, when cognitive action is not necessarily situated in a single individual but can be seen in a 'learning community', learning is no longer an individualistic process, the learner is transformed by participation in a social community.

Gergen, in prescient writing in 1995, anticipated current debates relating to technology and pedagogy, even before the technology of the Internet had begun to mature. He argued that the confluence of communication enhancing technologies have transformed the cultural conception of knowledge, especially the view that knowledge can transcend community (ie by building an hierarchy of decontextualised transcendent truths). By elaborating on the implications of a social-constructionist view we can consider replacing authority in education with a more relational account of knowledge production. He urges us to consider the implications of 'global electronic networks' for, amongst other things, enriching

the representational spectrum within the classroom and developing pedagogic processes 'that enhance the multi-vocal capacities of the individual, that enable one to speak in many discourses'.

The potential of the Internet to support diversely constituted online communities becomes clear when the extent of the public's participation in online communities is understood. When this research project began, Horrigan (2001), in an extensive survey of Americans participation in online communities, found that 84% of Internet users (about 90 million Americans) have used the Internet to get in contact with or to get information from a group. 79% of these people identify at least one particular group with which they stay in regular contact. In a striking reversal of the stereotype of the geek with no social skills, isolated with his computer, even five years ago Horrigan found that 40% of Internet users said it helped them become more involved with groups to which they already belong. Interestingly 26%, 28 million people, employed the Internet to contact or get information about local groups, perhaps suggesting that Bauman's (2001) concerns (quoted above) that infomatics is 'a mortal blow to communal understanding' are premature and need to be considered carefully. Horrigan writes 'Internet access is helping people join all kinds of communities, including those that are not exclusively virtual communities'. Another finding, possibly counter-intuitive given stereotypes about Internet users, is that 37% of Horrigan's respondents said that the Internet helped them connect with people of different ages or generations. Overall these findings seem to suggest that group and community activities are alive and well online, that people are more than willing to engage in online communities, that online communities often support geographically *local* activities, and that in some cases membership of online groups helps build links between generations. This important social phenomenon described by Harrigan adds considerable weight to educational theory emphasising group and community learning online.

Social-constructionist perspectives, as noted, have come to the fore, but other theory (such as that of Mezirow, 1990 and Freire, 1972) on learning through social interaction is also well placed to help us understand the technology. Mezirow (1990) emphasising critical discourse leading to 'transformative

learning' and Freire (1972), like Habermas (1985), focussing on democratic dialogue, free from hierarchical structures. Nevgi and Manninen (2000) argue that from the social-constructionist perspective learning is seen as 'conversation' and that CMC, through the provision of real opportunities for conversation, enables the development of metacognitive skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. In particular Nevgi and Manninen review research which suggests that CMC can change the way teachers and students interact, promote teamwork and collaborative learning, build intersubjective or shared experiences, and move writing and other literary activities from solitary work to a more active, social learning process.

Nevgi and Manninen also make interesting arguments about the ways in which the role of the teacher (in CMC supported education), might change, underlining above discussion above about how ICTs might change the role of professional career advisers. They believe that because working in web-based environments is such a collaborative activity, traditionally individualistic and 'secret' teaching activity becomes public and 'socially shared'. They see a shift from 'teacher directed' to collaborative learning, from transmission to transaction, where the status of both the teacher and the student are altered, with education becoming 'student-centred'. Instead of 'lecturing' the teachers role is to 'build learning and communication environments and settings, engage him/herself in text based discussions, use various facilitation techniques, motivate and encourage interaction – and even learn how to remain silent when necessary' (p. 9). There is a loss of authority, a loss of control over the learning experience, the status of the teacher changes from one of authority to that of an invisible supporter.

There is, therefore, a strong and well thought through theoretical framework to support the application of ICTs in education. ICTs, and specifically CMC, can be thought of as challenging the power and authority of the 'teacher', and facilitating 'student-centred' learning where the student is a partner in a process of constructing social knowledge.

Alongside this useful underpinning theory, the literature of online education is also full of practical findings about the best ways to manage and support online

learning. Not surprisingly, countries with small, geographically dispersed populations are over-represented in the literature and often provide the models for implementation elsewhere; Finland, Canada and Australia are leaders in this field of research.

2. f. ii. Online Learning Environments

The value of web pages in online learning is well understood – the phenomenon of the so-called ‘desktop library’ – offering searchable text, instant cut and paste for quotations, ease of access and referencing etc. Harasim (1997), writing at that start of the boom in research in communications on the Internet, is disparaging about static web pages, commenting that much educational use of the web can be characterised as publishing rather than as educational activity, and she cites putting lecture notes and presentations online as examples. She sees this as perpetuating a model of passive transmission of information and describes web sites supporting this model as ‘shovelware’. Her work is stimulated by an ‘early adopter’ attitude and even in 1997, she was advocating 3 dimensional graphical user interfaces and advanced visualisation tools to help create a sense of space in Internet based learning environments, so the pejorative tone of her comments must be seen in a context of attempting to push the boundaries of what was possible at the time. None the less, publishing to web sites is still one of the most important applications of ICTs and is an important way in which previously arcane academic knowledge is being made public. The continuing emphasis on web publishing hints that education as a whole has been slow to take up the potential of interactivity in ICTs, Moiduser et al (2000), conducted a survey of 436 web sites which found that the vast majority were static and text based.

Interactive ICT applications, those that support the social-constructionist orthodoxy (email, bulletin boards and online chat in particular), have generally been of more interest to researchers than web pages. An important distinction is often made between synchronous and asynchronous applications. Synchronous applications, such as instant messaging and online chat require all the participants to be online at the same time, asynchronous applications, such as email and

bulletin boards, allow messages to be sent and checked at the leisure of participants – they can go online when and where it suits them.

In a useful study, Schwier and Balbar (2002), conducted an 8 month trial comparing synchronous (online chat) and asynchronous (bulletin board) communication as mechanisms for facilitating online learning with post-graduate students. Although modest in that it was based on a single iteration of one course, their study came to interesting conclusions. The synchronous chats proved very helpful in providing continuity for the group and community building in general, but were less effective for dealing seriously with deeper ‘content’ issues. The asynchronous communication, while being slightly more formal and less helpful for building relationships, was found to be more suitable for thoughtful and ‘deep’ contributions.

Stacey (1999), working with a similar group of students, set out specifically to test the social-constructionist perspective based on the work of Vygotsky (1978). Using a variety of platforms (synchronous and asynchronous) she concluded that the peer social support that CMC provides was a major advantage for distance learners, arguing that the group interaction involved in searching for consensus, communicating different perspectives, receiving feedback from students (and tutors) and discussing ideas and coming to shared understandings etc all made it a valuable vehicle for ‘socially constructed learning at a distance’. Not all researchers have been so positive; Kanuka and Anderson (1998), in a frequently referenced study, found that the dissemination and discussion model does not necessarily facilitate higher learning and that unless group processes are carefully structured and managed, postings representing ‘social interchange’ might outweigh those representing ‘knowledge construction’. The ways discussion is managed, participants are engaged and motivated, content is structured, and contributions are moderated by tutors, will all have effects on the outcomes. They hypothesised that the learning environment might not be sufficiently demanding and that the completely textual environment might be limiting, making it a poor second best compared to FTF knowledge construction. From a social-constructionist perspective, it is not clear how ‘social interchange’ can ever be separated from ‘knowledge construction’ – they amount to the same thing.

In later work, Kanuka (2002) set out to identify a set of principles that would allow CMC to be used to maximum potential. It is important to elaborate on what they anticipate this potential actually promises. Kanuka and Anderson (1998), in their earlier study quote as their starting point Gunawardena and Anderson et al's (1997) attempt to create a constructivist model of content analysis. Apparently oblivious to the philosophical contradictions inherent in adopting 'instrumental rationality' to explain 'social' construction (ie. the rules are not the game), they hypothesise five phases of construction of knowledge in computer conferencing:

1. sharing/comparing information;
2. exploration of dissonance and inconsistency;
3. negotiation of meaning and/or co-construction of knowledge;
4. testing and modification of proposed synthesis or co-construction;
5. phrasing of agreement and applications of newly constructed meaning.

Before proceeding it is worth taking a diversion and considering for a moment the implications of the approach adopted here. It has the quality of Hegelian dialectic (the search for synthesis) and is reminiscent of Habermas' discourse ethics (1985) where he sets out requirements for 'ideal speech' and ways to ensure the 'force for the better argument' (negotiation etc). In common with much research in the field of online education, this view of social-constructionism is determinedly modernist; a learning community that is a search for 'sameness', unity, compromise, 'progress'. Lyotard (1979) makes a searing critique of this Habermasian position which he calls the valorisation of conformist, not to say, 'terrorist' ideals of consensus. The possibility that a 'social-constructionist community' might be a pluralist exploration of difference and diversity is repressed in the model adopted by Gunawardena et al. The extent to which the social-constructionist orthodoxy in educational research is compatible with postmodern positions such as Lyotard's is controversial, but in much of the

research referred to here, social-constructionism is firmly situated in an idealistic, progressive, modernist arena.

Kanuka and Anderson (1998) took Gunawardena et al's model and used it to structure a content analysis of online discussion. They found, as noted above, that the overwhelming number of messages were coded to the first stage, sharing and comparing (often messages with a social, community building content), rather than the later stages, such as co-construction of knowledge. Kanuka(2002), in two papers based on survey data from distance learning experts and online learning tutors etc, attempts to establish teaching and learning principles which can facilitate 'higher' levels of online learning (those that shift the content of discussion away from Gunawardena et al's Phase 1 in the direction of Phase 5).

- The principles of teaching used were:

Active and purposeful engagement with abstracted phenomena; multiplicity of perspectives to be fully apprehended; readiness for meaningful understanding and diversity of instructional methods.

- The principles of learning used were:

Assume greater responsibility; meaning making into abstracted phenomena and reconstruction of meanings.

The survey data was used to identify constructs relating to each of the principles, and later, a useful set of strategies for facilitating each of the principles. Whilst there is still an implicit association of 'higher' levels of learning with negotiation and consensus, this work introduces a new emphasis on apprehension of a multiplicity of perspectives as a key principle of teaching, and of reconstruction of meaning as a key principle of learning. Amongst a great deal of excellent practical advice that emerges from Kanuka's survey work, there are a few points that are particularly relevant here.

The findings emphasise the value of case study data to facilitate the presentation of complex phenomena. This supports Flyvbjerg's (2001) view that the power of a good example is often underestimated, and that case studies are ideal for 'falsification', that is, testing propositions (such as 'all swans are white' by observing just a single black swan), stimulating further investigation, and theory building. Kanuka's respondents argued that one of the most effective platforms for creating multiple perspectives and multiple solutions to problems is 'web-based threaded conferencing and groupwork' – asynchronous groupwork.

In order to generate a 'multiplicity of perspectives', Kanuka identifies three constructs that need to be addressed: taking a multidisciplinary approach; presenting conflicting phenomena and paradoxes; and using multiple sources of information with diverse perspectives. Hyperlinks can be used to support threaded discussion, giving access to information from different disciplines and multiple information sources. Threaded discussion can support debate and investigation of conflicting phenomenon. She also notes that her results warn against providing too many external hypertext links – confusion and aimless surfing are always dangers in online learning.

Evaluating, and indeed adopting, multiple perspectives is an aspect of phronesis, understanding the values that underpin a range of positions and making judgements about the merits and demerits of each. Establishing context specific, personal, values etc. may not be something that can be taught (Flyvbjerg 2001), but it is possibly something that can be learned, perhaps with the help of the type of threaded discussion to which Kanuka refers. As already noted in the introduction, Nietzsche (1908) argues 'For the task of revaluation of values' we need to be skilled at 'dividing without making inimical; mixing up nothing, reconciling nothing; a tremendous multiplicity which is none the less the opposite of chaos' (p. 43), the research discussed here hints at the possibility of ICT applications that resist the 'curse of the self-same' (see Introduction), the search for sameness, unity, compromise, categorisation etc. that characterises much online learning.

Kanuka's research provides an interesting theoretical framework for online learning, one that manages, at least in part, to shift the emphasis from negotiation and consensus to generating multiple perspectives and discourses, and at the same time she offers sound practical advice about constructs and strategies that relate to each of her seven principles of teaching and learning.

A great deal of the literature concentrates on comparing and contrasting FTF and CMC communication, or simply, weighing up the pros and cons of CMC.

Hammond (1998) highlights the potential for participants to develop professional knowledge, articulate ideas, access information and other viewpoints and seek clarification, but notes that 'participation cannot be easily structured', contributors may prefer different styles of messages and text-based communication may not be appropriate for some kinds of discussion. Curtis and Lawson (2001) argue that there is good evidence that the online environment is effective at encouraging student cooperation, but that a great deal of time is spent helping students use the technological interface, and so on, despite the plethora of research and interesting findings, there are a number of key problems that make drawing conclusions difficult and result in authors endlessly calling for more research (eg. Curtis and Lawson 2001, Kanuka and Anderson 1998):

- As noted above, there is a lot of research evaluating and comparing FTF communication and CMC, but very little that explores the potential of integrating the two methods of communication. They certainly do not have to take place in isolation from one another.
- The field is multi-disciplinary, online learning is of interest to practically every professional group, from counsellors, lawyers to adult educators. There is considerable repetition and overlap from journal to journal.
- The technology is evolving so rapidly that platforms used in studies that superficially seem similar, may in fact be quite different. For example, the format of Bulletin Boards is extremely variable, the way discussion is threaded can differ, recent messages can be highlighted, messages can be

ticked as 'read' helping them to be sorted, emoticons may or may not be facilitated, postings can simultaneously be sent as emails etc. The impact of different types of software that support the asynchronous communication may prove to be very important.

- It is probably only now, in the early 21st Century, that the Internet is reaching maturity as a mass medium. Earlier studies may have suffered from novelty effects, or lack of technical know how amongst participants, or simply slow data transfer and immature software.
- The theory building is often weak, studies concentrate on a 'how to' or 'best practice' mode without always questioning what it is they hope to achieve, or the values implicit in their chosen approach.

Despite these caveats, there is continuity and a sense of consensus in the research on asynchronous online discussion about its benefits. There are many useful summaries (e.g. Salter, 2000) of the early findings of the research about asynchronous online discussion which include:

- It encourages reflective and thoughtful responses;
- It is always 'open' and therefore allows detailed contributions at a time to suit the participants;
- Postings can be read and re-read at leisure and there is a permanent record;
- Writing for a real audience (of peers) is more motivating than simply writing for a tutor;
- There is no 'bidding' for a chance to speak and you cannot be interrupted;
- It is easier to avoid domination by a few individuals;
- Responses are more likely to be posted to the content of the message than the person who posted it.
- There is scope for anonymity and pseudonymity, reducing stereotyping.

2. g. Social Psychology of the Internet

As discussed above, there is a considerable overlap in interest in CMC across a wide range of academic disciplines. Underlying much of the research, especially that of online education, is social psychology. As with the literature on online learning, it is considerably outwith the scope of this thesis to survey the entire field but there are at least three key areas that need special attention:-

- **Online Aggression:** since the emergence of electronic communication there have been concerns that CMC was an environment particularly prone to expressions of anti-social behaviour and aggression.
- **Anonymity:** a key aspect of online communication has been the capacity for individuals to remain relatively anonymous or to adopt pseudonyms.
- **Depayement:** Idealists (Turkle, 1996, Rhiengold, 2000) have argued that the Internet is a place that allows a special kind of experimentation; it is possible to adopt alternative identities, to participate in unique communities, to operate according to social mores that would be unacceptable in most of the corporeal world.

2. g. i. Online Aggression

A picture sometimes emerges of CMC as cutthroat and cruel, full of fire and conflict but lacking in refinement. Wallace (1999), devotes an entire chapter of her book on the psychology of the Internet to 'Aggression on the Net', Gackenback's (1998) excellent collection of articles on psychology and the Internet has sections on community failure, violence, fluidity, charivari (punishment for transgressing social norms by ridicule and taunting) and flamewars, Jones (1998), in his book *Cybersociety 2.0*, devotes a chapter to dissolution and fragmentation, and Joinson (2003), slightly more moderately,

devotes a chapter to negative aspects of Internet behaviour. It is interesting to note that the phenomenon of 'flaming' is ancient in terms of the Internet, having been defined more than 20 years ago by Kiesler et al, 1984, p. 1129) 'remarks containing swearing, insults, name calling and hostile comments'. The early researchers had serious concerns about the apparent lack of manners in CMC.

'Flaming' is the word most often used to describe an inappropriate, hostile response in CMC, but it is a slippery word that is used in a wide variety of ways. Joinson (2003) adopts a pragmatic definition (p. 64), 'negative or anti-social behaviour on computer networks.' The slightly hysterical, and even prurient tone that is sometimes apparent in discussion of CMC aggression and flaming now seems a little naïve but it can be traced in Sherry Turkle's (1996) sensational account (p. 250) of a 'rape', in a text based, multi-user computer environment, an online role playing game. Her account of this *text* based role playing game is important because the event, and subsequent accounts of it, are precursors to the current febrile attention of the popular press to the 'dangers' of CMC: 'Mr Bungle forced various players to have sex with each other and then forced Legba to swallow his (or her) own pubic hair and made a character called Starsinger attack herself sexually with a knife' (p. 251). Although her exploration of the implications of this event for the players sense of personal identity, and for the virtual / corporeal, real / simulated constructs, is indeed thought provoking, Turkle does not dwell on the singularity of this event in the context of the hundreds of thousands of hours players spend in text based multi-user computer environments – environments which are in fact normally highly 'rule governed'. Paradoxically, after describing the very emotive responses to this unusual online event, and its repercussions in the community, she finishes by wondering if the ability to project feelings and emotions onto online characters ('emote') without corporeal consequences might be a reflection of the 'flattening of affect in post-modern life'! This discussion is a forerunner of endless popular apocalyptic speculation about the amorality of the online world.

Most of the research into online aggression focuses on more prosaic expressions of aggression, community failure, difficulty reaching consensus, outbreaks of hostility in emailing lists etc. The key question that this research raises is whether

or not there are particular features of CMC that make it especially prone to conflict. Some of those concerned with rapid polarisation of opinions in online communication have highlighted the way text based CMC has the spontaneity and immediacy of speech, with the indelibility of writing. Content and grammar can be formulated very rapidly and without much thought (a casual remark), but immediately becomes a permanent record that can be studied and interpreted/misinterpreted at leisure. Wallace (1999), citing Barker and Lewin's frustration-aggression hypothesis, suggests that aspects of the Internet can be particularly frustrating, she highlights slow data transfer speeds, poorly designed web sites, rapidly evolving software requiring constant upgrading, 'lag' in online chat, computer crashes, information overload and poor quality information as all contributing to frustration, and sometimes aggression, in computer users. She also refers to Berkowitz's 'hair trigger' theory, arguing that any of the above factors can trigger negative affect in computer users that potentially inhibits our ability to consider events dispassionately.

Joinson (1998 p. 48) and later, Joinson (2003 p. 20), argues that behaviour on the Internet is generally disinhibited and he surveys a wide range of possible explanations for this including:

Reduced Social Cues - it is argued that reduced social cues lead to a reduction in the influence of social norms. There may be an attention shift from other participants to the task, a weakening of normal social hierarchy by reduced status cues, anonymity might lead to both reduced 'other' and 'self-focus' and as a consequence lowered self-regulation. On the contrary though, Joinson notes that there is also good evidence to suggest that CMC can be social, citing the development of rich online relationships, interpersonal social cues (emoticons etc) and category cues (headers, threading).

Social Presence Theory – the idea that different media have different levels of 'social presence', with FTF having the most. Low social presence is thought to lead to depersonalised communication, although Joinson notes that where there is no time pressure, even with very low social presence (e.g. bulletin boards) lots of social information is exchanged.

Two-Component Self-Awareness Model – this model argues that attention can be more or less directed towards the environment (public self-awareness) or the self (private self-awareness) and that in CMC there is greater private self-awareness. People are both more likely to disclose information about themselves and be less concerned with the feelings of others online. The implication might be that, rather than being de-individuated, CMC users are ‘self-regulated’ and responding to innermost thoughts etc. There is only limited empirical support for this model as yet.

At the moment the research into de-individuation seems highly speculative and in some ways even contradictory. In a survey of the empirical evidence to support the existence of flaming, Joinson (2003 p. 65) concludes that there is evidence of increased flaming in CMC, and that it is more likely to occur in text based communication.

It is too early to come to any firm conclusions about whether CMC encourages conflict, and there are a number of difficulties for research in this area. ‘Flaming’ is, by definition, a phenomenon of text based CMC, it is not easy to relate it to FTF communication for comparative study. In fact, flaming is defined very loosely in some studies that even include diverse activities such as flirtation and consensual erotic chat in the definition. CMC takes place in a huge range of contexts, from adolescents’ chat rooms to company board rooms, it is not always clear that like contexts are being compared. The characteristics of the online population have changed dramatically over the last few years and indeed the profile of CMC users, even the gender balance, has changed significantly since the early studies. Lastly, it is worth noting that in some CMC contexts, a culture of anarchic and highly competitive behaviour is actively cultivated (online gaming cultures, hacking community etc). It may be that flaming was a characteristic of early adopters of the Internet, but that, as it becomes more mainstream, integrated into daily life, online communication is normalised and aggression no more prevalent than it is in corporeal environments.

2. g. ii. Anonymity and Pseudonymity

The potential for people to remain anonymous on the Internet, hiding their true identity, adopting several identities at once, or adopting a well-rounded alternative, pseudonymous, identity, has long been a cause of both celebration and concern in Internet research. As noted above, it has been cited as a cause of disinhibition and consequent anti-social behaviour, the idea being that if our actions are free of personal consequences it is easier to be cruel to others. Young et al (1999) argue, perhaps in rather sensational language, that anonymity encourages 'Internet Adultery' (explained by their ACE model; anonymity, convenience and escape.) and comment 'stable marriages of 15, 20, or 25 years end because of a three or four month old cyberaffair. Yet these are typical scenarios plaguing many couples today'.

But just as there are authors who worry about negative consequences of anonymity and pseudonymity, others have identified interesting, positive consequences. King and Moreggi (1998) highlight the benefits for online therapy and self-help groups. In particular, they cite the more level playing field for social interactions because of the lack of status clues, the emphasis on ideas and concepts, the inability to stereotype on the basis of race, age or gender, and the fact those with 'debilitating or shameful' disorders may be more likely to seek help.

In a frequently cited paper, Chester and Gwynne (1998), investigate the potential of anonymity and pseudonymity in an educational setting. Basing much of their analysis on Walther's classic (1996) paper which argues that the 'de-individuating' (visual anonymity, physical isolation and selective self-presentation) aspects of CMC can combine with high group salience to lead to more positive impression formation and adherence to group norms. Walther believes that this, combined with asynchronous CMC that encourages 'planned discourse' and reflection, can create a 'hyper-personal' environment, characterised by more intimate and socially desirable exchanges than FTF. Chester and Gwynne decided to experiment with pseudonymity in particular, believing it allows a level of 'managed ambiguity', it allows stable relationships

to develop while offering an opportunity actively to conceal or reveal elements of real-life identity. They ran a course at their university on which all the communication was online – the identity of other students was kept secret and they were requested not to try to meet up.

The findings were largely positive and very encouraging about the potential of pseudonymity to facilitate learning and debate between students. They argue that the ‘online environment allowed students to find a strong and confident voice’. Asian students, who they had previously found to be less likely to contribute to discussion in FTF classes, contributed much more actively, and they noted that interactions across cultural groups seemed to take place more easily. They felt there was indeed more positive impression formation taking place. At first they were concerned about the level of playful interactions between participants but concluded that the process of character play was integral to the experience of developing group salience and facilitating debate. In general their students reported higher participation rates than in FTF classes with one student logging on for up to 5 hours a day. They have some concerns about the possibility of flaming (see above) emerging, but overall were very positive about pseudonymity.

There are a wide range of advantages and disadvantages to pseudonymous discussion, but it is obvious that it has its uses in certain contexts. There are some contradictions in the arguments used by advocates of pseudonymous CMC. While Walther’s view of this mode of discussion as ‘hyper-personal’ does not necessarily contradict the opinion of Rheingold (2000) that virtual communities treat people primarily as ‘thinkers and transmitters of ideas’, it is a hard circle to square and an indication of tensions in the rhetoric of the computerphiles.

2. g. iii. Dépaysement

A short mention needs to be made of the influential use of the word ‘dépaysement’ in the literature. It is a word that is sometimes used by anthropologists, literally meaning to ‘decountrify’ oneself. It appears early on in the literature and was adopted by Sherry Turkle (1996 p. 218) who describes it like so: ‘One leaves one’s own culture to face something unfamiliar, and upon returning home it has

become strange and can be seen with fresh eyes.’ She uses the term to explain the experience of one male member of an online community who adopted a female gender online. Once he had become accustomed to the experience, and the experiment was over, he returned to his ‘normal’ male gender, only to feel uncomfortable, as if he was behaving inappropriately for the context. He felt on reflection, that when he offered to help people as a female it was taken as welcome, natural and kind, but as a man the helping role seemed unexpected to people and was suspected as a seduction ploy.

One implication might be that playing with identity online can help us understand aspects of our corporeal identity that might otherwise be hidden from us. Chester and Gwynne (1998) take up this idea enthusiastically and include a section in their study about what their online experiences have taught them about their FTF teaching. They argue that the experience enabled them to make explicit implicit norms in their FTF practice, reappraise the role of creativity and the hyper-personal in teaching and learning, and to re-appreciate the value of play. Although the process of *dépaysement* might be uncomfortable, it opens up new possibilities for change.

There is then a suggestion that the process of *dépaysement* might be a special advantage of CMC, especially when used with pseudonyms and explicit permission to experiment with identity. It offers possibilities of experimentation and play that might be difficult to achieve in FTF teaching.

2. h. Communities versus Networks

As discussed in the Introduction, ICTs, and perhaps even modernity itself, seem to be challenging community values. The theme of community is central to much of the research on CMC. Community has been a persistent and controversial topic in sociology; in particular the impact of social and technological change on ‘community’ has polarised researchers, with three perspectives vying for dominance (Wellman, 1988). The ‘community lost’ perspective argues that social and environmental changes have made it impossible for a sense of community to

survive. The community 'saved' perspective argues that community thrives in the most unexpected places if we go out and look for it (and abandon more romantic, 'pastoral' definitions of community). The community 'liberated' view is that advances in communication and transport encourage participation in multiple, interest based communities composed of long-distance friendships.

One of the earliest celebrations of CMC, a community 'liberated' perspective, can be found in Rheingold's (1993) 'The Virtual Community'. In this important and celebrated text, it is worth noting the very modest efforts Rheingold makes to define the term 'community'. In the introduction he hints that feeling 'passion' about the communication, and 'caring' about the participants is important for a sense of community in CMC. In other passages though, he uses the language of commerce to understand what binds people to communities and what they might gain from them. He speaks of an evolving 'social contract' between participants and of group norms changing according to a process he calls 'social evolution'. Later (p. xxviii) he speaks about the group's 'collective goods' which he defined as social network capital, knowledge capital, and communion. This way of talking about a community, as having 'stock' and 'capital', immediately gives a sense that some communities will have more value than others, and introduces a quantitative, utilitarian, element absent from earlier conceptions of community identified by Bauman (2001), valorising 'social capital' (see Introduction).

Reviewing the literature on community, Bauman (2001) identifies constructs such as 'shared understanding' (*not* necessarily consensus), common understanding 'coming naturally', and a 'warm circle' (which specifically excludes 'cold calculation!'). Bauman ultimately associates community with security, a sense of stability and connection that is absent in the modern world; our sense of identity has been privatised and bureaucratised, we are each increasingly isolated in our relations with wider society. Far from seeing the Internet as a mechanism for creating a sense of community, Bauman argues, as already noted above, that the free flow of information actually undermines the shared understandings that had been thought to be the basis of 'community'. Interestingly, rather than seeing life online as being happier because 'the people with whom one interacts most strongly will be selected more by commonality of interests and goals than by

accidents of proximity' as Rheingold does (p. 9), Bauman argues that 'strangers are unsafety incarnate and so they embody by proxy that insecurity which haunts your life' (p. 145). The sense in which online communities are 'communities of strangers' is echoed in Rheingold's emphasis on forms of capital and social contract as the important binding forces of online community. The tensions in these conceptions cut to the quick of research on CMC, much hinges on whether or not our online contacts can ultimately be characterised as 'strangers', whose identities are unstable, suspect and manufactured, and whether or not online communities need 'shared goals', and 'social network and knowledge capital'. From quite different perspectives, and despite Rheingold's enthusiastic advocacy of online community, both authors hint that online communities differ dramatically from the 'traditional pastoral' view of community.

It may be that Rheingold's attempts to classify the binding elements of online communities in terms of capital and exchange are unhelpful. Haythornwaite et al (1998) note that 'the question of whether or not one can find 'community' on-line is asked largely by those who do not experience it' (p. 212). Recalling Flyvbjerg's insistence that social scientists need to pay as much attention to context, experience and intuition as analysis, rationality and rules (p. 24, 2001). Joinson (p. 102, 2003) cites an interesting case study that highlights the problems for social scientists. One participant in an online discussion forum created a pseudonymous, gender swapped identity. The online 'community' quickly accepted the 'fake' identity. When he finally decided to end the experiment, he posted a message to the forum saying she had been killed (run over in an accident). There was a grief stricken response from many community members at first, but then as people began to notice there was no account of the accident in the media they grew suspicious. Eventually the perpetrator of the hoax had to own up in the forum and apologise. According to Joinson, the response to this hoax was supportive by some 'what can you expect on the Internet'; a pragmatic and philosophical response to the unstable identities and connections often reported in CMC. But increasingly hostile and negative comments from others began to emerge. Some people felt duped, cheated, as if their good will had been abused, 'While some people may view this as 'only' the internet it is a community of real people'. This case study highlights both Bauman's 'community of strangers

paradox' as well as the good-sense view of Haythornwaite et al. It is clear that at least some members of this active forum were in fact 'strangers', not their 'real' selves. On the other hand the emotional attachments and personal involvement (indeed intimacy) that Joinson describes certainly imply a sense of community. The responses of the participants underline the need for context, experience and intuition in CMC. Some people are prepared to accept that identity is more febrile and uncertain in CMC than in FTF, others demand a greater level of trust and want a community of 'real' people. It is important to note that developments in software for bulletin board forums now make it possible for sophisticated levels of 'authentication' to be built into the forums themselves depending on the *style* of community being developed.

Perhaps a measure of community is its relationship to action, political or otherwise. Jones (1998) reframes the debate in a more political way, citing Charles Taylor's (1992) 'The Ethics of Authenticity', he asks whether or not CMC is a technology that embodies Taylor's view, that political powerlessness encourages alienation from community ('as it spins off identities'), or whether it is one that 'technologizes community', and with it, authenticity? Leaving the question unanswered, he suggests that the key will be the ways in which online political and personal action are themselves defined, noting that the connections between CMC and the social and political worlds are unclear. Despite this, if we take Haythornthwaite et al's position that the experienced 'know it when they see it', we might cite 'identity tourism' and 'racial passing' (described by Nakumara 2000) as forms of 'personal' political action. The extremely powerful use of Weblogs and viral campaigning during the 2004 election campaign in the United States might also be considered an example of 'social' political action. Like a great deal of research in CMC, some of the earliest work, before the maturing of the Internet into a genuinely mass communication tool, suffered from uneven sampling (limited access), the effects of unrefined software, and an immature infrastructure (poor data transfer speeds). As the technology is refined, so are its applications and perhaps its ability to support community.

One way that the intensely subjective (essentially psychological) questions about community have been avoided by empirically minded sociologists has been

simply see people as ‘nodes’ in extended social networks (Clyde-Mitchell, 1969). The nodes themselves are less important to understand in detail than the relations between the nodes. Relations (or strands) between nodes are characterised by their content, direction and strength (Jones, 1999). Ties are relations which connect particular actors and are often characterised as ‘strong’ or ‘weak’ This approach can be traced back to the 60s in sociology generally, but application of this approach to CMC is very much been associated with Barry Wellman, Laura Garton and Caroline Haythornthwaite throughout the nineties. The quantifying of social ties, to the detriment of the exploration of the qualitative aspects of those, ties has limitations, but despite this, social network theory has proven very productive in some areas, especially in organisational contexts and knowledge management theory. Wellman argues (1999) that the social network theories have the advantage of allowing us to explore the ways in which organisational and institutional boundaries are ‘fuzzy’ because of the relations and ties of the organisational ‘nodes’ to ‘nodes’ outside the organisation.

He argues that ‘private intimacy has replaced public sociability’, but although he makes a strong case for declining public sociability, its relationship to, and the way it has been *replaced* by, ‘private intimacy’ are undeveloped. Wellman’s key point, that ‘people are floating in sparsely-knit, loosely-bounded, frequently-changing networks’, is important for understanding the impact of CMC. If Wellman is correct, and social network analysis shows that this phenomenon is a wider social trend, independent of ICTs and CMC, rather than a specific feature of CMC itself, it helps contextualise discussion of CMC and hints that the apparent ‘idiosyncrasies’ of CMC (community instability, increased private self-awareness etc) may in fact simply be a reflection of wider social phenomenon and need not necessarily be structural features of CMC (ie. technologically determined). Castells (2001), in line with Wellman, seems to support the view that it is not ICTs that are changing social relations, but the emergence of networked individualism in wider society generally.

Of note is Wellman’s (1999) view that cyberspace supports ‘glocalized’ communities. The essence of this argument is that although the Internet allows us to network globally, there is a tendency for ‘virtual communers’ to be bound to

their home desktops – an extreme form of ‘localisation’. This tendency is at odds with Wellman’s view that people ‘only make partial commitments to online relationships’, and that they may be combined and intertwined with telephone and FTF interactions with local ‘actors’. This argument, emphasising the dangers of social isolation resulting from CMC is undoubtedly important, but as Wellman reminds us, CMC is only one of many media that can be utilised to maintain rich social relationships. Haythornthwaite (2001) notes ‘there is not just one best message-medium fit, but it is instead a repertoire of media that become used and useful for exchanges that support work and friendship’. In a detailed social network analysis of ‘computer-supported distributed learners’ she concludes ‘the first step in supporting such groups is to consider providing *multiple means* of accomplishing group and work interaction’, the objective being to find ways to support both strong (advice, friends, confidants, emotional support) and weak (low frequency group wide communications) ties within the group using the most appropriate media, including FTF work.

Much of the work on social networks seems to support the frequently repeated argument that it is who you know that is most crucial to the ways you contribute to knowledge development. Cross et al (2001) note that a decade of research has indicated that even engineers and scientists are ‘five times more likely to turn to a person for information than to an impersonal source such as a database or a file cabinet...who you know has a significant impact on what you come to know, as relationships are critical for obtaining information, solving problems and learning how to do your work’ (p. 100). It is important to note that the objective of much of this research has been to identify ways that businesses can ‘appropriate’ the social into the world of work, to harness more effectively human resources to organisational ends. The Cross et al (2001) paper was sponsored by IBM who clearly see the ‘social network’ and the work network as synonymous: ‘At IBM we would welcome the opportunity to help your business analyze, build and strengthen its social networks. Our SNA consultants can pinpoint potential bottlenecks, underutilizations, misutilizations and hindrances and suggest alternative strategies’ (Cross et al, 2000, p.13). There is little to indicate that the individuals in the network might have alternative, or conflicting needs and objectives to those of the organisation. Borgatti and Molina (2005) explore some

of the ethical issues relating to this kind of research, especially that of research being appropriate for managerial ends, but do not get to grips with the philosophical problems relating to individuals relationships to the network as a whole.

The apocalyptic view of CMC as replacing FTF interactions and isolating people in domestic environments is one that needs careful examination. As suggested above, it may be just as likely that in fact CMC becomes an important tool for supporting local communities and supplementing already existing social networks maintained through FTF communication and other media. Social Network analysis has proved a helpful way of exploring online communities, especially in business and organisations, but will not answer wider philosophical problems about the changing status and qualities of these communities. Significantly though, Lipnack and Stamps (1996) maintain 'one major finding from multiple studies... is that the greater the number of relationships (people have) the happier and healthier they tend to be'.

2. i. Summary

The multi-disciplinary underpinning to the research inevitably means that the review of the literature given above is unable to do justice to the breadth of each of the individual topics. Despite this, a clear picture emerges of CEG at a crossroads and a web of interconnecting themes hinting at interesting future developments.

There is a tension in CEG between guidance and counselling oriented approaches, and between technician and professional models for the work.

ICTs are playing an important part in this tension, infomatics applications are beginning to undermine the exclusivity of the 'expert knowledge' that underpins career advice (and undermining the professional status of career advisers), but largely unexplored communications applications hint at opportunities to develop new interpersonal and counselling approaches.

Theoretical developments in CEG seem to support a shift from a working model based on knowledge, to one based on interpersonal skills. There is a parallel argument from critical and community psychology that questions the tendency in guidance and counselling to individualise clients and seeks to find ways of working with people in a more social, 'community' context.

Evidence from research in online learning and education, often from a social-constructionist perspective, clearly indicates the potential of communications applications of ICTs to build and support online learning communities, particularly with the help of flexible asynchronous formats. These environments provide a mechanism for people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives to come together to participate in knowledge construction. There is the possibility of a shift from education about transmission of knowledge, to education that is about knowledge creation. Social psychology research provides evidence of the strength of online communities; their ability to create sustained informal help and support networks; the value of anonymity and *dépayement*; and the possibility of integrating FTF with Online Communication to avoid the dangers of 'glocalisation' and social isolation presented by some ICT applications.

The possibility of CEG utilising ICTs to create decentralised online learning communities that link clients into wider communities, can involve client's networks of relations, and that can utilise help and expertise from the wider community is tantalising. These online communities might be able to work alongside conventional FTF CEG adding an interesting new dimension that introduces student centredness, holism, and knowledge creation to the more conventional knowledge transmission of formal career education (where content is prescribed). Furthermore, the communications applications of ICTs offer possibilities for 'upskilling' career adviser's work, emphasising interpersonal skills and community building instead of the more technical (e.g. information provision) aspects of their work.

In the light of this interesting nexus of developments, I set out to test some of the ideas and arguments by building an online career education community.

Chapter 3: Methodology

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3. a. Methodological Overview

It is impossible for human beings to have objective thoughts – people are always driven by passions and desires. (Robinson, 1999 p. 18)

This chapter looks at the methods adopted. From inception the research was a combination of action and reflection and therefore, inevitably, reflection on the methods themselves demanded a flexible and evolving approach. The critical realist emphasis on emancipation and social justice that motivated the research eventually gave way to a much more subtle perspective where the relativism of post-modern thinking ultimately led to the values that underpinned the research being contested.

Firstly, this chapter sets out a broad philosophical perspective and identifies important debates that informed the choice of methods, in particular, the tension between the idealism of modernism (in the sense that progress is possible and life perfectible) and the relativism of post-modern thinking. These debates relate directly to the subject matter of the thesis as well as its methods; the tension between the ‘ideal speech’ of modernist thinking, and the project to disrupt language and meaning of post-modernist thinkers such as Derrida and Baudrillard lead us to question to what extent education can ever be ‘emancipatory’ and ‘progressive’ in the way many Marxist critical theorists suggest. Secondly, the chapter details the development of the project – what happened when, how the data was gathered, and how the data was analysed.

The current crisis of confidence in scientific method, and suspicion about the possibility of the establishing of ‘proofs’, is traced to many diverse sources. Sometimes it is seen to begin with the so-called post-modern thinking of the 1980s, to classic texts on methods such as Miles and Huberman’s (1984) ‘New Paradigm’ collection of essays, from Feyerabend’s (1993) wonderfully anarchic dictum ‘The only principle which does not inhibit progress is: Anything Goes!’ (p. 5), or from Kuhn’s (1962) brilliant demonstration that the scientific paradigm is merely a constellation of beliefs, values and techniques shared by members of a

given community and that to understand science it is necessary to understand the community of scientists. Kuhn even doubts that practitioners of natural science possess firmer or more permanent answers than their colleagues in the social sciences.

But, in fact, stern warnings about the futility of the quest for 'truth', and the dangers of the 'tyranny of truth' can also be found in the nineteenth century (and earlier). For Nietzsche the 'will to truth' was inexorably linked with the 'will to power', a mechanism to create conditions for obedience and slavery. In 'Beyond Good and Evil' (1886) he even dares (sardonically) to question the value of the 'will to truth' itself; 'Granted we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?'. In *Morning Glow* (1881), he notes 'When a single universal, overly pretentious 'truth' is invested with the aura of dogma, it becomes in the very nature of things tyrannical and thus mind-numbing.'

(Aphorism 507). Lyotard (1979) reiterated this idea one hundred years later with his celebrated remark 'Total solutions create totalitarian societies'. Likewise Feyerabend (1993) is fiercely critical of the scientific quest to integrate theories, to make them compatible with one another and build ever grander, more encompassing theories, always closer to the 'truth'. 'Proliferation of theories is beneficial for science, while uniformity impairs its critical powers. Uniformity also endangers the free development of the individual' (p. 24). Scientists' attempts to make scientific method the sole arbiter of 'truths' about the world is seen in this context as part of a wider battle for power and influence (with churches, with politicians). For Feyerabend (1993) knowledge must not be seen as 'a series of self-consistent theories that converge towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to truth. It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives' (p. 21).

Nietzsche (1886) sees the 'will to power' at the root of all inquiry and rains opprobrium on philosophers and scientists who pretend otherwise; he notes:

They pose as having discovered and attained their real opinions through the self-evolution of a cold, pure, divinely unperturbed dialectic: while what happens at the bottom is that a prejudice, a notion, an inspiration,

generally a desire of the heart sifted and made abstract, is defended by them with reasons sought after the event – they are advocates who do not want to be regarded as such, and for the most part no better than cunning pleaders for their prejudices, which they baptize as ‘truths’. (p. 36)

He continues in similar vein; ‘today we suspect any thinker who ‘wants to prove something’ – that they always knew in advance that which was supposed to result from the most rigorous cogitation’ (p. 111).

Nietzsche does not advocate anarchy and abandoning rules, quite the reverse; the ‘will to power’ can be a positive and creative force; in fact it is the ‘tyranny of arbitrary laws’ - metrical constraint, the tyranny of rhyme and rhythm - that gives us great poetry. Inquiry needs to recognise the ‘indifferent magnificence’ of nature to our human laws, it must be conducted with a ruthless curiosity and subtle flexibility, it must not ‘cleave to another person’ (ie. manifest a ‘doglike fidelity’ to another thinker), and, most importantly, must not judge a multi-coloured world in black and white, true and false, good or bad; ‘For it may be doubted whether there exist any antitheses at all... (they are)... perhaps foreground valuations, merely provisional perspectives.’

The purpose of the methodological discussion outlined below is, therefore, not to seek grand ‘truths’ or ‘proofs’, but in keeping with Nietzsche’s spirit of irony, suspicion, cynicism and iconoclasm, is to employ strict method to discover ‘humble truths’ (1878 p. 15). It is a dynamic, iterative and reflexive hermeneutic enquiry that will seek to balance observations, evidence and theories.

3. a. i. Methodology: Underpinning Philosophy

One does not understand in order to act, one acts in order to understand.
(Law, 1996, p. 293)

This research takes a qualitative perspective. The philosophical, social-psychological, technological and political ideas being applied derive from

constructivist and social-constructionist perspectives – both views have at their core concerns with subjectivity and sociality.

The tension between constructivism and social-constructionism (in a career education context), that is, the tension between meaning-making as a personal activity and meaning-making as a social activity, and the tension between modernist truth claims and post-modern embracing of diverse subjectivities, are both important threads in this thesis and as such are necessarily reflected in tension in the methods.

Grounded theory, phenomenology, and discourse and content analysis, although very different, have at least in small ways each influenced the research design. These approaches help in understanding how individuals construct personal meaning, and to some extent also how social groups construct meanings. Social network analysis has been identified as a way of thinking that helps understand the social processes occurring online, and the nature of the relationships between the participants in the research.

There are many assumptions underpinning this research which themselves are potentially open to question. In particular three core values are at the heart of this thesis:

- **Reflexivity:** rather than obscuring the researchers identity and standpoint by attempting to be objective, the researcher must reflect upon their own standpoint in relation to the phenomenon they are studying and to attempt to identify the ways in which such a standpoint has shaped the research process and findings. For example, the politically charged (Marxist) concept of the ‘emancipatory’ (Mezirow, 1981, 1990) was initially at the heart of this research, but as these comments on methods and the following results and discussion show, the researcher’s evolving understanding of theory, and the participant’s experience of Futureperfekt, led to a critique of the usefulness of this concept.¹

¹ For example, see Chapter 2 c, page 59.

- **Social-constructionism:** human experience is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically. Our perceptions and experiences are not a direct / true reading of environmental conditions but are mediated 'readings' of these conditions. We need to understand the world in terms of 'knowledges' rather than knowledge. This value is closely linked with the interest in 'community' throughout; knowledges evolve in, and are contested within and between communities.²
- **Language** plays a critical part in the social-construction of meaning (Peavy, 1992) and it is the researcher's task to investigate the ways in which such constructions are produced. The role of language has been hotly contested between modernist thinkers (e.g. Habermas, 1985) and post-modern thinkers (e.g. Lyotard, 1979).

Every research process is underpinned by a set of assumptions and presuppositions, regardless of the methods used, the principle of reflexivity suggests that to acknowledge and question these assumptions and presuppositions helps us understand how the knowledge we have generated is circumscribed.

3. a. ii. Hermeneutic epistemology and Habermas

Hermeneutic epistemology has been the subject of much of the work of the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, amongst others. Habermas contributed to methodological debates about hermeneutic epistemology and in particular, to a methodological approach and philosophical perspective labelled Critical Theory. It is necessary to define the hermeneutic approach, indicating how qualitative methodologies are derived from it, and note the influence of Critical Theory in order to show how this thesis is contextualised within a broad strand of qualitative educational and psychological research.

² For example see Chapter 2 sections (e) and (h).

Hermeneutic epistemology is often seen as being in opposition to objectivist epistemology which, as described by Erwin (1999), holds that propositions are generally true or false independently of any particular paradigm, school of thought, or language, and can therefore be warranted independently of what anyone believes using empirical techniques.

In contrast, the goal of research underpinned by the hermeneutic epistemological position is neither generalisation, prediction, nor control (as with empirical methods). Rather, it is concerned with interpretation, meaning and illumination. It takes the position that meaning constructed within social interactions cannot be researched solely using observable evidence; it has to be the subject of an iterative cycle of interpretation (actors need to explain what they mean, and these explanations themselves are then subject to interpretation). The traditional positivist /empiricist model, based on objectivist epistemology, does not recognise the capacity of people both to experience the world and interpret it; it cannot easily accommodate differing interpretations of the same phenomena.

This thesis is intended to be a hermeneutic exercise; it is a process of ‘meaning-giving to social interactions’. The meaning-giving or ‘sense-making’ is further complicated because both the subject and the objects of the research are interpreters and ‘sense-seekers’. It is not possible to make a strict separation between the researcher (subject) and the researched (object) because they are co-constituted and mutually constituting. We cannot ignore the fact that the objects of the research are interpreting both the subject of the research and the research process itself. For example, the participants in the online career education programme, which is the core of the data gathering process, discussed below, are aware they are participants in a research project and themselves have an interpretive framework for understanding the project, one which can be influenced, but not controlled by the subject.

From this position of hermeneutic epistemology then, the implication is that all interpretation is perspective-bound and partial relative to the framework being used. No matter how ‘reflexive’ the practice, it is likely that neither the subjects

nor the objects of the research can ever be fully aware of all the assumptions, presuppositions and beliefs that underpin their interpretive framework.

Law (1996), writing in the context of career education and guidance comments that the hermeneutic perspective calls for action, based on a 'situational understanding' of where the work is to be done, and that the learning should be from experience, either reflection, or action research. Law (p. 294) writes:

Research indicates that the use of theory in careers education and guidance has as much a hermeneutic as a rationalist resonance. Such theory can hardly be promoted as objective and universal truth: It must be presented as a conversation between complementary perspectives.

Hermeneutic understanding is, therefore, a learning experience involving dialogue between ourselves as researchers and that which we are trying to understand. The dialogue can never be completed and it can be assumed that 'everything' cannot be methodologically known. So far so good, but for some social and educational researchers the hermeneutic project is inadequate because its goal is simply to understand rather than change the world, the search for meaning and illumination simply perpetuates the hierarchy of knowers and doers, reconfiguring research but preserving the status quo. This is the perspective of critical theory. Critical theory is a reinterpretation of Marxist theory in a context of social issues, such as the family, race, mass culture and sexuality. Vattimo (1991) in his compelling book 'The End of Modernity', details how Helgelian-Marxist thinkers (such as Habermas and Adorno) have come to see the task of twentieth century thought as resistance to attacks launched on man's humanity (in the form of our subjectivity and self-consciousness) by science and the rationalisation of social labour. For example, as characterised above, Careers Scotland is an active participant in this rationalisation of social labour, implementing new-managerialist 'technical rational' ways of managing staff, and of course, making its central objective management of the labour market.

Habermas argued that neither the 'purposive action and control' of the empirical sciences nor the 'understanding and illumination' of hermeneutic research, has an

interest in research and knowledge that changes the world in the direction of freedom, justice and democracy. To fill this void Habermas talks about knowledge-constitutive interest (which he relates to critical theory, see below). He believes this is a search for a kind of emancipatory knowledge – it seeks to unmask ideologies that serve to maintain the status quo; to raise consciousness about the structural conditions that oppress people; to increase understanding of the causes of powerlessness; and ultimately, by acting individually and collectively, to change the conditions of life. Habermas' language contains an echo of Haraway's (1991) call, discussed in the Introduction, for researchers to 'reconstruct the boundaries of daily life'.

Research itself then, becomes political action, 'action research' (see below). This is closely related in many respects to a traditional Marxist position, and in particular the Marxist concept of 'false consciousness' (e.g. the masses unquestioning acceptance of capitalism). For more conventional Marxists though, emancipatory knowledge (consciousness raising) is an inevitable societal development following the predicted polarization of the social classes, but for Habermas, it is the legitimate objective of social research, and although it may ultimately lead to transformed consciousness or 'perspective transformation', there are no predictable outcomes (Mezirow, 1981).

3. a. iii. Habermas' Critical Theory

Habermas believes that the human species organises experiences in terms of 'interests' (often referred to as cognitive interests). The first arises from our need as animals to make tools, the second from our need to communicate (through intersubjectively understood symbols), and the third an interest in the 'reflective appropriation of human life'. This last is an interest in reason; the capacity to be self-reflective and self-determining, to generate knowledge which enhances autonomy and responsibility; and of course, an interest in emancipation (Held, 1980). Each of these three cognitive interests can be linked to separate learning domains – the technical, the practical and the emancipatory.

The 'technical' relates largely to work. It involves instrumental action, based on empirical knowledge and is governed by technical rules; it involves predictions about observable events that, as such, can prove correct or incorrect.

The 'practical' relates to interaction, or what Habermas calls 'communicative action'. Communicative action does not seek to control and manipulate the environment; it is governed by binding consensual norms, that is, reciprocal expectations of behaviour that must be recognised by at least two actors. Unlike technical rules that depend on empirical analysis, social norms are only valid in terms of the way they relate to mutual understanding of intentions and recognition of obligations – they are grounded in inter-subjectivity.

The 'emancipatory' relates to self-knowledge, a concept which is itself utterly central to the world of career education and guidance: '...the knowledge of self-reflection, including interest in the ways one's history and biography has expressed itself in the way one sees oneself, one's roles and social expectations. Emancipation is from libidinal, institutional or environmental forces which limit our options and rational control over our lives, but have been taken for granted as beyond human control.' (Mezirow, 1981, p. 5). Through emancipatory knowledge dramatic personal change can take place as one becomes aware of the way ideologies have created or contributed to our dependency on reified powers.

A key objective of this thesis is to test methods of bringing career education and guidance into the domains of the practical, of communicative action, and of the emancipatory, by utilising Freire's (1970) strategy of 'problem posing', described by Mezirow (1981) as 'making problematic our taken for granted social roles and expectations and the habitual ways we act and feel in carrying them out'.³

In the early 1980's Mezirow attempted to apply Habermas' ideas about critical theory and human interests to education. Mezirow argues that educators have failed to recognise the crucial distinction between the three interest domains. He

³ It is worth noting the similarity between Mezirow's language here and the words Turkle (1996) uses to describe the process of *Dépaysement* in 2. g. iii. above. *Dépaysement* might be a useful mechanism for 'problem posing'.

notes that the mode of inquiry derived from the empirical-analytic sciences is often deemed equally appropriate to all three domains. He is particularly critical of the trend in education (a trend also well seen in career education and guidance in the UK, discussed above) to focus on a behavioural change model (related to controlling and manipulating the environment of the learner) and notes ‘There is nothing wrong with this rather mechanistic approach to education as long as it is confined to task-oriented learning common to the ‘technical’ domain. It is when educators address the other two domains of learning, social interaction and perspective transformation, using the same model, that they have been wrong and generally ineffectual’ (p. 17).

In Mezirow’s (1981) framework, the process of ‘communicative action’ appears well suited to career education and guidance.⁴ He argues that it is the role of educators to assist people to learn to take on the roles of others, to develop empathy, to develop confidence and competence in resolving conflict, participating in discussion and dialogue, participating in and leading learning groups, listening, expressing oneself, asking questions etc. Indeed some of these activities appear on the face of it particularly well suited to the electronic online discussion forum. The value of the ‘emancipatory’ (Mezirow refers to this field of interest as ‘perspective transformation’) is much less clear. Indeed it is not obvious whether 16, 17 and 18 year old school pupils are equipped with the necessary maturity to generate this kind of emancipatory knowledge and participate in a process of perspective transformation.

Mezirow describes Habermas’ third domain of learning, the development of perspective transformation, as ‘uniquely adult’. For example, he argues that while adults are capable of being consciously critical, or critically reflective, in effecting relationships, children are critically unselfconscious and usually unaware of how circumstances dictate their relationships and commitments to parents or mentors. It is unclear in Mezirow’s writing when adulthood begins and childhood ends, and in common with many developmental theories there is an acknowledgement of

⁴ This focus on communicative action leading to perspective transformation is much closer to the relatively neglected ‘community interaction’ model (Law 1981) and later ‘emancipatory communitarian’ perspectives (Blustein et al 2005) than it is to the ‘banking’ model of career education epitomised in the dominant DOTS framework (Law and Watts 1977).

overlap (people develop at different rates) – he refers, vaguely, to ‘late adolescence’. Mezirow relates his ideas to Erikson’s developmental stage of ‘identity crisis’ and the related heightened sense of critical reflectivity, to the Piagetian concept of ‘decentration’ (the ability to analyse things from a perspective other than one’s own), and to Bruner’s theories about the latter stages of intellectual development when self-consciousness begins to permit the distinction between our own psychological reactions and external events. Mezirow writes (1981, p. 1) ‘It is only in late adolescence and in adulthood that a person can come to recognise being caught in his or her own history and reliving it.’ So while the thesis can be seen as an attempt to root career education and guidance in a process of ‘communicative action’, it is unclear whether it will be possible to identify evidence of perspective transformation as a result of ‘problem posing’ and discussion – it is possible that school students in late adolescence may be able to be prepared for generating ‘emancipatory knowledge’ and perspective transformation in later life, but may not be equipped for this while still school students. Clarification of this issue, both in terms of career education and the utility of electronic forums, is an important concern here and a challenge for the methodology.

It is debatable whether career education itself, freed from institutional constraints, can become emancipatory. However, in line with the first objective of this thesis (see page 1), to involve the wider community in career education, the methodology will help test the ability of modern technologies of communication to generate communicative action and ultimately, perhaps even emancipatory change in the participants of a career education online discussion forum. Ultimately theory may or may not emerge from the data collected but this will be independent of, and unconstrained by, the emergence of any emancipatory change in the participants (i.e. the main objective is to involve the wider community, not to fabricate a process of ‘perspective transformation’!).

There is one final important contradiction that needs elaboration at this stage. The link between the methodology of critical theory and constructionist and social-constructionist perspectives on career education is most helpful. Despite this, there is a tension between Habermas’ position and that of constructivist

perspectives. Constructivist positions are sometimes aligned with post-modern thinking, yet Habermas is explicitly an unreconstructed modernist who has been highly critical of the 'post-modern turn', and especially the unbounded relativism to which it so often leads. For example, his methodology of emancipatory knowledge has an inbuilt value system - it seeks to create knowledge that will change the world in the direction of freedom, justice and democracy. Of course a post-modernist may not be comfortable presuming we could all understand these changes the same way, and may even want to question the very nature (perhaps the very possibility) of justice, for example. A post-modern thinker might speculate that different people, and different social groups, in different historical phases, would perceive justice differently. Benhabib (quoted in Stephens, 1994) writes:

Habermas' theory calls into question a belief that is widely held by cynical and fashionable thinkers on the right and the left: the belief that human behaviour should be seen as a battlefield upon which each of us is merely out for our own strategic interests. In our 'communicative actions' the right sees selfish individuals struggling to get a leg up on each other; the postmodern left sees the powerful exploiting the powerless; but Habermas sees, of all things, a kind of co-operation. Indeed, he shares with Socrates an almost utopian belief in the wholesomeness of debate and discussion.

As Andersen (2000) puts it, language facilitates reflection and critique, and for Habermas the task of critical social science is to examine if consensus about ideas, beliefs and norms etc is rationally justified in terms of 'universal interests' or if it is the result of illegitimate power relations.

Despite Habermas' criticism of positivism, which he saw as legitimising instrumental ways of thinking and technical-rational control disguised as scientific neutrality (Andersen 2000), it must be noted that he does not reject rationalism. Controversially, he believes that moral rightness can be justified rationally.⁵ Through communicative social action we can formulate norms, which all affected

⁵ Echoing Nietzsche quoted in 3. a. above.

can accept the consequences and side effects of, for the ultimate satisfaction of everyone's interests.

So Habermas is rooted in the values of modernism, he is optimistic and utopian, which puts him at odds with the relativism of many post-modernists. In some ways then, this modernist strand of thinking seems to be an appropriate point of reference for a thesis investigating the impact of introducing wide-ranging community discussion into career education and guidance. Lyotard (1979) is scathing about Habermas' view that carefully managed communication, 'ideal speech', will somehow produce an evolutionary leap to a new kind of rational society. He sees this position as Marxism stripped of its radicalism, 'reduced to the status of utopia or hope' (p. 13). Rather, Lyotard emphasises, not 'emancipation', but communication that can 'disturb' the regulatory mechanisms of the social order, the self-adjustments of the system, by introducing new narratives and 'language games'. He argues:

No one, not even the least privileged among us, is ever entirely powerless over the messages that traverse and position him at the post of the sender, addressee, or referentlanguage games are the minimum relation required for society to exist. (p. 15)

For Lyotard, the language game itself *is* the game of inquiry. As such, regulating communication, adopting rules (such as Habermas' 'five processual requirements of discourse ethics') is simply entrenching the power that is in the hands of the decision makers, the rule makers. Flyvbjerg (2001) sums up the debate very nicely, 'Is communication characterised by consensus seeking and the absence of power? Or is communication the exercise of power and rhetoric?' Flyvbjerg answers his own questions by suggesting (like Lyotard), that rationality and power cannot be meaningfully distinguished from each other. Habermas' rules are simply one possible set of rules amongst many, their 'rationality' cannot be proven by 'empirical experimentation and observation' and is therefore open to argument; the nature of emancipatory knowledge will always be elusive and contested.

In this thesis the methodologies of learning implicit in the process of communicative action and perspective transformation will be integrated into career education and guidance through processes of active discussion, problem posing, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions, self-reflection, developing empathy, challenging cultural myths and exploring alternative meaning perspectives for interpreting the world. It will use aspects of the qualitative strategies Mezirow himself identifies as appropriate techniques (symbolic interaction, grounded theory and phenomenology etc.) for research in this area (1981, p. 18). As the above discussion makes clear, it is essential to bear in mind the main challenge to this methodology is not simply from positivistic perspectives, but from a subtle post-modern position. This view suggests that disrupting the status quo of the transmission of knowledge in career education is not a shift to a more 'democratic', 'emancipatory' educational process. Instead it is a process of 'delegitimation' of grand narratives, of knowledge itself, exploring the complex languages that make up the fabric of our social bonds by introducing diverse language games that 'obey their own rules' and which no one person could ever hope to master. Knowledge can only be 'legitimate' when it springs from one's own linguistic practice and 'communicational interaction' (Lyotard 1979, pp. 40-41).

This latter perspective neatly parallels a number of themes already alluded to; the ways increasing access to career information databases allow alternative interpretations by stakeholders (parents, clients, employers) and contradictions to emerge (p. 64); the work of Peavy (1992), emphasising the importance of social context in interpreting information and generating knowledge (p. 65); community guidance (p. 65); and of course the social-constructionist orthodoxy in research about online communities and online education (p. 69, p. 80). Multiple linguistic practices, multiple communities, generate a multiplicity of perspectives, all of which places the emphasis on pluralism and diversity rather than a sense of dialectical progression towards an ideal (such as Habermas' rules for discourse ethics).

3. a. iv. Critical Theory and Technological Determinism

It is interesting briefly to digress from the methodological issues relating to this thesis, in order to introduce some additional context to the discussion of Habermas and critical theory; his perspective on technology and his conception of the 'public sphere'.

For our purposes here, a most interesting split emerges in the approach to technology. While many writers see in technology (Feenberg, 1996) the evils they have identified in positivism, instrumentalism, behaviourism and mechanism, for Habermas (and many other writers and post-modern thinkers eg. Harraway, 2000) technology is essentially neutral. It is neither good nor bad, although it may be utilised for good or bad ends. For constructivists too, technology, like everything else, is a product of a process of cognitive constructivism and social-constructionism, the development and application of technology is politically and socially determined, it does not have a life of its own, or indeed any status outwith political and social perspectives within which it is constructed.⁶

⁶ Technology is not essentially 'unnatural', although it is often constructed as such. It both determines, and is determined by, our constructions of it in a reflexive process. Feenberg (1996) writes 'The tools we use shape our way of life in modern societies where technique has become all pervasive. In this situation, means and ends cannot be separated. How we do things determines who and what we are'. Technological development transforms what it is to be human. Indeed Feenberg argues that if technology is essentially social, like all social institutions it must itself be characterised by reflexivity: -

'The essence of technology can only be the sum of all the major determinations it exhibits in its various stages of development. That sum is sufficiently rich and complex to embrace numerous possibilities through shifts of emphasis and exclusions.'

The implication of this way of thinking is that technology is not determinist, but is in fact reflexive. Technology is essentially social, and is expressed in the ways we choose to apply it, it can be oppressive, emancipatory, or both.

3. a. v. Ethnomethodology

The highly politicised approach to qualitative research discussed above, originating from developments in Marxist thinking and especially the Frankfurt School of philosophy – has a quintessentially European flavour. The position it brings us to, reflexive action research, where the researcher is both subject and object in the process and works in partnership with participants to move through iterative cycles of understanding, can also be reached from an ‘ethnomethodological’ perspective which, in its most developed form, originates from North America and, in particular, the work of Garfinkel (1967). Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology seeks to understand the unspoken assumptions that structure and support organisational phenomena. There is a strong sense that organisational and social worlds need to be understood on their own terms, in context, and that applying structure and rules from without may ultimately miss interesting and revealing issues:

I use the term ‘ethnomethodology’ to refer to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organised artful practices of everyday life. (p. 11, 2003 ed.)

Garfinkel calls to mind the hermeneutic and constructivist enquiry discussed above, describing his methodology as assigning ‘exclusive priority tomethods of common understanding. Not as *a* method of understanding, but immensely various methods of understanding are the professional sociologist’s proper and hitherto unstudied and critical phenomena’ (p. 31).

He was interested in the ways unspoken rules structure the activities of people working in organisations. For members of an organisation the ‘hows of their accomplishments’ are unproblematic and known only vaguely, ‘in the doing’, which is often remarkably skilful, reliable, uniform, but also often, unaccountable.

For Garfinkel the members are using 'ethnographies'. Their accomplishments are, for them, commonplace phenomenon. They use everyday activities as methods to exploit the rational properties of indexical expressions and indexical actions, and these everyday activities can only be understood as actions-in-context. He was careful to note that the use of the word 'context' is itself essentially indexical.

Therefore, in Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, the following practical policies apply:

- 1 Any organisational event can be examined for evidence of choices being made by members that may indicate that communality of practical actions is a project of the members' actions.
- 2 It is not enough to note that members are systematically operating according to organisational rules, the ways in which these rules are themselves applied (adequately, sufficiently, necessarily) are themselves glosses for organisational phenomenon that need to be understood.
- 3 The rational properties of practical activities cannot be assessed or understood properly using rules or standards imported from outwith the settings in which these properties are recognised.
- 4 Social settings must be seen as self-organising. Any setting organises itself to make its properties accountable to its members. That organisation consists of the members' methods for making evident that the settings' ways are clear, rational connections.
- 5 Every kind of enquiry consists of organised, artful practices whereby rational properties of partially formulated advice, fables, passing remarks etc are demonstrated.

Point 5 of this list of policies for ethnomethodology is particularly relevant given the focus of this research – the online career learning conversations of school

pupils and supporting adults. It suggests, of course, that research must pay attention to all the communication – not only the ‘on-message’, ‘on-topic’ communication, but also the ‘back-chat’, the informal, unstructured, undirected communications between participants. Point 3 too, has a particular resonance for a study looking at a relatively new mode of communication, one that has yet to establish itself in secondary schools as a whole never mind in career education. It is possible that the pupil Internet bulletin board communications will make sense only in new, context-specific ways that have yet to be explored and understood.

There is another way in which Garfinkel’s important work links neatly with the methodological approach suggested by the European tradition discussed above. Garfinkel sees scientific enquiry itself as just another ethnography, to be understood in a hermeneutic way.⁷ In a telling passage he writes:

the scientific rationalities, in fact occur as stable properties of actions and as sanctionable ideals only in the case of actions governed by the attitude of scientific theorising. By contrast, actions governed by the attitude of daily life are marked by the specific absence of these rationalities either as stable properties or as sanctionable ideals. (p. 270)

Flybjerg (2001) argues that Garfinkel’s method is particularly interesting in light of what he calls the ‘double hermeneutic’; the need to understand the self-perceptions and contexts of those being studied, and the converse need to understand the self-perceptions and contexts of the researchers.

Ethnomethodology emphasises that the basic skills and attitude of the researcher are just as ‘situational’ and dependant on context as the people they study. The work of the researcher, his or her values and methods, must also be subject to scrutiny. Flybjerg takes this to a radical conclusion, arguing that because, as Garfinkel carefully notes, the researchers skills are situational and context-dependent, Garfinkel’s objective of formulating the researchers skills into rules for research (a methodology) is impossible! In a striking passage, that recalls the iconoclastic views of Nietzsche and Feyerabend that introduced this section,

⁷ In common with Kuhn (1996) quoted above.

Flyvbjerg argues that objective rules for methods are impossible in the social sciences:

Researchers do not need to be able to formulate rules for their skills in order to practice them with success. On the contrary, studies show that rules can obstruct the continuous exercise of high-level skills. There is nothing which indicates that researchers at expert level – those who have achieved genuine mastery in their field – use mainly context independent rules or traditional rationality in their best scientific performances, even though they might depict it as such when they get around to writing the scholarly articles or memoirs. (p. 34)

3. a. vi. Summary

To summarise the above discussion on the underpinning philosophy of the research:

- The focus of the research is qualitative, and, as Miles and Huberman (1984) note, qualitative data normally come in the form of words. The majority of the data used is harvested from a text based Internet discussion forum. Email correspondence, notes from informal interviews, and the reflections and notes of the researcher supplement this.
- There is a focus on ‘praxis’, the (dialectic) relationship between theory and practice (Weiner, 1994), described by Freire as the fusion of objectivity and subjectivity in the ways people live out their lives; ‘a process of orientation in the world (which) can be neither understood as a purely subjective event, nor as an objective or mechanistic one, but only as an event in which subjectivity and objectivity are united’ (Freire, 1972, p. 21).
- In qualitative research a key question is ‘Who benefits from the research?’ (Prilleltensky and Nelson, 2002) and in this case it is the explicit project of

the research to find a way to use modern communications technologies to allow school students to set the agenda for their own career education and to allow the wider community to engage with that agenda.

- The methods utilised draw on strands of participatory action research, they involve the researcher in a collaborative process involving teachers, career advisers, school pupils and selected representatives of the wider community. It attends to issues of power and is a catalyst for social change in as much as it represents an attempt to counteract the powerful elements of social control that underpin the career education curriculum by introducing an element of student-led knowledge generation to the process. Like feminist pedagogy, it is concerned with changing classroom methods to reflect concerns with the role and authority of the teacher and the epistemological challenge of experience; the source of the claims for knowledge and truth is in personal experience and feeling (Weiner, 1994). Lather (1991) describes this as an approach to research that is in search of pattern and meaning, rather than prediction and control.

3. b. Action Research and Participatory Action Research

Although, broadly speaking, there have been many influences on the research design from hermeneutic epistemology, the single most significant influence has been the view that research must always take place in context and to facilitate social change, uniting reflection and action. The emphasis on action research (and especially participatory action research), has been heavily influenced by community psychology, sociological and educational research. In Habermas' scheme of human interests, discussed above, technical (work) knowledge is related to the instrumental and positivistic sciences, practical knowledge (interpretation and understanding) is related to hermeneutic methods, but the emancipatory domain is related to methods that involve reflection, and especially reflection in action.

Despite the fact that some psychology books on methods do not even list ‘action research’ in their indexes (eg. Silverman, 2000), let alone discuss it seriously, there is a long tradition of action research in psychology and its profile is strengthening as a result of a combination of increasing awareness of ethical difficulties in some areas of experimental social psychology and the heavy emphasis on participatory action research in community psychology.

In action research the social research process is a dynamic, interactive process that acknowledges all the participants have a view on the research and that the relationship between the researcher and the other participants is very important; it is not an external, objective observation (Hayes, 2000). Hayes (2000) sums up a key element of action research, and the method of this thesis, as follows:

Where other approaches to research try to minimise the effect of the researcher’s presence, A.R. aims to take advantage of it – studying how the researcher’s intervention has its effects, and the processes which become apparent as a result. (p. 196)

Lewin (1946) coined the term in order to find ways to address social problems such as anti-semitism and poverty by improving the way organisations function. In the last 60 years many competing conceptions of action research have emerged, but Rapoport’s (1970) definition is still useful:

Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework. (p. 499 cited in Orford, 1992)

It is worth noting that, typically, the collaboration Lewin had in mind in the 40s was between researchers and organisational managers and that his goal was to produce organisational changes that might in the long-term lead to social change. Lewin saw action research as a cyclical process of problem definition, fact-finding, goal setting, action and evaluation, with the cycle repeating until the desired results are achieved. Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodology, discussed

above, provides a helpful way to think about this aspect of action research; in order to understand a complex system it is necessary to disturb it in some way (Hayes, 2000). Action researchers aim to introduce changes into organisations, or complex systems, that reveal previously unseen processes and assumptions, and which perhaps even improve the operation of the organisation or system. What makes A.R. different from ethnomethodology is that the researcher actively collaborates with participants; in ethnomethodology the 'objects of the research may be unaware they are being observed.

An important component of much action research is 'critical subjectivity', sometimes called 'reflexivity'. This is a process where the researchers, indeed all the participants, are encouraged to consider the values and interactions that have created the research inputs (Gough and McFadden, 2001). There are three important components to this reflexivity. The researcher must expose their individual perspectives and values and the effect these have on the research process. Rather than being dismissed as 'bias' or 'subjectivity', and therefore repressed, as in much scientific research, the researcher's values are opened up to scrutiny and critique. Similarly the relationship between the researcher and other participants in the research is exposed. It is acknowledged that it is almost impossible to escape structured inequalities between the participants (because the researcher often develops the idea, formulates research questions etc.) but close attention is paid to the distribution of power. Lastly, there must be 'disciplinary reflexivity'; the researcher must adopt a critical stance to broader debates about theory and method in their own discipline. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) greatly expand these core aspects of reflexivity in research to include a commitment to emergent and flexible research designs, an educational component for everyone involved (everyone should learn something), and an active demystification of the research process and the knowledge involved so that expertise is shared. Research must not be the arcane domain of a class of professional academics.

The Critical Psychology movement has been especially critical of psychology's reliance on methods borrowed from the natural sciences (Prilleltensky and Nelson, 2002) and advocates use of qualitative and reflexive methods, including

action research. But the (closely related) Community Psychology movement strongly advocates a version of AR dubbed 'participatory action research'. Concerned with the way psychological and therapeutic interventions on an individual level can lead to 'blaming individuals' for their problems, rather than seeing their problems as products of environmental circumstances and as social constructions, Community Psychologists undertake action research to solve practical problems and change social conditions (Orford, 1993), like other action researchers. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) make a very strong case for combining action research with participatory research. They note that for action research to produce social change 'oppressed people must be fully engaged in the process of research, education and change' (p. 278). The emphasis here is much more on the questions of power and equal participation that Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000, see above) identify. The researcher must avoid treating participants as 'objects of curiosity', be attuned to issues of power, and maximise the participation of everyone involved in all aspects of the research; the research should be demystified as also noted above, but it should involve all stakeholders in the interpretation of findings and recommendations for change. It is not simply up to the researcher to draw conclusions and disseminate the results, they belong to all the participants.

Participatory action research contains all the elements of action research but shifts the focus to a more radical position; it is considered unethical to research people and communities who are not actively involved with the research process.

A.R. overlaps with other research paradigms, such as Activity Theory (Nardi, 1996), and Edwards (2000) makes a strong case for the compatibility between A.R. and research in a constructivist tradition based on the work of Vygotsky (Sociocultural Research and Activity Theory - SCRAT). Edwards characterises this constructivist approach to research in terms of 'knowledge construction as a process of increasingly informed participation in the communities in which specific skills and understandings are employed. Knowledge is constructed in interaction with the cultural tools that mediate the knowledge in use in that community' (p. 198). For Edwards, there is no tension between what she broadly terms 'the hermeneutic model of psychology', SCRAT and A.R. On the contrary,

Bassey (1997) makes the differences between these paradigms explicit; hermeneutic, phenomenological and ethnomethodological paradigms describe and interpret the phenomena of the world in order to generate shared meanings; action researchers on the other hand are focused on directly trying to improve the phenomena of their surroundings. It is important to note though, that A.R. is often cyclical, and the evaluation and problem definition stages of the cycle inevitably return action researchers to the process of interpretation; the interpretive paradigm and the action research paradigm are thus linked in cycles of interpretation and action.

Whatever the reasons for the neglect of A.R. in psychology, Bassey (1990) notes that it has blossomed in the last ten years in educational and nursing research, and the participatory variety of A.R. is certainly the central paradigm for Community Psychologists. Kember (2002) conducted an analysis of 90 educational A.R. projects and noted that almost all were successful at introducing innovations to improve student learning and concluded 'action research is a highly cost-effective means of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning'. It is this very practical emphasis on allowing theory to emerge from continuous cycles of improvement of professional practice, so contrary to the positivist research paradigm, which is responsible for the neglect of A.R. by some professional academics.

There are then, in conclusion, two overlapping elements to the methodology of this thesis:-

- 1 A process of action research and participant observation in career education programmes where interventions were designed in order to create the conditions to explore the constructs underpinning the research and from which the data, in the form of words, could emerge.

- 2 An analysis of the data using an iterative process of reduction, display, interpretation, conclusion drawing and verification (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

These elements both involved cyclical processes of devising and adapting interventions that generate data, which in turn generate theory, which in turn generates adaptations of interventions. Any emerging theories can be described as ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) precisely because they are derived from data systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. Data collection, analysis and eventual theory are closely related, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) note:

A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind. Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data.

This idealistic, some would say unrealistic, injunction is tempered here by a recognition and evaluation of the researcher’s own partiality and values, as discussed.

3. c. Method – The Cycles of Exploration

The research can neatly be divided into four phases, with three stages of data collection, each subsequent stage becoming increasingly structured and formal, culminating in a complex intervention involving school pupils, parents, teachers, career advisers and others, resulting in the collection of almost 700 bulletin board messages.

The outcomes of the formative trials are presented and discussed in Chapter 4, the outcomes of the main trial Chapter 5.

In summary, underpinning constructs to be explored included:

- The capacity of modern communication technologies to enhance and broaden career education.
- The capacity of modern communication technologies to link school pupils with the wider community.

- The ability of senior school students to engage in text based communication in online communities.
- The possibility of developing a student led, holistic dimension to career education, capable of integrating occupational concerns with wider career planning issues.
- The possibility of online career education leading to perspective transformation and functioning as a conduit for emancipatory education.

Phase One	2000 - 2001	Software Development Content Development Web Page Design Web Site Hosting
Phase Two	2001 - 2002	Software Development Negotiation with LEAs Data Collection Trial: Miniature Trial – with adults Unsuccessful Full-Scale Trial Literature Reviewing and Writing Revised Delivery Model
Phase Three	2002 - 2003	Negotiation with LEAs Negotiation with Careers Scotland Data Collection Stage 1: Single Period Trial – School Pupils Data Collection Stage 2: Six Week Trial – One School Initial Data Analysis – QSR Nudist
Phase Four	2004 - 2006	Data Collection Stage 3: Six Week Trial – Two Schools Main Data Analysis Theory Development Writing

Table 1: Summary of the Main Phases of the Methodology

3. c. i. Phase 1 2000 – 2001: Software and Curriculum Development

The earliest phase involved a two part development process:

Software development and coding – the creation of a ‘software probe’ to test the technology; and content development – in particular the development of a complimentary ‘problem posing’ curriculum to the traditional DOTS (Law and Watts, 1977) framework.

3. c. i. I Technical Solutions – The Software Probe

The timing of the research was good in one important sense – free and open source software was increasingly abundant and there were numerous platforms available, both to support Internet communications and to assist with the development and design of web pages. Related to this was a change in attitudes to ‘user-friendliness’ of Internet tools. For example, the ability to create, modify and regularly update web pages was, at the time, becoming easier with the help of web-based tools such as Blogger (www.blogger.com).⁸

The first major task undertaken was to develop the skills to create web pages using HTML, CGI and CSS scripts; a process of familiarisation with html editors such as Dreamweaver and Frontpage. Although it might have been possible get technical support to create the required web pages and interactive software, the need for the design to evolve throughout several cycles meant that it would be impractical and expensive to rely on the skills of technicians. The long-term

⁸ In at least three regards, issues alluded to in the literature review, chapter 2, were being overtaken by events; the concerns by Sampson (1994, see 2.b.ii) that the technology was difficult to master, concerns about informal networking displacing the role of professional people, and the general lack of communications applications. Blogger was a ground-breaking social networking application, partly because the software was so easy to use, and a whole new generation of users was drawn to social and communications potential of the Internet.

nature of the project also meant that there would be a need for changes to be made and problems corrected at short notice throughout the lifetime of the project.

The process of familiarisation with the technical side of the Internet took approximately a year of part-time work, and is a never-ending task in itself. There is a continual need for development and refining of skills as the technology evolves. The introduction of CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), for example, has transformed the way web pages are designed during the five years of the project.

The main technical solutions that emerged from a year of experimentation included:-

- Use of a commercial host for the web site.

Initially it was anticipated that the Napier University server would be an appropriate host, but difficulties accessing the server from off-campus (there is no File Transfer Protocol access), restricted access to Common Gateway Interface Bins, and lack of technical support meant that the expense of using a commercial host was outweighed by the advantages it brought in terms of support, access and reliability.

- Use of Frames and Cascading Style Sheets

The skeleton of the web site was created with a mixture of hand coding HTML and use of a compiler (Dreamweaver Version 4). Templates were used to ensure additional pages were consistent with the initial design and the site structure was built using frames. All the internal links in the site except the discussion forum opened in frames. External links opened in a new browser window. It was important to ensure that internal navigation within the site was clear and that it was obvious to users whenever they were accessing pages 'off-site'.

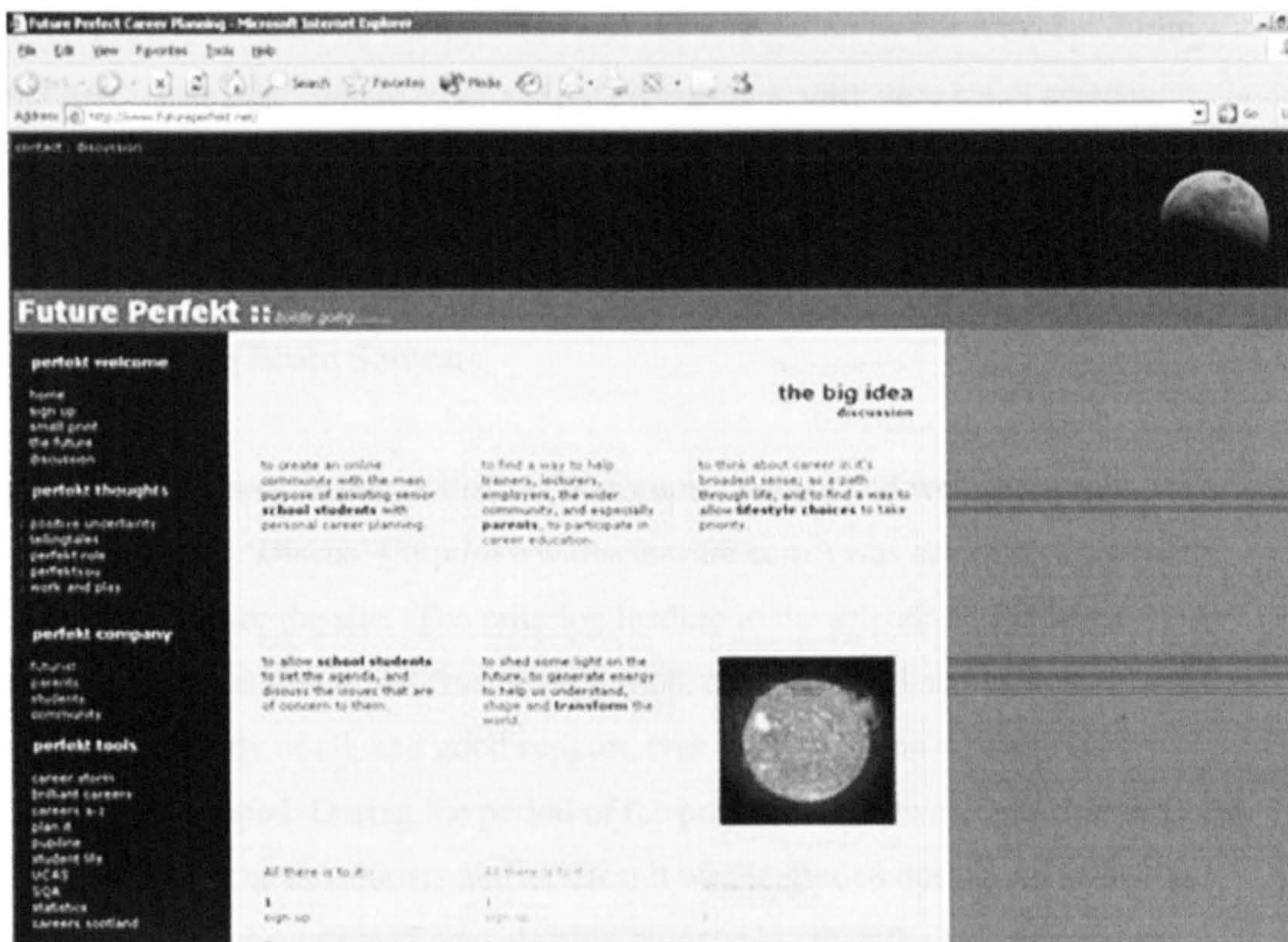


Figure 2 Futureperfekt home page – the design (color, fonts, images) went through a series of improvements but the same basic frames structure was used in all the versions.

Throughout the development of the ‘software probe’, which went through several iterations, fashions in web design changed – in particular use of ‘frames’ has declined as cascading style sheets have become the preferred way to design and structure web pages. A typical perspective from one of the many web sites devoted to design issues on the web: ‘At the time of writing (June 2000) frames are unfashionable, denigrated by the majority of designers, and it’s noticeable how many of the big-money sites no longer use them.’ (Wakeman, 2000). By the end of the data gathering the web site was, perhaps inevitably because of its organic development, an uncomfortable mix of styles, templates, frames and css code. Feedback on the design of the site during the early stages was on the whole very positive, although some school students found the black, white and grey backdrops dull on certain platforms (see below). The underlying code was therefore inefficient and untidy (compared to the efficiency a professional web designer might introduce) but the ‘front end’ of the site achieved a good level of ‘usability’; the experience of visitors to the site was positive. There were no

adverse comments about the structure and site navigation by users except during the first ‘class trial’, where elderly Apple computers, with very small screens, made the frames layout difficult to use. Users with fifteen-inch monitors and above, the current standard for desktop use, did not note this difficulty.

- **Bulletin Board Software**

After an extensive review of discussion forum freeware and web services, software called ‘Discus’ (<http://www.discusware.com/>) was selected to power the bulletin board for the site. The criterion leading to the selection of Discus included the fact that it was free, widely used, easy to install and customise and, most importantly of all, had good support, was ‘bug’ free and was still being actively developed. During the period of the project the software was dramatically overhauled by the developers and as a result was upgraded during the trial – the more recent version proved considerably more stable than the former and had additional features that proved popular with participants, such as a facility to highlight recent postings with ‘new post’ icons. The initial process of installation of this software was a serious task for someone with modest technical skills and numerous mistakes were made. This represented between 3 and 4 days work in itself, but would possibly be only a half days work for an appropriately trained computer technician. The software is highly rated in comparative software reviews (eg CGI Resource Index, 2002 gave the software an average of 9.83 out of 10 stars over 66 reviews).

3. c. i. II Curriculum Development

During this phase of the project, even as early versions of the ‘software’ probe were being tested, a number of decisions about the content of the web site were taken. There were two key constructs that needed to be balanced – ‘structured versus unstructured’ and ‘vocational versus holistic’.⁹

The web site needed sufficient structure to provide clear focused points of

⁹ See Chapter 2 (d) p. 62 for comments on the debate about holism in career guidance.

engagement for the school students, but also needed to be open and flexible enough for students' personal concerns and interests to emerge.¹⁰ In the light of findings from the earlier parts of the research cycle, in the final and most extensive of the data gathering cycles, each of six topics (one per week for a six week programme) was introduced by a single web page containing pictures or graphics, a small amount of text, and a few hypertext links to particularly relevant sites. Text was kept to a minimum as it was found that some school students were resistant to reading even a couple of paragraphs on a computer monitor – although others did enjoy more extended introductions to the topics. Links to external sites had to be carefully selected too – some pupils quickly became diverted from the task at hand by surfing. Too many links inevitably led pupils away from the Futurperfekt site.

The site was broadly 'career' related. As discussed above, there is a tension in much career education between a tight focus on occupational, educational and training concerns and a broader formulation of a career as being a path through life, involving the implementation of a self-concept and a process of expression of personal values. As noted, the latter approach brings career education much closer to social education and blurs the distinctions between the role of guidance teachers and career advisers. The content creation took as its reference point the well-established DOTS framework for career education. Although first muted in 1977 (Law and Watts, 1977), this approach to career education was recently endorsed by Learning and Teaching Scotland, whose 'National Framework for Career Education in Scotland' (2001) embedded each of the elements of 'DOTS' in a framework for a career education curriculum. As noted above DOTS is an acronym for Decision Making, Opportunity Awareness, Transition Skills, and Self-Awareness. The DOTS curriculum is integrated into classroom teaching in the majority of Scottish secondary schools and many school students are familiar with the content. The content of the web site was an attempt to take a more holistic and critical perspective than the standard DOTS framework. The topics

¹⁰ In line with the objective (See p.1) of experimenting with person-centredness in career guidance. See Chapter 2 for comments on person-centredness. Lent (1996) provides a detailed analysis. Conclusions about the value of person-centredness in career education are given in Chapter 6 (c) p. 257

invite pupils to develop, enrich, and to criticise, the DOTS orthodoxy. The five topics selected for this ‘problem posing’ approach were:

Positive uncertainty: an exploration of *decision making* based on the ideas of Gelat (1989) which celebrate intuitive decision making and risk taking.

Telling Tales: an exploration of ‘*self-awareness*’ from a narrative perspective (McLeod, 1997) – looking at the stories we tell about ourselves.

Perfekt You: also on the ‘*self awareness*’ theme, students were asked to consider how well formed and fixed their personalities were. In particular it was an opportunity to consider the person they might be changing into. In more technical language, it was an attempt to contrast constructivist perspectives with those from differential psychology.

Perfekt Role: a look at various life roles and the ways in which different roles may be more or less important to us at different stages of our lives, based on Super’s (1995) ‘life career rainbow’ – intended as a more holistic approach to ‘*opportunity awareness*’.

Work and Play: investigating the relationship between work and the rest of our lives. This topic was inspired by an Industrial Society publication, ‘Happy Mondays’ (Reeves, 2002), which suggests barriers between work and play are being broken down by structural changes in the modern labour market.

It must be noted that the topics were indicative – this was not intended to replace a conventional career education curriculum, rather, it was an attempt to stimulate students to engage in critical discussion. Each topic had its own web page with images, definitions, comments and questions, but these pages were not intended to focus discussion exclusively on an alternative curriculum nor was it intended to be compulsory for students to read and respond to the topic web pages. These topics were intended simply as a springboard, loose enough to allow pupils own concerns to emerge, tight enough to focus discussion for those who needed or wanted some structure.

The content of the web pages was dynamic and they were edited and adjusted at various stages over the following eighteen months. As a general rule the changes were in two directions – the content of the pages was reduced in response to the length of time students spent reading the pages, and the content was marginally enriched with some ‘academic’ and higher level discussion in response to evidence that some of the students appreciated and enjoyed elements of theory.

In summary, Phase 1 was a process of tackling and solving the many emerging technical problems the development of the ‘software probe’ created. Decisions were taken about the structure of the web site, the navigation through the site, the preferred software solutions and the content. Participants were involved at each stage, giving feedback and making suggestions.

3. c. ii. Phase 2 2001 – 2002: Software trial / Access to Schools

The second phase of the research was characterised by difficult negotiations with the Scottish education bureaucracy, some modest development of the ‘software probe’, a trial of the format of the software probe, and ultimately by a radical rethink about the mode of delivery.

The initial conception of the web site was that it should be based entirely on distance learning with all the participants organised and managed remotely, possibly with guidance teachers supervising students in computer labs, but essentially all participants would log-on to the web site independently, in their own time and wherever most suited them. Participants would read web-based introductions to the topics, consider the issues and then enter into online discussion using the bulletin board. Instructions and coordination were to be carried out via email with occasional ‘on-line’ real time chats.

3. c. ii. I. Data Collection Trial – Testing the Software Probe

In order to test the practicality of this mode of delivery, a cut down version of the software probe was developed, smaller, more compact, and more focused – it was

conceived as a training tool in Internet job search for post-graduate students. Eight post-graduate students were recruited in Scotland, Finland and England, there was no face to face contact with any of the participants and they were recruited via university career service contacts. There was a series of 4 topics – each containing a small amount of text and including links to a variety of Internet job search resources, such as recruitment agencies, online psychometric tests, and discussion forums. Students were invited to visit each of the four topics in turn, one week at a time, explore the links and ideas, and comment and discuss what they had learned on the associated bulletin board. In addition to the formal function of the probe (teaching online job search skills) there was a subsidiary role in simply bringing unemployed post-graduates together in a forum where they could support one another and share ideas. In view of the much discussed potential of the Internet to bring together people from diverse cultural backgrounds, this trial was an opportunity to test this aspect in extreme conditions, the participants never met face to face, and did not even share the same native tongue. After the short trial, each participant was interviewed online using IRC (Internet Relay Chat).

The results of this preliminary trial were of modest significance due to the few participants, limited length and restricted content, but in general the trial confirmed the applicability, or at least potential, of the mode of delivery. The majority of the participants demonstrated ‘stickability’, that is, they saw the trial through to week four. They communicated freely and easily on the bulletin boards without any serious cultural barriers. The data from the online interviews indicated that the post-graduates felt it a worthwhile experience and particularly emphasised the value of the discussion forum support from other participants, all of whom were undergoing major life transitions.

3. c. ii. II. Negotiation with LEAs

The ease of management of this modest trial, and the generally positive response from participants, encouraged attempts to recruit three or four Scottish schools for a major trial of the Futureperfekt web site. Despite considerable time and trouble – and six months of negotiations and arrangements this came to nothing. For a

variety of reasons, none of the four schools contacted, and who initially seemed interested, were able to participate in the trial, planned for October 2002.

For example, two schools were tentatively interested in participation after informal contact was made to the school guidance team. The project was presented in one case to the school management team and in another to the school guidance team. Both were supplied with information about Internet security (see discussion of ethical issues p. 140), timing, content, participants and possible advantages for students and the school alike. They were also given the URL for the software probe itself. Ultimately both these schools decided against participation – a number of reasons were given, which included demands on guidance teachers' time, demands on pupils, incidental factors relating to other projects the schools were also participating in. It took some months before the final decisions not to participate were made, and it was clear that a number of small factors combined to dissipate the enthusiasm of the teachers – there was no one in the schools with the time and motivation to solve the many administrative difficulties and coordinate participation.

A third school was very enthusiastic, the commitment of one guidance teacher was secured and she agreed to recruit school pupils. The school's Internet access was protected by a powerful firewall, so the Education Authority was contacted for permission to allow the school to access the Futureperfekt site and a regional computer technician was contacted to enable access to the bulletin board from the school (pupils were prevented from accessing interactive sites as a matter of course). Despite considerable time and trouble and lengthy negotiations, this school also withdrew from the project because term time commitments overwhelmed the guidance teacher responsible for seeing the project through.

A fourth high school also agreed to participate. In this case contact was made via the Highland Region careers service, and the school's career adviser presented the case for participation in the project to the guidance team, backed up by the above-mentioned literature. In this instance there were no firewall difficulties accessing the site and it was agreed that I make a presentation to senior pupils and recruit them directly to the project. Unfortunately when the allotted time came to meet

the pupils, organisational chaos broke out in the school, the time available was massively reduced and it was not possible to have the contact the pupils required to introduce such a complex project. A few volunteers were forthcoming, even on the basis of significantly reduced input to the pupils, but the numbers were too insignificant to sustain even a small-scale trial.

3. c. ii. III. Community Participants as Social Capital

One of the most difficult and important lessons of the project emerged at this phase. In order to prepare for a larger trial of the project it was necessary to recruit external ‘community’ participants and prepare them for possible start date in October 2002. Potential participants were identified in a range of ways. A group of informal academic and personal contacts were identified, mainly individuals who had some experience or interest in online communications. Potential participants who were employed by Career Scotland were contacted – some of whom had a special interest in online guidance services. The wider social networks of interested colleagues were exploited in order to identify potential participants with varied social profiles; in education, in work, retired, IT literate, Internet ‘Newbies’, parents etc. Due to concerns about ethics, safety of school students online, and the sensitive nature of Internet discussion, it was considered important not to use anyone who was either not well known to the researcher or who was not the subject of an informal endorsement / reference from a trusted colleague of the researcher.¹¹ This careful vetting of the external participants was strictly speaking unnecessary as a raft of precautions were already in place to ensure a safe Internet environment, but it added to the overall sense of security inherent in the project. This was a prerequisite for involvement of the schools.

A few of the ‘community participants’ needed instruction in the use of the Futureperfekt web site and help in understanding how to use the bulletin board ‘discussion forum’. In some cases this necessitated long telephone calls and in

¹¹ Concerns about children’s safety online were regularly raised in the press throughout the duration of the research – indeed in October 2003 the MSN Chat rooms, actively used by many of the school students who participated in the trials, were closed down due to fears about paedophiles using them to ‘groom’ potential victims.

others written instruction and support. By the end of the summer, about twenty potential participants were primed for a possible October 2002 start.

When it eventually became clear that none of the schools would be able to go ahead with the trial it was necessary to contact all the external adult participants – thank them for their support, and suggest the researcher would contact them at a future date. Apart from the amount of time and energy wasted – there was a considerable amount of credibility lost. Some of the external participants were excited about being involved in the project and highly motivated; ultimately they were disappointed that their help and cooperation was wasted time. This was certainly an emotional low point in the course of the research.

3. c. ii. IV. Revising the Delivery Framework

After many months of arrangements and negotiations it became apparent that the mode of delivery, which was effective for the ‘Internet Job Search’ trial, was insufficiently structured and managed to prove practical with schools and school students. One important difference between the model for the large scale trial and the small-scale trial previously conducted was that in the latter I was the focus for all the organisation, administration and communication. The attempts to recruit a larger cohort of participants inevitably required committed confederates in each of the schools to manage the project – the commitment required seemed to prove too much for over-pressed Local Education Authority staff.

It was obvious by the end of this demoralising phase that the mode of delivery would need to be much more structured if schools were to be actively involved. It was decided to offer schools a six week supervised career education programme based around participation in the Futureperfekt project – schools would be asked to commit a class sized group of pupils in a computer laboratory one period per week for 5 or 6 weeks; in exchange the entire programme would be managed by the researcher and therefore would involve minimal staff time. This had advantages and disadvantages as a solution. A key advantage was that the researcher would have considerable face to face involvement with the school students, becoming more closely attuned to the social interaction in the classes

and the nuances of the inter-student communication. A major disadvantage was that the number of potential participants had to be reduced – both in terms of the number of schools involved and the number of school students in each school because the researcher would be required to be available each week to take classes in the schools themselves. However, a corollary of that problem is that the intensity of the engagement of the school students could be increased – instead of relying on a percentage of a larger group of students to log into the web site during lunch breaks and from home, essentially in their spare time, all the school students would have timetabled class time in addition to the option of logging on in their own time.

During this tricky phase of largely unsuccessful data gathering (but valuable adaptation of the methodology) the researcher continued to explore aspects of the methodology in relation to the critical theorist, Jurgen Habermas and a writer on the methodology of adult education, Jack Mezirow in addition to undertaking further investigation of the social psychology the Internet. It was also possible to develop and explore the possibility of social network analysis as a method for studying bulletin board discussion.

3. c. iii. Phase 3 2002 – 2003: Implementing the Revised Model

The collapse of the proposed trial with schools in the Autumn of 2002, along with the data from the small scale trial of the Internet Job Search, site created space and time for the refinement and fine tuning of the Futureperfekt web site. The content and design of both the web site and the bulletin board forum were improved as a result of feedback from professional web designers and software coders. A new strategy for implementing interventions in schools was devised.

3. c. iii. I. New Strategy for Engaging Schools

The experience during Phase 2 of attempting to recruit and negotiate with 4 schools, and the subsequent re-modelling of the mode of delivery suggested that a more careful approach to working with schools would be needed – the decision

was taken to work on an incremental basis with several schools, building up relationships with the schools in a step by step way and slowly increasing the confidence in potential participants in the effectiveness of the Futureperfekt site.

The process of engaging schools with the software probe would have three data collection stages:

Stage 1 – A single period, single class trial of the Futureperfekt software. This would be an opportunity to test the navigation, ‘user friendliness’, and overall usability of Futureperfekt and to get some direct feedback from pupils. It would require only a modest commitment from schools (one class of students during one uncommitted period in a computer laboratory) and the researcher would supervise the class. Results of this trial are discussed below.

Stage 2 – A six week trial of Futureperfekt with a single, small class of senior school students. This extended trial would allow exploration of the students engagement with the site and their ‘stickability’ – it was arranged on a voluntary basis with all pupils attending during an uncommitted period. All the classes were supervised by the researcher and there was no commitment from the school other than provision of a computer laboratory. The data from the bulletin boards would then be used to help recruit schools and students for stage 3.

Stage 3 – A six week trial involving at least two schools with class sized groups of school students, involving up to 50 people including students and community participants.

It was hoped that experiences and evidence from stage one would help recruit participants for stage two and so on. A further dimension to Phase 3 was an effort to establish the support of managers in Careers Scotland to the project. Phase 2 proved difficult partly because, despite considerable good will from both career advisers and guidance teachers in schools, the pressures of their work were so intense that voluntary, extra tasks and projects get sidelined.

3. c. iii. II. Setting up the 3 Stage Data Gathering Process

The Stage 1 Trial, although involving only one school, and a single class for a single school period was twice abandoned by the host school (on one occasion because the school Internet connection failed) before finally, it took place successfully.

The Stage 2 trial was much easier to establish, partly because of the useful results of the Stage 1 trial helped sell the project, but mainly because Careers Scotland identified a very committed career adviser who was interested in getting involved with Stage 2 of the data collection. Having a contact who was highly motivated to participate and who had sufficient autonomy in her school to go ahead and speak to senior school students and book an appropriate computer laboratory (with sufficient Internet bandwidth to support up to 12 pupils using the Futureperfekt site at the same time), made the organisation and coordination of Stage 2 remarkably straightforward.

This stage involved a substantial amount of work, and required my attendance in school one period a week for six weeks as well as almost continuous monitoring of the web discussion; it ultimately generated over 400 postings to the bulletin board discussion forum. The feedback from students was extremely positive (data discussed below). The student comments supporting the project, and the fact that Futureperfekt web site had been safely trialled in two secondary schools, proved to be a great help in setting up Stage 3, the core of Phase 4 of the research.

By the end of Stage 2 a considerable amount of data was already available for analysis and the new mode of delivery (1 period a week of timetabled class time as well as 24 hour access to the site at other times) was proving effective – generating group discussion in class, group discussion online, and contributions from school students to the discussion in their own time. Most importantly, the data from Stage 1 and 2, the support of Careers Scotland, and the new mode of delivery were making it easier to recruit schools to the project for a bigger trial. By the summer of 2003 negotiations were underway with 4 schools about

participation in Stage 3. Data from the Stage 2 trial are discussed below in the results section.

3. c. iv. Phase 4 2003 – 2004: Final Trial

In July/August 2003 the first attempts at data analysis began. In particular experimental social network diagrams were created to help understand the relationships between participants in the Stage 2 trial (see below), and the bulletin board postings were coded to allow experimentation with QSR Nudist computer software – a tool for qualitative data analysis. This phase of analysis, while generating some interesting data in itself, served as a thorough feedback loop – indicating pros and cons, from the pupils' perspective, of the forum. Participants were therefore able to influence each new iteration of the research design.

3. c. iv. I. Preparation

In September 2003 negotiations began with 4 schools about the details of participating in Stage 3, the final and most extensive data gathering exercise and trial of the software probe. All the schools had been initially contacted in June in the hope that arrangements could be made before the schools break up for the summer holiday. None of the schools was in a position to commit to the project by the start of the summer holiday – mainly due to imponderables in the school timetable and the need to identify volunteer pupils. So, despite assiduous efforts, the main negotiation and preparation for the trial would have to take place on the first week of the autumn term, when the teachers were back in school, but the week before the pupils returned – the last minute.

Contact was made with two of the schools directly via senior members of the guidance team, and in the other two of the schools with the nominated Careers Scotland career advisers. In the latter two cases where contact was made with the career advisers, despite a great deal of correspondence, the schools were not able to proceed – in both cases due to pressures on the guidance team and the school students. The additional distance from the senior management team as a result of

negotiating through the career advisers and the modest leverage a career adviser has in a school were also factors.

Ultimately, two of the four schools contacted were able to proceed – both schools had been contacted directly by the researcher (in one case after an introduction from the career service), both schools required permission from the school senior management team to proceed, and both schools required a written statement of the measures that were in place to ensure the safety of school pupils online. Despite the fact that the trial was taking place to a backdrop of a full-scale media frenzy about the dangers of the Internet to children, they were reassured by security features of the Futureprefekt project; only registered users could post; all users posted using a pseudonym; no personal details of any of the participants were available online; the participant schools could not be identified; and lastly, the web site was monitored continuously by either the researcher or a confederate with editing privileges (i.e. any inappropriate postings could be edited or in an extreme case removed).

In discussion with guidance teachers (after the initial negotiations took place), it emerged that both schools had an effective contracting process in place with senior school pupils about Internet use. Internet privileges were immediately withdrawn from pupils who abused the service. Both schools had successful experience dealing with online harassment and bullying and were relaxed about pupil Internet use. As one guidance teacher put it to me ‘pupils are much more at risk from the activities they regularly participate in from the comfort of their home PCs than anything they might do on a school computer’.

In view of the experiences in Phase 2, where adult, community participants were recruited in advance of the trial, only to have to be let down when the trial collapsed, this time the community participants were recruited at the last minute from a small pool of ‘likely suspects’ who had been identified in advance. This meant that there was an element of chance in the make up of the sample of community participants identified. In the end the group of participants included a fisherman, a computer programmer, a community nurse, an unemployed housewife, a trainee clinical psychologist, a university lecturer, a higher education

careers adviser, a Finnish career adviser, a local government administrator, a guidance teacher, and a Careers Scotland school career adviser.

3. c. iv. II. Stage 3 Data Gathering and Software Trial

At the end of September and through the month of October a full-scale 6 week trial with two schools, (30 pupils and 11 adult community participants were active) finally got underway. The resulting data comprised almost 700 postings. Both of the schools involved identified an appropriate computer laboratory and a suitably sized group of volunteer pupils – in both cases the pupils attended one period a week for 5 weeks with an additional week to debrief any pupils who wanted to discuss the experience and provide oral feedback.

The first week consisted of an introduction to the project, administration (allocating pseudonyms and passwords), and ensuring that all the pupils were comfortable navigating the site and posting to the bulletin boards. Each subsequent week began with a new topic of discussion on a face to face basis, followed by pupils reading the relevant ‘primer’ web pages, and posting messages at will to any of the open discussion topics and reading postings from other pupils or adult participants. Pupils were encouraged to visit the web site through the week, between classes, and to read and respond to the messages by other school pupils and the adult participants. During the course of the trial pupils were free to attend or not as the fancy took them. The minimum attendance was 24, the maximum 32, with an average of about 27 pupils per week. Losses were mainly due to illness or competing school events.

One important difference between the two schools was that in one school there was no teacher in attendance in any of the sessions, but in the other a guidance teacher intermittently visited the class. Both secondary schools involved in the project were south Edinburgh schools, but they had quite different catchments. School C, furthest from the town centre, was essentially situated in middle-class suburbs and had a well above average academic record. Staff had no concerns about the behaviour of the volunteer pupils in the class, as a consequence there was not a single visit by a member of staff throughout the trial. School F was

closer to the city centre and had mixed catchments, although it still had above average exam performance as a whole. The volunteer group of pupils at this school were considerably less academic than in school C and were described by their guidance teacher as 'mainly bright pupils who are underperforming'. As a group they were more high spirited and had a great deal more to say for themselves. The guidance teacher promised to pop into the class now and again to check that 'everything is ok'. In the event, there were no behavioural or disciplinary problems with this group at all and they were extremely engaged and motivated throughout. The guidance teacher did spend some time in the classroom but the pupils had an extremely good relationship with him and were very keen for him to join the online discussion. The teacher himself had a particular interest in the project and in fact posted 3 or 4 messages to the discussion but was too busy to contribute as he would have liked.

All the pupils, without exception, were familiar with the Internet. All the pupils had used email and search engines and were comfortable using browsers. About half of the pupils had used both bulletin boards and chat rooms and of that group, the majority were regular users. In particular MSN Messenger, MSN Chat, AOL Messenger and ICQ services were heavily used by some pupils. This familiarity benefited the trial in a number of ways:-

- The pupils rapidly became accustomed to, and very comfortable with, the Futureperfekt website.
- The pupils were keen to help one another, so those who were cautious were rapidly able to get help and support from their neighbours.
- The pupils had excellent access to the Internet both in school and at home so there were many opportunities for them to access the site and check for new postings or post messages of their own outside the classroom sessions.

Data Collection Stage 3 generated thousands of words of data and well over 600 postings to the web site. The process of exploring and analysing this data took approximately 9 months and literally tens of iterations. All the data was copied

into QSR Nudist software and analysed and coded both electronically and by hand.

3. d. Notes on Ethical Issues

Informally, this entire thesis can be seen as a discourse on the ethics of career education and online communities. At its heart is an exploration of what ‘good’ career education is, and as discussed above,¹² the methodology was chosen in an attempt to find a way of doing social psychological research that avoided exploitation and objectification of human subjects. The focus is very much on a participatory process throughout.

On a formal basis the project was subject to approval by the University Faculty Research Committee, was supervised, by senior members of University staff from two different faculties, and the Chair of the Faculty Ethics Committee was consulted, in line with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) position that research should have provision for ethical guidance beyond the initial approval process. Close attention was paid to both the British Psychological Society code of Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants and the ESRC Research Ethics Framework.¹³ In particular, a rigorous system was in place for the involvement of school pupils (aged 16 years and above). Participation was voluntary (except for the first single class trial devised to evaluate the software probe), there was a thorough introduction explaining the nature of the project, pupils signed a consent form and were given information to take home to their parents. Given the project’s concern with ‘emancipatory’, there was at all times a heightened awareness that the main researcher was in a position of authority over participants. Great efforts were made to protect the confidentiality of the school pupils online. As noted, they

¹² See in particular 3. b. on participatory action research.

¹³ The BPS code (www.bps.org.uk/the-society/ethics-rules-charter-code-of-conduct/) was revised extensively during the course of the research, underlining the political and dynamic nature of ethical considerations. In particular the BPS now state emphatically that deception is acceptable in psychological research, a position rejected by many Community Psychologists (Nelson and Prilleltensky 2005). ESRC Research Ethics Framework is available as a pdf file at: http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf

posted to the Internet discussion forum using pseudonyms (only registered participants were able to post and throughout the entire length of the project the forums were checked several times a day for any inappropriate contributions), and the names of the participating schools were not released onto the web site. In addition to the above precautions, pupils in both schools had signed up to their school's own Internet use policy. Pupils were carefully debriefed and had various opportunities to provide feedback. Despite the fact that contribution to a publicly accessible web site is legally a form of publishing, consent was also sought from the pupils to quote from their postings in the write-up.

The adult, community participants were recruited on a much less formal basis. Obviously participation was on a voluntary basis and they were briefed either by email and/or telephone conversations. It was not considered necessary to get written consent forms. All the actively participating adults were extensively debriefed and had opportunities to contribute to the evaluation and analysis of the project in both informal (chats, emails) and formal ways (feedback to the discussion forum, debriefing interviews).

All research is more or less contextualised within an ethical framework that may or may not belong to all the participants; questions of ethics are relative and codes of ethics themselves change and evolve over time. The values that underpinned this research (at least at its inception), of emancipation and person-centred education, were communicated to the participants in briefing sessions. It is worth noting section 2.1.6 (p. 22) of the ESRC research ethics framework:

'Much social science research has a critical role to play in exploring and questioning social, cultural and economic structures and processes (for example relating to patterns of power and social inequality), and institutional dynamics and regimes that disadvantage some social groups over others, intentionally or not. Such research results may have a negative impact on some of the research subjects.'

Great care was taken throughout the project not to present the Futureperfekt programme in opposition to the school curriculum and the normal career

education framework, but as complementary. Inevitably, the free reign available to pupils to review and critique career education inevitably led to some resistance, for example, to the pressure on pupils to make early occupational choices (see below Chapter 5, Final Trial).

Chapter 4: Findings from the Formative Trials

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4. a. Overview of the Formative Trials

Over a two year period, 2002 and 2003, there were three cycles of data gathering, the first two leading to a substantial trial in the autumn of 2003. This section highlights the cycles of development that led to the final trial:

- Internet Job Search Web Site
- A Class Trial of Futureperfekt Career Education Web Site
- An Extended (6 week) Class Trial of Futureperfekt

Discussion of the practical problems encountered in building and managing the software tools and recruiting a community of participants is found in Chapter 3.

Available space does not permit in depth analysis of the formative data, nor does the quantity and quality of the data warrant it except in the case of the 6 week single class, single school trial. The three formative cycles of data gathering should, rather, be seen as a cumulative process of generating the information and experience required to build and sustain a more highly developed 'software probe'. This summary highlights the learning outcomes of the three trials. The collaborative nature of the research, and the time consuming bureaucracy involved in recruiting participants, meant that even small and informal trials could be difficult to establish.

4. b. Internet Job Search Web Site

Notes on the establishment of a mini-web site, focussed on Internet Job Search, can be found in section 3.c.ii.I. This rudimentary trial confirmed:-

- That participants showed 'stickability', that is, they were engaged strongly enough to visit the web site regularly for the four week period.
- Participants communicated freely and easily on the bulletin boards without any serious cultural barriers.

- Some of the participants commented that it was useful to get an overview of tools and services available to job seekers on the Internet and they were able to use the bulletin boards to comment on and critique these services.
- Participants chatted freely and offered a great deal of support and encouragement to one another about job search.

The long-term outcomes of this trial included increased confidence in the potential of the technology and encouragement to commit to the development of a much more substantial web site. Specifically:-

- Initially there were worries that links would lead participants away from the web site and the related discussion into aimless surfing. In fact, the post-graduate participants were happy to read on-screen text as well as follow links, suggesting that it would be worth creating expanded web pages with background information and thought provoking questions to encourage reflection. The job search site relied on only a paragraph of text to introduce the links, but the effectiveness of these indicated that participants (all educated to graduate level) were prepared to follow these links and read online text.
- Level of literacy might be a problem in some situations for some participants, but participants for whom English was a second language joined in freely and the group were tolerant of loose spelling and erratic grammatical styles.
- Feedback from participants (gathered via synchronous online chat) suggested that it was helpful to be involved in a loose network of people (post-graduate job seekers) all at the same stage in their careers.
- Pseudonymous discussion is practical, participants were happy posting using a nickname and discussion did not rely on lots of background

information about participants being available.

Most helpfully, it provided some experience for the researcher and some encouragement to continue developing a more extensive platform.

4. c. Full Class Trial of Futureperfekt CEG Web Site

The Internet Job Search web site provided the impetus to develop a much more substantial web site for use with, amongst others, school pupils. Once the Futureperfekt web site was built it was trialled for a 56-minute period with a class (21) of school pupils. The usual pattern of complex negotiations followed. Once a sympathetic guidance teacher was identified, the school guidance team was briefed and the school management team sent documentation about the project and assurance about the nature of the online interactions (in this case entirely within the school) before permission was given to proceed. Even then, the single period class trial was cancelled twice, firstly as a result of the school Internet connection crashing, and secondly due to ad hoc activities in the school.

Finally a group 6th year pupils of mixed ability, ranging from Oxbridge applicants to likely entrants to Further Education at National Certificate level and 'Skillseekers' (state subsidised vocational training), were identified by the head of guidance. The pupils were press-ganged (did not volunteer) but were happy to be getting a change from their normal social education class.

The 56 minute period was adequate to introduce myself, introduce the website, and get the pupils working through it, but left little time for general discussion at the end.

10 Minutes settling the students down and introducing myself.

10 Minutes demonstrating the site and allocating passwords and pseudonyms.

25 Minutes with the pupils working in groups of 2 or 3 at the PCs, choosing a topic, discussing the issues, and posting messages.

10 Minute debrief and discussion.

4. c. i. Pseudonyms

For reasons outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, it was decided that all pupils should post using pseudonyms. The reasons for using pseudonyms were made explicit to the pupils in the introduction. The process of choosing and using a pseudonym was the cause of amusement – the pupils understood the need for privacy and security and clearly found the idea of posting under pseudonyms such as ‘Mustang’, ‘Panzer’, and ‘Centurion’ fun. They each selected a pseudonym from a list prepared in advance – this proved to be prescient because where pupils were allowed to choose their own pseudonyms they fell into a state of option paralysis and took far too long – all the pupils used names from the provided list in the end, mainly due to the time pressure. Although not a big issue for a very small trial it was noted that when attempting to select their own pseudonyms, pupils preferred pseudonyms that were essentially nicknames and which made them identifiable to other pupils, defeating the purpose.

4. c. ii. Site Design

It was a revelation to see the site, which took at least 35 hours to build and design, on archaic Apple Macintosh computers – it was extremely disappointing. The subtle use of carefully placed bright colours was rendered ineffective as the home page would not fit on the screen – leaving a mass of black and grey until you scrolled around. The extra scrolling required was time consuming and irritating and incited written feedback such as:

‘too grey / black = boring’

‘complicated to find the point you’re looking for. Clearer links to discussion boards would make it a lot easier – we’re quite computer literate so others may find it very difficult’

‘confusing – don’t understand billboard’

Along with the aging computers, the bandwidth the school had available was quite inadequate – some pupils even began timing the delays because they knew they would be expected to give feedback:

‘Timed for time from Positive Uncertainty -> discussion. Took 60 seconds... maybe too long?’

This led to the obvious conclusion that if school students were to participate in school, the quality of the school’s computer resources would be critical to the effectiveness of the project. The school chosen for this test of the software probe was in fact highly regarded as one of the first schools in Fife to have ‘wired classrooms’, but, as so often happens, their status as early adopters eventually left them at the back of the technology cycle – later adopters of the technology got better specified machines.

It also became obvious that some students might not take their time to understand the site structure on their own at home; either it had to be radically compressed in line with the modest Internet Jobs Search site discussed above OR the students would need a supervised introduction to the site.

After only 15 or 20 minutes of experimenting and asking the occasional question, the students were working well. The site structure (a series of introductory web pages leading into 6 discussion topics and links to outside web sites and bulletin board discussion), required a minimum of a modest in-class introduction and would certainly benefit from a carefully managed full period introduction.

Although there was not enough time for any quality discussion to emerge, important outcomes included; an understanding of the disabling effect on the web site of inadequate classroom technology; the need for a thorough, structured introduction to shorten the familiarisation process for the now more highly developed Futureperfekt Forum; the rapidity with which pupils took to posting to the bulletin board; and their enthusiasm for pseudonyms.

At this stage in the development, the relationship between the form and function of the technology became very apparent, the learning outcomes for pupils would be intimately related to technical aspects of the web site. Each technical change would inevitably colour the data (see p. 109).

4. d. Six Week Single Class Trial of Futureperfekt CEG Web Site

The next key stage of development was to explore how the online discussion would develop, and how the forum would fare generally, with an extended trial. In the spirit of iterative cycles of development, having established that the concept was viable, having developed and trialled a career education forum with a class, it was decided to organise a small, class size group of volunteers who would agree to meet one period a week for six weeks to help explore ways of integrating the Futureperfekt forum into classroom work. The lessons learned at this stage, it was hoped, would provide the data to establish a large-scale trial with a community of participants from more than one school.

Utilising lessons learned from previous exercises, a school was selected with up-to-date computing resources, a sympathetic career adviser, and the school guidance team were given a summary of the results of the earlier trials. In this case the school career adviser became a key confederate, enthusiastically endorsing the trial in the school and smoothing out the bureaucratic problems that had dogged earlier work.

The pupils were allocated pseudonyms at random. The small class size meant that, inevitably, the pupils were able to identify who was posting using which pseudonyms. This was one of the most significant drawbacks for this trial, although the pseudonyms protected the schools and the pupils' identities online, the potential advantage of pseudonyms disrupting pupils' ability to stereotype one another was lost. Indeed, even in FTF class discussion pupils began to refer to one another using their pseudonyms, an indication of deep immersion in the project.

This slightly more sophisticated trial had two new components helping to develop the complexity of the interventions, firstly there were 3 adult participants, and secondly, the activities on the Internet were integrated with classroom discussion. The 14 participants included the researcher (Pseudonym 'Futurist'), eleven school pupils and 3 adult participants.

Table 3 Analysis of postings

	Threads Started	Follow Ups	Contib to other Threads	Text Units Posted	Threads	No. Words Contributed
Themaster	7	2	6	15	12	389
Antigravity	7	4	14	26	20	782
Aurora	6	1	15	23	21	603
Stardust	6	5	13	25	16	673
Crazydiamond	4		8	12	12	368
Infinity	4	1	17	24	21	694
Natural Disaster	4		14	21	17	649
Motherearth	2		1	3	3	52
Sagittarius	2	1	20	27	16	1204
Venus	2	4	7	15	9	468
Solaris	1		10	16	11	419
Nebula			10	10	10	600
Futurist	3					
Totals	48			217		

Table 3 above outlines the structure of the online discussion that emerged over a six week period. It shows the number of threads (new discussion topics) started by each participant; the number of follow up postings to their own thread; the number of contributions each participant made to other threads; the total number of postings each participant made; the number of threads they contributed to and the total number of words posted by each.

Participants posted approximately 3 – 4 postings each week. The vast majority of these were posted in class although a small number were posted in school but out

with the dedicated class time. An essential component of this trial was the integration of the online discussion with FTF work. The pupils were introduced to a model of learning that consisted of the following cycle, repeated on a weekly basis:-

Tutor led introduction of the topic -

- ↳ Pupil exploration of related web page resources
 - ↳ Class (FTF) discussion
 - ↳ Pupil message composition and posting
 - ↳ Reading postings
 - ↳ Replying to postings ↻

Previous weeks topics were never 'closed', but a new topic was added each week, steadily increasing the number of topics and threads available to the students. This allowed pupils to stay with and develop topics that were especially interesting to them while still considering new material each week. All the pupils (except one drop out) were active and generally enthusiastic in both the FTF discussion and the bulletin board discussion.

The spirit in the class was extra-ordinarily positive. Attendance, which was voluntary, was excellent. There was some disruption of attendance due to other activities in the school but some pupils skipped classes in order to participate in the trial, others came before the class and apologised for not being able to attend when they were prevented from doing so (for example, by special exam preparation). Some of this 'good spirit' was undoubtedly due to a 'Hawthorne Effect', pupils felt like contributors to a unique experiment and enjoyed the close attention they were getting and the high level of interaction with the tutor. Inevitably this must be considered as a factor in the very positive pupil feedback.

Network diagrams were used to explore the pattern of communications between the participants. Some examples of the diagrams are reproduced in Appendix 1. They clearly show dramatic asymmetry in the communications. The social standing of some of the pupils appears to influence the focus of the

communications and strongly underlines the importance of maintaining the integrity of Pseudonymity – something that was impossible in the small group used in this trial.

It is also possible that there are important aspects of the quality of the postings that make some threads focal points for the discussion. The following examples show postings by two male pupils to the same thread:

***70 Anti-Gravity**

no perfect role but yo can percive some one to be the perfect role model however would tat realy bewhat you want from life. Why does anyone need a perfekt role because if yooou wor well as a unit what does it matter?

***71 Themaster**

I think that throughout our lives we all take on a number of different roles which change as our lives change, but at any given point in your life that role should be perfect to you.

Posting 71 is easier to read and understand than posting 70, hinting at another possible factor for Themaster's ability to attract so many responses to his postings – superior touch-typing and language skills. Maybe he did in fact construct clearer and more interesting contributions - the tyranny of the literate hinted at by some critics of online communication.

The pattern of postings of the main adult contributor (Sagittarius) is also revealing when viewed graphically. There are practically no incoming messages – Sagittarius did not start threads, but contributed widely and supportively to the students discussions but rarely got replies. Perhaps because the Pseudonymity was weak in the classroom, her contributions seemed all the more as from an outsider to the school.

In a future trial, with more participants, widely geographically dispersed, it is possible that Pseudonymity would be much more effective and easier to maintain in the long term. It seems reasonable to conclude that in this small trial, although

pseudonymity maintained the relative anonymity of the pupils and the school on the Internet, it did not bring noticeable benefits to the online discussion.

4. d. i. Content of the Online Discussion

The amount of textual data is considerable for such small trial with so few participants. 217 Messages were posted in total, about 6500 words. A clear indication of the richness of data the method can produce, and an insight into ways that this kind of data might be analysed, both emerged.

The pupils contributed freely, both orally in the FTF class setting and textually on the bulletin boards. Often perspectives were formed in class discussion and then the pupils would post their thoughts on the bulletin board and reply to other pupils postings. Although there was a high level of tolerance in the group for teasing and joking, the quality of some of the contributions was very encouraging.

The three most sustained threads of discussion consisted of 13, 11 and 9 postings respectively, posted by 8, 6 and 8 contributors respectively. The first two belonged to the topics on 'life roles', the third to the topic 'decision making and uncertainty'. A style emerged where pupils asked one another questions and people contributed possible answers, the longest 9 threads all began with a question. There were some indications that it is 'follow ups' (when there is more than one posting from individual participants) that make the threads evolve into discussion and encourage more interesting, thoughtful comments to be made. Most of the longest threads had multiple exchanges between a couple of posters, with single comments by a constellation of others.

Without reproducing all the postings, the longest thread referred to above, about perfect 'life roles', can be summarised as follows. There were three postings from pupils arguing that perfection is unattainable. Three more debating whether or not 'role models' seem 'perfect', and whether we should, in fact, simply be ourselves and be careful about looking up to others. Finally, there were another 6 pointing out that we take on different life roles at different stages in our lives. This latter idea was introduced to the pupils at the outset in the web pages and was the focus

of an in-class discussion of Super's (1983) work, but is elaborated in the postings in the students' own words. It was particularly encouraging to find evidence of the pupils drawing on the introductory resources so effectively. The following contributions were typical:-

***73 Venus**

it may be important to some people that they can have the stereo-typical 'perfekt role'. they want to be the person that everyone wants to be, the person that everyone looks up to. could that be defined as the perfekt role?

***69 Naturaldisaster**

The perfekt role is the role in which you are most happy. It may not seem perfekt to anyone else but if it is what you are most happy in then tis is your perfekt role

The 2nd longest thread, also on the topic of life roles, contained the single longest posting, from the adult participant Sagittarius (245 words). Overall it was characterised by an exchange between Sagittarius (an adult) and Stardust (a student). This thread was synchronous with the thread above but is perhaps more holistic and settles mainly on the role of parenting in relation to other life roles. Four postings focused on our need for other people, three on how important it is to be independent of others (neediness versus independence), and the others on the idea that the child parent relationship exemplifies neediness versus independence and hinting that parenting may be the single most important life role.

***87 Crazydiamond**

i don't think that jobs and careers are the most important things in life. I think that we all do depend on friends and family to help us through, because if you've had a really bad day at work they try and make you feel better and cheer you up abit

***91 Stardust**

but indepenance can sometimes scare people off, no one likes a person who likes to think they don't need anyone else. i believe its a mixture of neediness and independance

***96 Venus**

Bringing up a child must be a hard task, but for some people that is their main task in life. For them, this could be their perfekt role.

There is a great deal of evidence in the postings of rich and interesting ideas which might have been explored more thoroughly with active input from the moderator 'Futurist'. For example, one of the most difficult topics was about 'narrative', understanding in what ways our lives can be seen as 'a story' we tell ourselves and other people. The pupils seemed to get a lot out of this topic but the online discussion was not sustained. The following interesting postings were not well developed and were effectively dead ends:-

***154 Themaster**

When something bad or something really good happens in our lives some people like to talk about it, and tell stories but others dont. Do you think that it helps to tell people close to you stories? I think that when we tell people stories it can help us understand and come to terms with the things happen to us.

Some of the later threads reflects on the importance of telling our story to other people:-

***155 Infinity**

People value other people's thoughts and I think thats why they like to share their thoughts. I think people also like to be comforted by the knowledge that other people have had the same experiences as themselves,

so by sharing stories they are reassured.

*** 156 Aurora**

I think talking about how we feel really does help us understand and come to terms with events that happen around us. When we tell people things we start to understand every better and sort it out in our heads.

These postings quoted above might have made a really interesting foil to an earlier thread, where the students reflect on how easy it is to open up to other people and reveal their 'true selves'. As the following fascinating and rich postings show, the question was begged – does talking about ourselves to other people help us understand ourselves (and ultimately make us something new...)? This was not explored in the discussion but there is an open question about whether a more active teacher-led discussion might have been able to tease this out more effectively, or whether or not more active adult participation might have helped.

The rich quality of the pupils' discussion and reflection is obvious and in some cases touching:

***119 Aurora**

Tuesday, March 18, 2003 - 10:17 am:

Sometimes I think it's hard to show people the real you. People expect things of you. Does anyone know th real you?

***120 Crazydiamond**

Tuesday, March 18, 2003 - 10:24 am:

I agree with you i think it is hard to show people the real you, i think people are scared to show what they're really like in fear of not being accepted within society.

***122 Venus**

Tuesday, March 18, 2003 - 10:27 am:

It's not that people don't know the real you, its that you choose to show people certain sides of you. Do you feel that you can relax more aaround people that you feel comfortable around, thus letting your true self show, or do you just keep yourself to yourself?

***124 Sagittarius**

Thursday, March 20, 2003 - 06:20 pm:

Found this today on a website:

'Self is not a single entity. One 'self' may deceive another, but every now and then a third 'self' sees the truth!' (Bill Law, Steven Pinker)

What do you think?

***125 Antigravity Tuesday, March 25, 2003 - 09:56 am:**

The point sagittarius pick up on that peoples veiws on the same person are very different and complex. maybe it is you who is making that person character where every action equals an equal and opposite reaction. So in reality is everyone not there own third 'self'. there is only one person that knows your self because when do you know you are changing into a different person.

4. d. ii. Feedback

The feedback from the school students is shown in full below in order to capture all nuance and tone. It is strikingly positive, the students genuinely seemed to enjoy the opportunity to combine introspection and reflection with spirited debate. Participation and attendance was completely voluntary and the trial was sustained for several weeks with no decline in either attendance or participation in the discussion so it is unlikely that the positive responses could be due *solely* to a 'Hawthorne Effect'. There are no comments in the feedback threads from the

adult participants – they were neither specifically asked to post here nor were they discouraged, they simply seem to have felt that the feedback was for the students. The feedback can be summarised as follows. Key learning outcomes identified by the students include; learning about other opinions; learning to be open minded; learning about myself; and learning how individual people are.

Specific comments included:

- Really interesting. Got me thinking. Deep discussion. Asked new questions.
- Looked at my life. Broadened my mind. Saw myself differently. Looked deeper at myself and everyday situations. Opened new doors in my mind.
- Many opinions on the same question. Shows how we perceive the world differently. Changed my original position. Saw things in new ways.
- Thought about what you want in the future and how to achieve it.
- Enjoyable, worthwhile, rewarding, fun.
- Unclear but stimulating. Struggled to create a reply or thread sometimes – wasn't sure what it was asking. Easy to drift from original topics because of other's comments.

This summary of the feedback comments shown in full below was eventually used to encourage schools to participate in the later full-scale trial. There was some concern by one or two pupils that the discussion could be confusing and that there was some drift from the original topics as established on the web pages, but otherwise there were no adverse or qualified comments.

Feedback came in two forms – in response to a thread started by the researcher, Futurist, asking 'How have you changed?', and threads started spontaneously by the students themselves at the last class. Each participants 'icon' is also shown,

the larger icons represent a posting that starts a new thread (outgoing), the smaller icons show contributions to threads (incoming).

4. d. ii. I. Feedback: How have you changed?

SRD

Stardust - i have learned more about other peoples opinions and have learned to be far more open minded than i was before

ARA

Aurora - I think this project has been really interesting and has got me thinking first thing in the morning. As the weeks have gone past the discussions have become deeper. I can't think of anything else that could be added to the site or improved.

Antigravity - being able to think about different subjects has broadened my views and mind. I also have begun to look deeper into myself including everyday life situations.

NDR

Naturaldisaster - I believe that i have found out a lot about myself as i am asking myself questions that i would never have asked myself before. The discussions have allowed me to look at my life and see what i want and only i can achieve it, if i want!! I believe that through questioning myself i now look at myself in a different light.

IFY

Infinity - It shows how individual people are. Seeing so many different opinions about the same questions shows the difference in the way we perceive our world. It was good to see people's thoughts on threads you had started which sometimes changed your original opinion and make you see things in a way you wouldn't have before.

SRD

Stardust - 'does fate exist' is a very good question to start with for the future

NDR

Naturaldisaster - This web site shows how different minds work and how people think. Peoples answers to the same question make you think in a way that you might never have thought before. I have enjoyed these discussions and feel that every week has been worthwhile and rewarding!! thank you

4. d. ii. II. Student Feedback Threads

Feedback: What I thought – Themaster

MTR

I have really enjoyed using the FuturePerfekt discussion board over the last few weeks and have found the whole project interesting to be part of.

Topics were often very deep and a bit unclear but really stimulating and interesting too. More fun than sitting in the common room on a Tuesday double free!

Feedback: Others - Aurora

ARA

People should get involved because they will learn more about themselves - which is a really great thing. It helps people think about what they want in the future and how to achieve it.

Feedback: Topics – Stardust

SRD

I found them really interesting at the start, however, as the topics went on i sometimes found myself struggling to create or reply to a thread because i did not know what it was asking

IFY

Infinity - I found it was very easy to drift away from the original topics. This wasn't necessarily due to the topic name but also due to other peoples thoughts and questions.

Feedback: Thanks - Antigravity



Cheers Grant for opening new doors in my mind to look at what my life could be and not what it cant be.



Naturaldisaster - Agree totally. Each week has broadened my mind and I am thankful to you for this. All the best and thank you!!

4. c. Summary

This important stage of data gathering clearly indicated the utility of the software probe, 'Futureperfekt', and it hinted at the benefits of integrating FTF with CMC, and the cycles of reading, talking, writing, reading, talking and writing. The network analysis provided evidence of the value of maintaining pseudonymity throughout the trial, in order to avoid charismatic individuals dominating the discussion. The enthusiastic response of the pupils, and their active contribution and engagement with the adult contributors, both suggest that the 'student-centred' approach is involving for participants. Lastly, the content of the discussion suggests the possibility of rich learning outcomes and an effective platform for social-constructionist models of learning. Stage 2 therefore provided ample encouragement to develop a much larger scale trial of the web site and useful data with which to recruit participants for a bigger trial.

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***021006 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 19, 2003 - 11:23 am: imperfections are what define us as humans. without them we'd all just be robots.**

5. RESULTS: Final Trial – Introductory Notes

The results of the final trial focus on two areas – the structure of the data and the content of the data. The structure of the data reveals a great deal about the ways in which the participants contributed, who posted most, who posted when, where did participants post from, and what is the balance of adult versus student contribution. The bulk of this chapter focuses on the content of the data – which topics most interested the pupils; how did they use the web site ‘topic’ pages; did they feel free to raise personal issues of their own; and how did the adult contributions change the nature of the debate.

The analysis of the content was approached under four inter-related headings:

- To what extent is the conventional career education curriculum represented (DOTS)?
- Is there evidence of content that extends and contextualises the conventional curriculum (holism / family concerns)?
- Is there evidence of a more person-centred and wide ranging view of what career education can encompass (unexpected content, an alternative curriculum)?
- What is missing, has the open and largely un-moderated discussion led to the neglect of important curriculum content?

The final part of this results section focuses on the feedback from the participants and their suggestions for improvements and ways of developing the site.

5. a. Structure of the Data

Over 50 participants were registered to participate in the final trial. Some pupils participated in class activities and followed the online discussion by reading postings but did not post themselves. A couple of pupils did not attend the (voluntary) class sessions, and some adults were unable to participate due to personal circumstances or were unsure how to get started. In the end, 40 people contributed to the online discussion in total; 30 school students from two Edinburgh Secondary High Schools and 10 adults, 9 of the adults were unconnected to the students or their schools, and 1 was a guidance teacher in a participating school.

The individual student contributions to the online forum ranged from 8 words to 2291 words, and the adult contributions from 68 words to 4251. In excess of 22,429 words were posted to the site in 581 separate postings (some feedback from participants is not included in this total as it was submitted via email).

In order to facilitate analysis of the data, each individual posting is referred to as a 'text unit', each discussion sub-topic (started by the participants themselves) is a 'thread', and the 6 themes for the discussion set out in the web site are the 'topics'. There are 581 text units, 98 threads in total, 6 main topics and 3 minor topics (a feedback topic, an 'introduce yourself' topic, and an open space topic). Each individual text unit (posting) is identifiable by a six letter code – the first two digits relating to the topic:-

01 Experiment Wildly

02 Perfekt You

03 Work and Play

04 Telling Tales

05 Perfekt Roles

06 Positive Uncertainty

07 Feedback on the Website

08 What do you think about...

09 Open Space

The second two digits relate to the thread, in some topics there are over twenty threads. The third two digits identify the number of the posting in the thread, an individual thread might have 30+ postings. It is important to note that the 6 digit labels for the text units give practically no information about the timing and date of the post – once each new topic was introduced it remained ‘open’ for the duration of the trial enabling participants to revisit old topics at the same time as new topics and threads were being introduced. The longest thread has 32 individual text units, one thread had contributions on 13 separate days, and the longest lived thread had 27 days between the first and last contribution.

Where text units are quoted directly, unedited, they are always indicated with an asterisk. Take the following example:-

***012202 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 09:09 am: YOUR A GEEK!!!!**

The asterisk indicates that a text unit is beginning. The six-digit code tells us that this is the second text unit in the 22nd thread in the first topic ‘Experiment Wildly’. Shootingstar is the pseudonym of the poster. The month, day and timing of the posting follows, with the actual text of the posting after the colon. Where part of a posting is quoted or paraphrased it is referenced using the six-digit code like so: (012202). The full text of the discussion in the online forum can be referred to in Appendix II.

5. a. i. Adult versus Student Contribution

The adults and the students participated in the discussion relatively equally. Some participants posted much more frequently than others, but this was true for both adults and students. 12 of the 40 participants made more than 20 postings. A core of about 14 students made between 18 and 35 postings each over the 6 week trial, whereas the majority of adult contributors were making a couple of postings a week. The average number of adult postings is considerably skewed by the massive contribution (over 60 postings) by one adult. It is clear that although the overall balance of postings is relatively equal, the adult postings were consistently

wordier than those of the students (See p. 170 Table 7: Ave length and number of posts). The students were much more likely to post playful, 3 or 4 word postings.

Table 8 (p. 170) indicates the relative contributions of the students and adults, by number of posts made by each participant. The first 30 contributors shown are the students, the final 10 adult participants

More detailed information is given in Table 9 (p. 172). This chart provides an indication of the number of words and average length of postings (x 50) alongside the above data showing the number of posts each participant made (x 50).

The data in Table 9 clearly shows individual participant's personal posting styles, with some posting infrequently but making longer contributions, and others posting shorter, more frequent messages. Despite this, for students and adults alike, there is at least a modest indication that those who posted most often were more likely to make longer postings, as shown in Table 10 (p. 172): No of Postings by Length of Postings.

Figure 7 Average length and number of posts

Contribution

■ No of words posted ■ No of posts (x50) ■ Length of posts (x50)

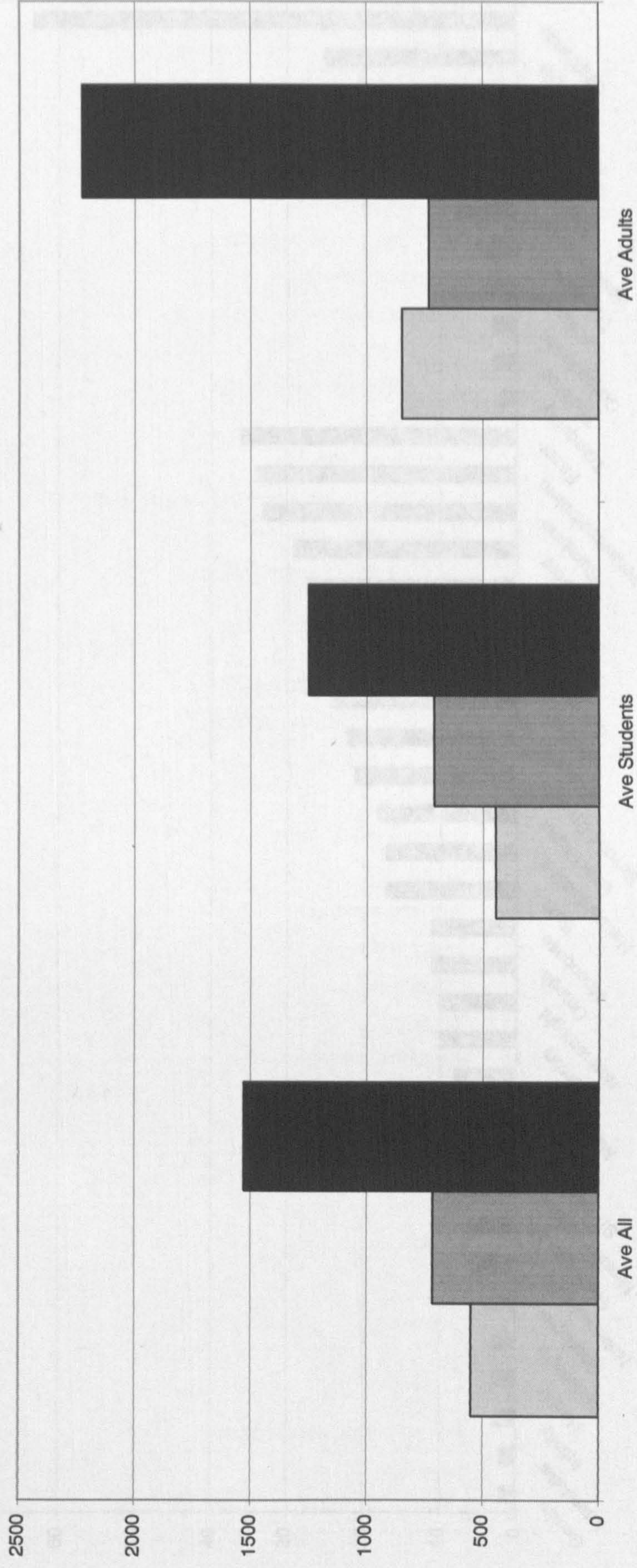


Table 8: No. of Postings- Students/Adults

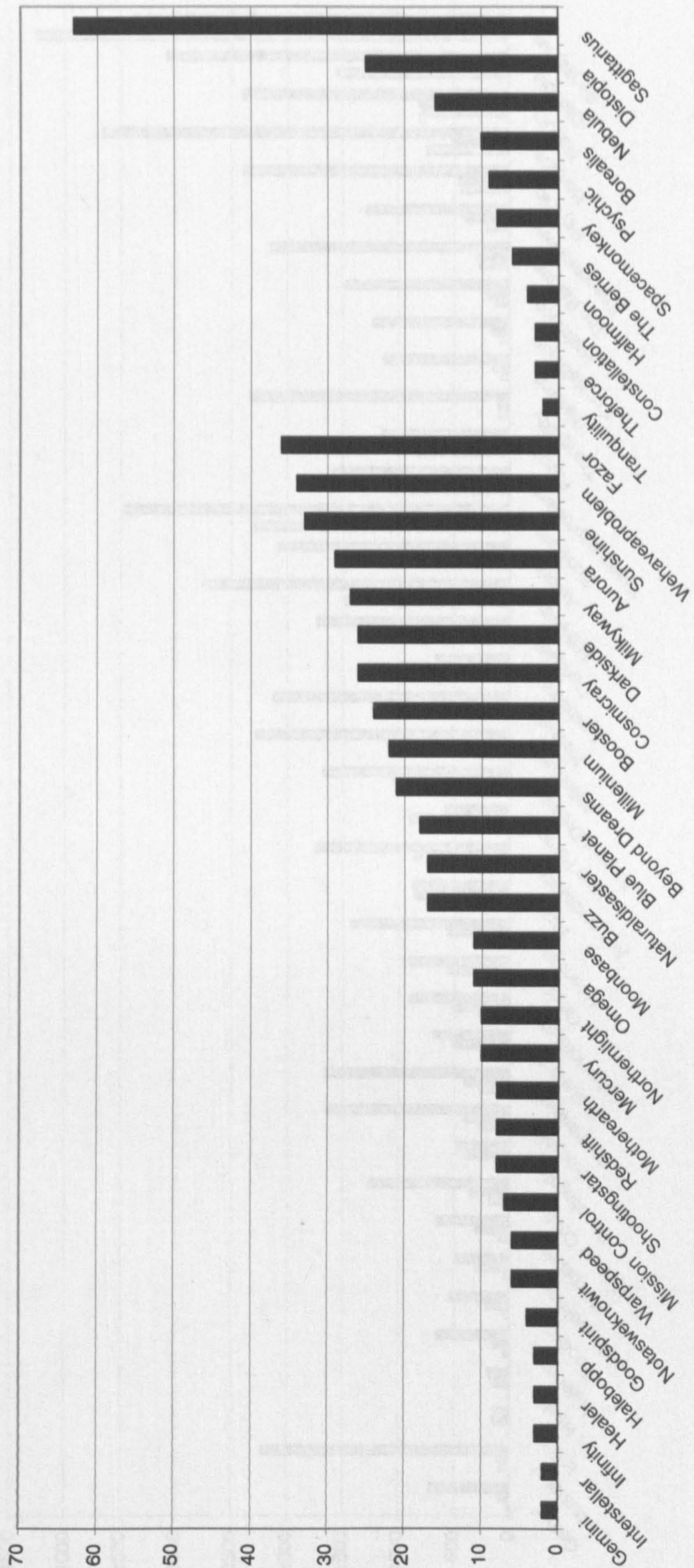


Table 9: Participants contribution (Students and Adults)

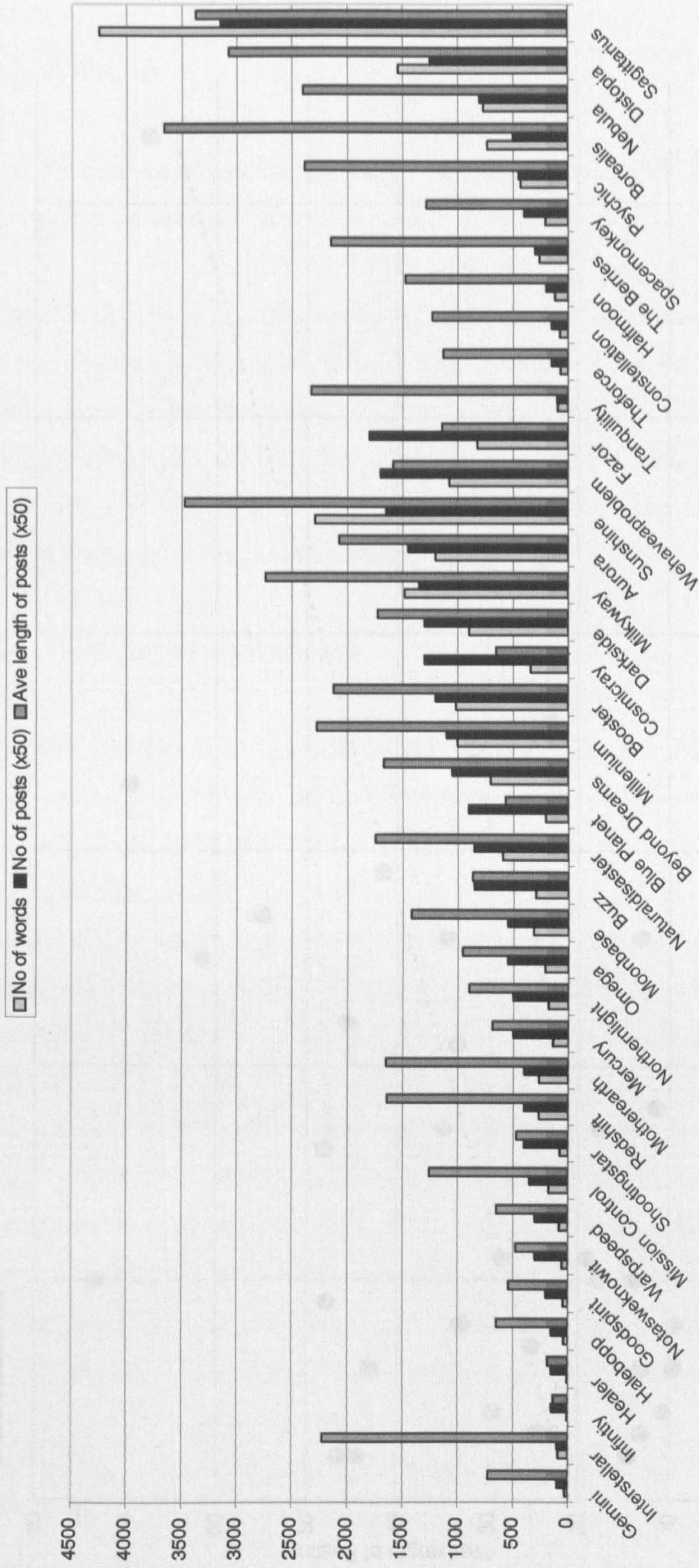
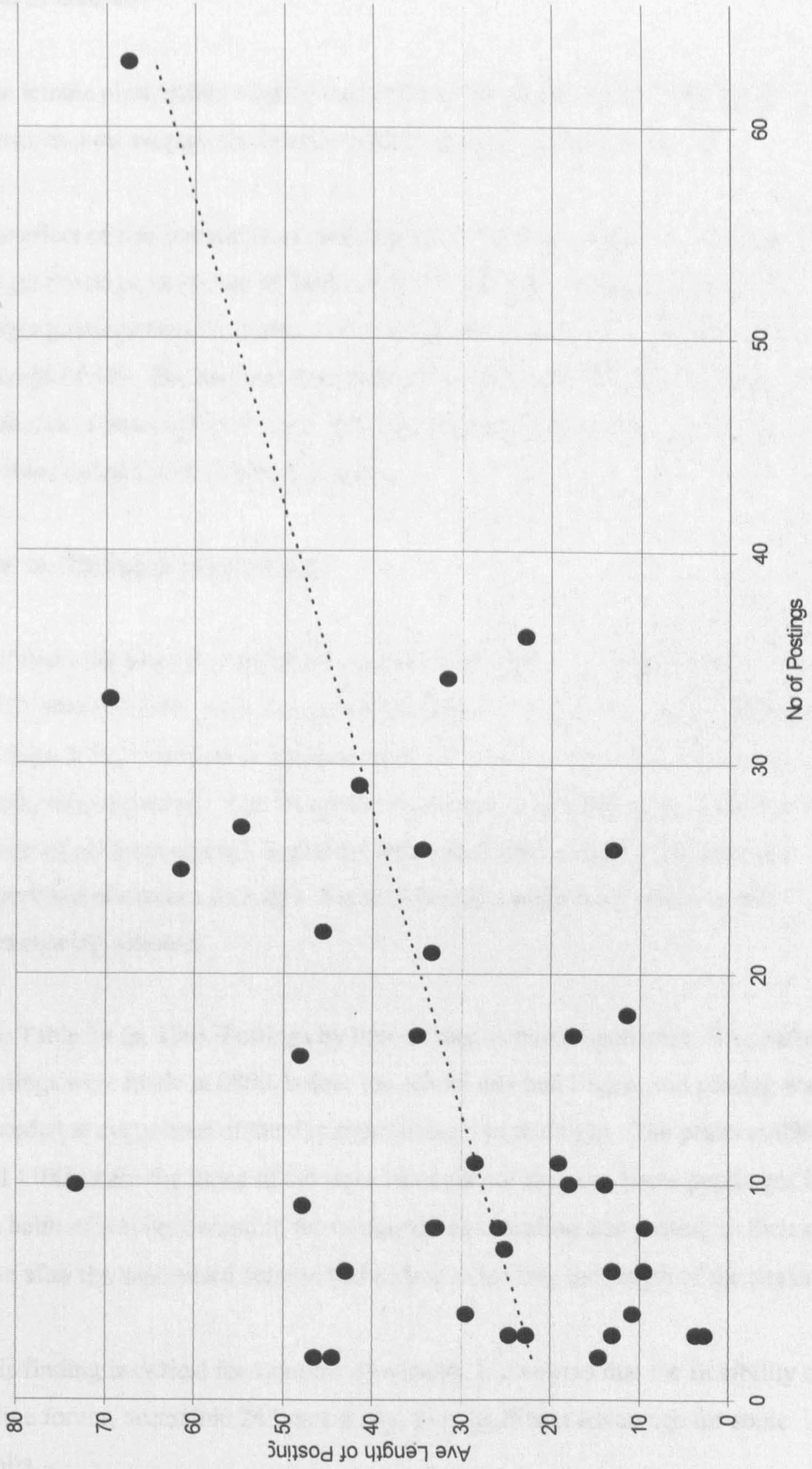


Table 10

Table 10
No of Postings by Length of Postings



5. a. ii. Gender

The female participants slightly outnumbered the males 17:23. Table 11 (p. 175): shows that on average the females posted more often than the males.

The effect of this imbalance is exacerbated by the fact that the females also made longer postings, as shown in Table 12 (p. 177) below. Females posted 59% longer postings than the males – on average 666 words compared to the males average of 419. So, the facts that there were a few more female participants than males, the females posted more often and wrote longer postings, combine to produce a significant gender imbalance.

5. a. iii. Timing of the Postings

The trial took place during the six weeks between 26 August 2003 and 11 October 2003, although there were occasional postings through to November. During the 42 days of the trial there were postings on 35 separate days with a relatively steady rate of posting. The 10 spikes which appear in Table 13 (p. 178) showing the no of postings on each day of the trial, occur on the days when there was supervised classroom activity – 1 school period a week for 5 weeks in two participating schools.

The Table 14 (p. 179), Postings by time of day, is more significant. The earliest postings were made at 0800, before the school day had begun, and posting was recorded at every hour of the day right through to midnight. The peaks at 0900hrs and 1100hrs are the times of the supervised school classes. Some pupils got into the habit of staying behind in the computer labs, reading and posting in their own time after the supervised session had ended, extending the length of the peaks.

This finding is critical for a couple of reasons. It confirms that the flexibility of an online forum, accessible 24 hours a day, is a significant advantage for some adults.

*080112 BOREALIS October 13, 2003 - 06:01 pm: I really like being able to

communicate with people whenever I want to. The discussion is accessible at any time of day or night which is great when you don't have a lot of time available or when you feel like having a discussion at an inhospitable time of day.

***080812 Theberries October 11, 2003 - 08:24 am:** I too read messages whenever I logged on - at home and at work. Using the site was actually quite addictive so it wasn't difficult to find time.

But more importantly, it suggests that pupils were actively engaged in the discussion and that the career education had transcended the school timetable and, in fact, the school boundaries themselves. Pupils were posting messages from their workplaces (out of school jobs) and their homes, at weekends and in a few cases even at midnight.

***080806 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:27 am:** yeah. i thought it was a good way to post certain things. If you don't feel comfortable posting serious things in front of your friends then doing it at home is much easier. I also wanted to see what others had said about some of my own postings as they were a bit mocking of others, so it was interesting to see how they reacted.

Wehaveaproblem's comment is paradoxical. It implies that even in the computer lab, using pseudonyms to post – there was still peer pressure influence (in just one or two cases students either guessed who was who, or shared their pseudonyms). It is possible that posting in privacy gave the pupils a more relaxed atmosphere in which to compose their messages without the risk of someone peering over their shoulder, but it would not make them more or less identifiable had their pseudonym been divulged. Regardless, it is important to note that students appreciated, and took the opportunity to contribute 'out of hours'.

***080803 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am:** was definetely interested to c if anyone had replied to what i had sed, but also to see if any other interesting posts had been put on that u could add to.

The records of actual postings grossly underestimate the number of times the web site was visited out of school hours – server logs show hundreds more hits to the web site. Often both adults and students would browse the site without posting:-

*080808 Aurora October 03, 2003 - 11:31 am: yeah if i had time i would check the web. it was really interesting to see what other people had said and what you could reply.

No of Postings by Gender M-F

Table 11: Males on left, Females on right.

■ No of Postings

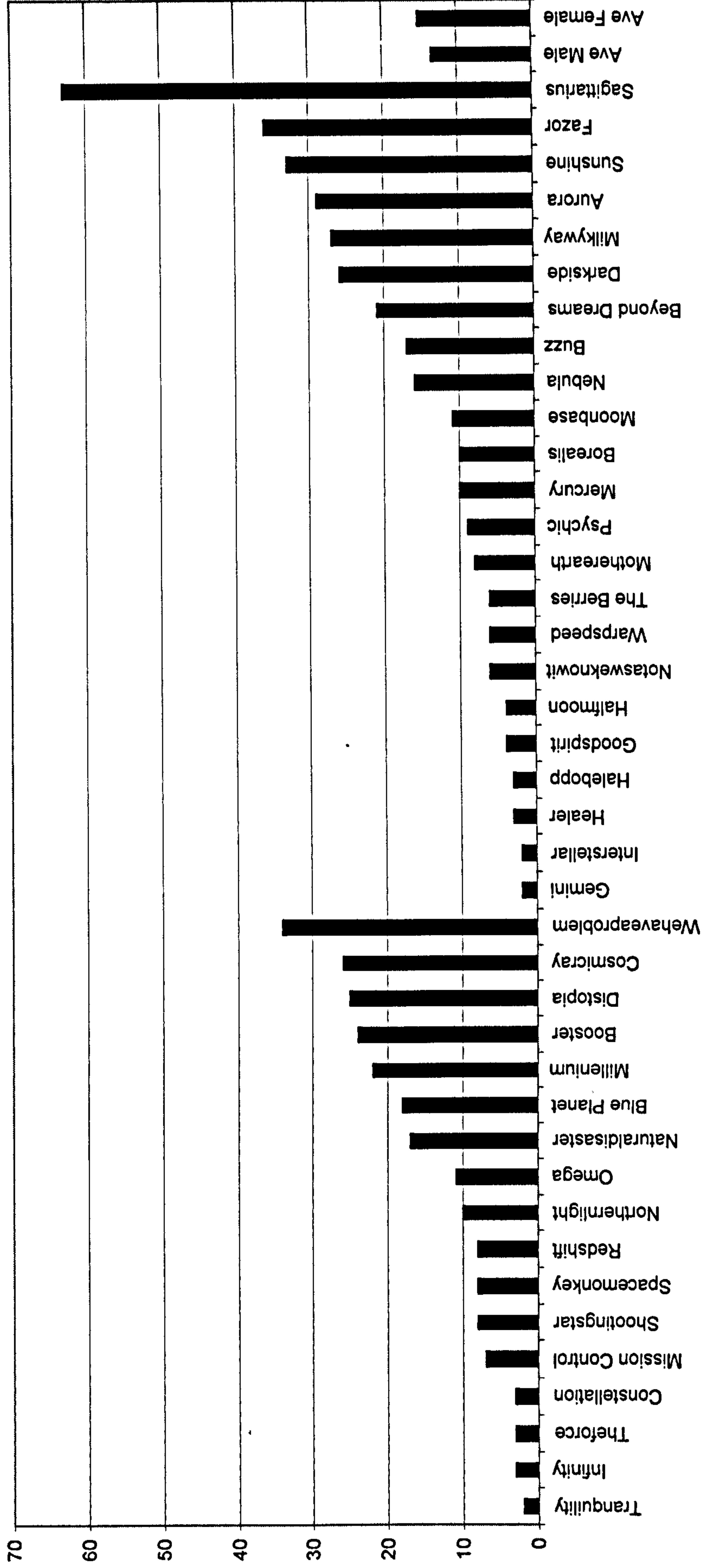


Figure 12: Length of Postings by Gender (males left, females right)

Postings by Gender - Males left, Females right.

□ No of Words ■ No of Postings X50 □ Ave Length of Posts X50

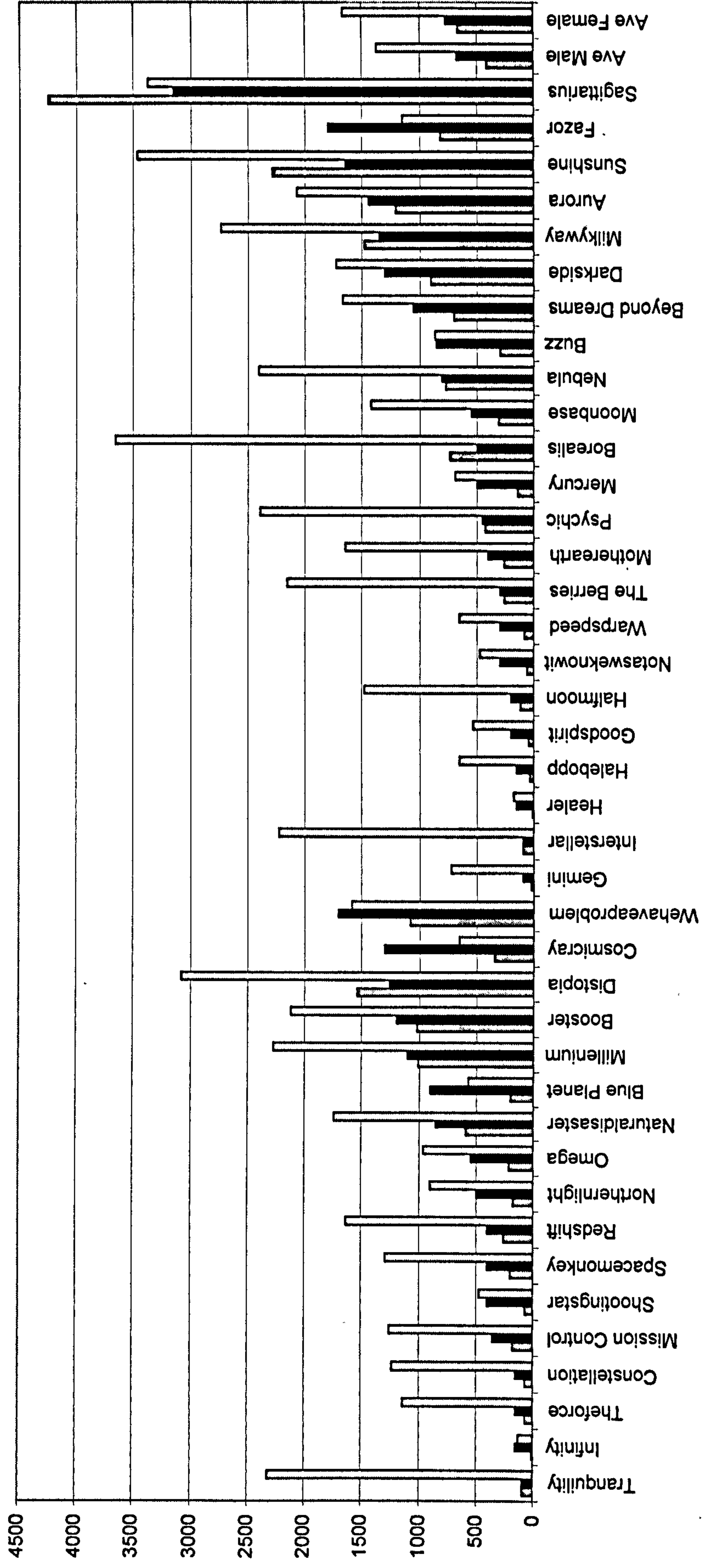
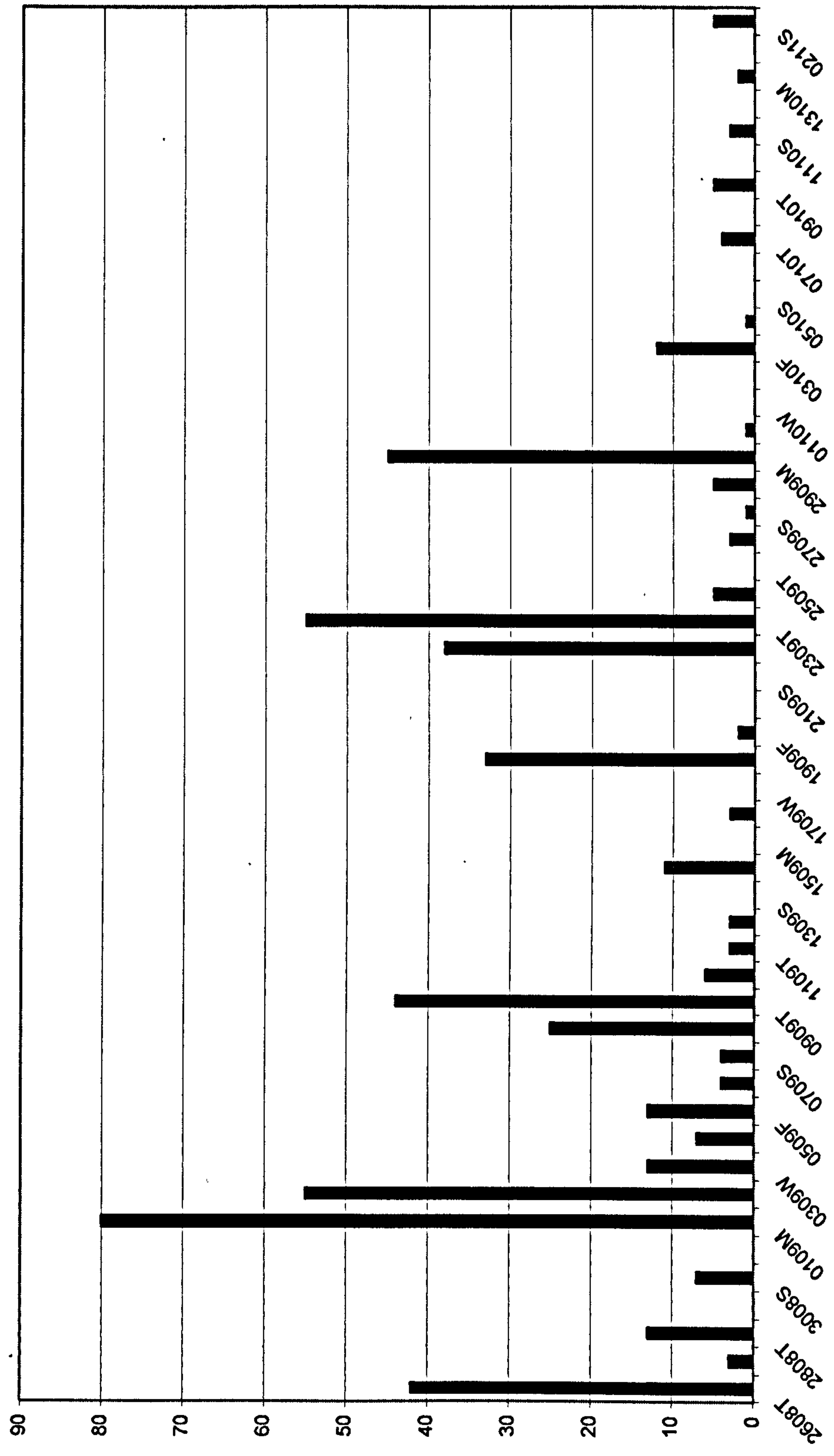


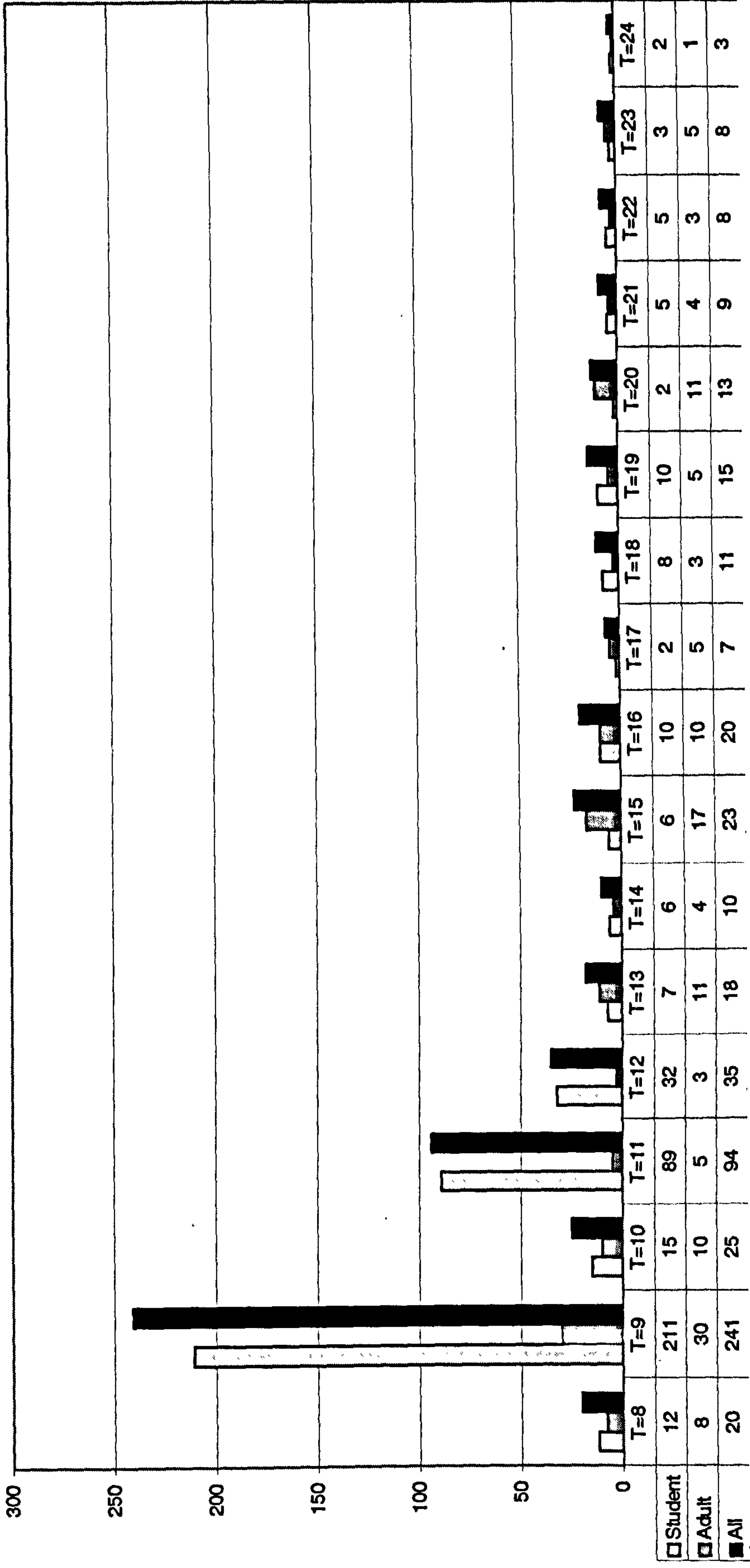
Table 13: Postings over time (Daily: day, month and day of week indicated)



**PAGE
NUMBERING
AS ORIGINAL**

Table 14: Postings by time of day

□ Student ▨ Adult ■ All



5. a. iv. The Threads

Table 15 lists the thread in order, from the threads with most postings to those threads with the least. The contribution to the thread is shown by the total number of postings, the number of postings from each of the participant schools, the number of postings by adults, the number of days in which there were postings to the thread and finally the life of the thread (the number of days between the first and the last posts). The threads are identified firstly by the topic (e.g. Perfekt You), which is followed by the name of the thread (e.g. Do what you're good at). Some students simply started a new thread using their pseudonym. Only the threads initiated by the students have been included in this chart.

The average length of a thread is 9 postings, so much of the discussion was remarkably sustained, 5 threads had more than 20 postings. In fact, the really long threads could quickly become a little confusing, it took a long time to read through all the postings and the focus often drifted considerably from the earlier to the later postings.

There are no obvious differences in the contributions of the two schools (there were more participants in School F than School C). The third and fourth threads listed in Table 15 below are of some interest. In the third thread there are 22 postings but no contribution from School C, this can be explained by the fact that the thread grew very rapidly in a single hour of school time and by the time School C had supervised class time the thread was already over-long and complex. The fourth thread was started by a School C pupil as a provocation to another contributor from School F, she pointed the posting out to her classmates who expressed their feelings! This thread (0513) is discussed in detail below. Apart from these two exceptions, the only other noticeable difference between the schools is that the School F pupils were much more likely to start new threads, many of which only attracted 1 or 2 contributions. These exchanges were mainly between a couple of students who had identified each other.

Table 15 Structure of the Threads (spelling is pupils' own)

	Total	Schl F	Schl C	Adults	Days	Life
Postings by length of thread (No of Postings)						
Work and Play, Do what you're good a	32	3	15	14	8	21
Perfect You, What kind of world will I be living in?	23	7	4	12	13	19
Perfekt Role, Carrer or family (linked threads)	22	20	0	2	3	9
Perfekt Role, Who thinks DARKSIDE a bit far?	21	15	4	2	5	7
Positive Uncertainty, The role of luck	21	10	9	2	4	11
Perfekt You, Darkside	19	8	5	6	7	27
Futurist wants to know, Was this site GOOD...	16	6	7	3	6	13
Work and Play, Busy doesn't mean no fun!	16	2	9	5	5	22
Positive Uncertainty, Luck	14	6	5	3	4	8
Work and Play, Mornin	14	5	2	7	5	7
Positive Uncertainty, Life after death	13	9	2	2	5	6
Work and Play, Play at Work?	12	3	3	6	7	10
Postive Uncertainty, Life is about taking risks	11	5	3	3	4	8
Positive Uncertainty, Uncertain about postive	11	3	4	4	7	19
Perfekt You, Buzz	10	4	2	4	5	6
Perfect Role, Balancing family life with a job	10	1	7	2	2	1
Perfekt You, I am already perfect?	9	9	0	0	2	7
Perfekt You, I am so perfect!!!!!!	9	2	3	4	5	13
Perfekt Role, What is my view going to be like?	9	3	5	1	3	5
Open Space, Relationships	9	3	0	6	4	18

Work and Play, Work or Play?	9	2	3	4	5	14
Telling Tales, The Point	8	2	4	2	4	8
Positive Uncertainty, Safety and Security or ...	8	3	2	3	3	5
Perfekt Role, Politics	7	5	0	2	3	9
Feedback on the website, Darkside	7	5	2	0	5	11
Work and Play, Fazer	7	3	1	3	4	6
Work and Play, Sunshine	7	3	0	4	3	7
Work and Play, You should have a job you enjoy	7	4	1	2	4	12
Work and Play, Broken Hearts (comb)	7	3	3	1	6	7
Perfekt Role, What is my view going to be like	6	6	0	0	3	9
Open Space, Bee Gees	6	1	4	1	5	15
Work and Play, Healer	6	2	4	0	2	5
Perfekt You, 6??????						
Personalities!!?	5	2	2	1	3	2
Perfekt You, Does your personality change	5	1	4	0	2	1
Perfekt Role, Society	5	5	0	0	3	2
Perfekt Role, Fazer	5	4	0	1	2	19
Perfekt Role, Darkside	5	2	1	2	3	13
Work and Play, Buzz	5	3	2	0	3	7
Perfekt Role, Carrers	4	4	0	0	2	14
Perfekt You, Personalities: Stable or Unstable	4	3	1	0	2	6
Perfekt Role, Most important thing!!!!	4	4	0	0	1	1
Work and Play, Is any1 else called Brian???	4	2	2	0	3	6
Work and Play, Darkside	4	2	2	0	3	7
Work and Play, Orite!!	4	3	0	1	2	1
Perfekt You, Fazer	3	3	0	0	1	1
Open Space, Computer	3	0	0	3	2	1

Wizardry						
Positive Uncertainty, Magic !!!!	3	2	0	1	1	1
Work and Play, Fazer	3	3	0	0	1	1
Work and Play, Does anyone know what to say?	3	3	0	0	1	1
Postive Uncertainty, Changing you life	3	1	0	2	1	1
Positive Uncertainty, Practical magic in life	2	2	0	0	1	1
Perfekt Role, Role models!	2	1	0	1	2	5
Work and Play, But...	2	1	0	1	2	4
Positive Uncertainty, Rational	2	1	0	1	1	1
Perfekt You, John Holland Test	1	0	1	0	1	1
Work and Play, Any1 play guitar?	1	1	0	0	1	1
Work and Play, Do what you are good at not what	1	1	0	0	1	1
Total	469	217	128	124		
Average	8.228	3.8070	2.2456	2.1754	3.4385	7.7894

Adults, who made up only a quarter of the total of contributors, made half the postings in each of the two longest threads. The role of the adult contributions is also discussed in detail below.

5. b. Content of the Discussion

5. b. i. DOTS Career Education Framework

As discussed above, one of the earliest and most resilient models of career education is DOTS (Law and Watts, 1977):-

Self awareness – who am I?

Opportunity awareness – where am I?

Decision learning – what will I do?

Transition learning – how will I cope?

Despite the flexibility of these categories, the framework has its critics. Roberts (1977) has perhaps been one of the most important, pointing out that people are not free to make unconstrained choices in the way DOTS implies, and that it treats a sociological process as if it was an uncomplicated psychological process.

However, the analysis of DOTS that most influenced the development of the Futureperfekt forum can be traced to another Roberts, R.J. Roberts (1980), who introduces a critical argument; perhaps career education (which, after all, has a future orientation) should be less concerned with learning how things are, and more about learning how they might be changed. This point was neatly summed up by Paulo Freire (1972):

‘Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.’ (p. 14)

Law (1996a) makes his own (less political) critique of the early versions of DOTS, ‘The DOTS analysis does not address progression: it offers no indication of what is basic and what is advanced, what can be learned early and what can be learned later’ (p. 215).

Despite efforts to update and develop the DOTS framework, in particular to find creative ways to embed it in the curriculum and to make it developmental Law (1996b) introduced four stages to be applied to each DOTS component; understanding, focusing, sifting, sensing. But DOTS can still be found in its original and unreconstructed version in much career education (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001). The problem with DOTS is not the way in which it limits the content of career education; it is not elastic because it is centred on the learner, but because it is ‘content’ driven, with only the loosest definition and categorisation of content. The consequence according to Bates (1989) is that it can become a ‘politically malleable ideological resource’. Indeed, without any sense of irony, Law (1989a) argues that:-

it needs to be reshaped for use in different sectors. It can also be shaped to reflect the interests of different stakeholders in careers education (p. 218).

It appears that the DOTS framework is not wedded to a humanistic and person-centred framework focused on school pupils, but is in fact a political arena in which a range of stakeholders (LEAs, employers, Careers Scotland, schools, politicians, parents) are all competing for influence.¹

One important measure of the utility of the Futureperfekt forum will be the extent to which it manages to embed, and extend the traditional DOTS framework, whilst addressing sociological questions of power and community interaction. The ways in which Futureperfekt enabled a more holistic person centred career education is explored in this chapter, but it is essential to first consider whether or not the loose framework caused established interpretations of DOTS to be neglected – in short, did the Futureperfekt trial address the current career education curriculum? Obviously in any future iteration of the Futureperfekt discussion, each new group of students or adult participants will cause the nature of the content to vary - conclusions relating to this trial may be valid in this context yet be unreliable predictors of future discussion content.

Each of the text units was analysed and, where relevant, coded for one or more of the DOTS categories. There was considerable overlap; for example, a single text unit might contain a reference to decision making but also a comment about the poster's own decision making skills, leading to that posting being coded for both self-awareness and decision learning.

Certain key criteria were applied rigorously. Only postings with an explicit career dimension were included, a less holistic, more traditional definition of career was used for this aspect of the analysis in keeping with DOTS. The way Futureperfekt topics were established as a critique, even as an inversion, of standard DOTS career education, pushing the forum in a holistic direction and including concepts

¹ This issue is discussed in more detail in the Discussion p.244.

that cut across the DOTS categories, presents a difficulty for this part of the evaluation. The 'Perfekt Role' topic, for example, encouraged exploration of different life roles, such as 'parent', or 'citizen', a practice advocated by Law (1996a) who comments 'The concept of role is highly congruent with DOTS, offering it breadth, depth and resonance' (p. 221). In an effort to exploit the elasticity of the DOTS framework and the exploration of 'life roles', he stretches it out of all recognition. Attempting to integrate different roles into the DOTS framework, he gives examples of 'role learning' that include 'reading between the lines of advertising copy' and 'analysing land use for new factories' (p. 220). Law, by expanding and developing DOTS in this way, makes the categories themselves seem redundant in the same way as the Futureperfekt inversion of the categories does, and career education is seemingly pushed ever closer to social education. Baudrillard (1983) puts it simply, describing the obsession with increasingly reductive categorisation, 'microscopic observation provokes such an alteration in the object that knowledge of it becomes imperilled' (p. 81). The categories themselves come to seem arbitrary and redundant.

Ultimately DOTS is so 'elastic' that everything can be included (inevitably begging the question 'do we need these categories?'), but is usually applied so rigidly that it excludes all but educational and vocational concerns. In practice, DOTS is rarely if ever 'microscopically observed' in schools, given that three or four career education lessons a year would be the exception rather than the rule (more than this is practically unheard of) – DOTS is only dealt with in broad-brush strokes. So, in this analysis, only postings explicitly related to the core DOTS themes were included. This explains the relatively small number of text units coded in these categories despite the potentially unlimited elasticity of DOTS.

68 Text units were coded under 'Decision Learning'

58 Text units were coded under 'Opportunity Structure'

20 Text units were coded under 'Transition Learning'

157 Text units were coded under 'Self-awareness'

5. b. i. I. Transition Learning

Transition learning is related to the abilities required to implement decisions. It is skills focused, related to self-presentation, conflict resolution etc. It is perhaps not surprising then, given the stage of development of most of the participants, that this is the most modest DOTS category. The small number of postings coded to this node makes it hard to identify trends but the postings were none the less interesting.

This thoughtful comment from an adult participants, reflecting longer life experience, is a typical example, hinting at the need to be prepared to make mistakes but to learn from them:

***020606 Sagittarius September 03, 2003 - 03:34 pm: Every experience in life adds something to your character and that is how we all develop. It is up to you to get the most out of each experience. Even if it is something you have no wish to repeat it can be worthwhile if you make something positive out of it. Have you ever done something you wouldn't do again but you are glad you did it once?**

School students too were capable of giving direct advice about coping with 'life' and what might loosely be called transition skills:

***051106 Wehaveaproblem September 22, 2003 - 09:11 am: DARKSIDE. You can't hope to achieve anything unless you are 100% confident that you will succeed then you WILL fail!!! If you keep at it, study hard then you will go far. Stay The Path, do not stray!**

It is clear that although wisdom reflecting 'life changes' is apparent in much of the discussion, transition skills as defined in DOTS are mostly absent. There was no discussion at all of practical transition skills such as applying for jobs, going for interview, fitting into higher education courses and such like. Clearly the discussion could have been steered in this direction using the topic web pages but

of course the objective was to keep the discussion as student centred as possible. More critically for the Futureperfekt project, it is interesting to speculate whether or not more active support and encouragement for adult participants, especially encouragement to share personal experiences of life transitions, might have resulted in practical consideration of coping and transition skills in the discussion. This issue is discussed in more detail elsewhere, but it is useful to note feedback from Distopia, an adult participant:-

***081016** If asked to contribute again I would however like clarification on a couple of points. Was I required to remain completely anonymous i.e. I felt a little disingenuous by not letting the students know I was an adult, I wasn't pretending to be a student I just became very aware that my posting would make it obvious and wasn't sure whether I should hide that fact.

This clearly indicates confusion about the role of adults and the kind of contribution that they should make, confusion that might ultimately inhibit them from contributing as much to the discussion as they could.

5. b i. II. Opportunity Structure

It was considerably easier to find postings that could be clearly identified as belonging to the opportunity structure category. Noticeably, early in the discussion, there were comments from school students about occupational choice and this is discussed in detail under the heading 'Occupations' below. There was even a tiny amount of discussion of the pros and cons of particular jobs (including 'Prime Minister!'):

***030433** Nebula September 16, 2003 - 08:03 pm: I was once a swimming pool attendant and had to walk round the pool all day watching out for folk that were in trouble or being a danger to others. It was very dull, but the company of my colleagues, who were a strange bunch of really different types, was a real bonus. It was also quite diverting working with folk coming swimming with their friends or

families or on their own...getting to know the regulars and so on, made a dull job quite interesting at times.

Occupational knowledge was evidently not of compelling interest to the school students, there was no extended discussion of these topics and no discussion at all in the later weeks of the forum. Two strong themes did emerge, themes that crossed over topics and threads – a pervasive sense of pessimism about the future of the planet, and a sense that the labour market is evolving so rapidly that planning is futile.

Both themes were established in one of the earliest postings by an adult poster:

***020101 Distopia August 26, 2003 - 08:26 pm: What I will become in the future might depend on what becomes of the world....I might have to be a soldier :-(Or maybe I can herd flocks of genetically modified tomatoes.**

The school student 'Sunshine' could always be relied upon for some witty and apt postings:

***020115 Sunshine September 03, 2003 - 09:29 pm: When i think about what life might be like in ten yrs its scary. We are getting ourselves ready for the future but we dont know what is going to be left of the world,is war going to take us away, is the 3d world going to grow to other parts of the world, are our jobs going to be taken over by computers or are we going to be abducted by aliens(well we never no)?**

Aliens are bad enough, but there is always the big ass asteroid:

***020116 Moonbase September 04, 2003 - 06:52 pm: you'll always need people to make hand-made pots. Since robots and machines don't have hands you'll always need people to do that. If however handmade pots become extinct then people will cease to exist...and anyway were gonna get hit by that big ass asteroid in 2043 or wotever and be plunged into an ice age. Au revoir future!!**

Embedded in the joking and pessimism, constructive discussion emerges in a variety of ways:

***031213 Aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:07 am: i have to agree with psychc. a good team of people can help you to have fun at work instead of dreading going into work already cranky. b nice to other and they will return it. it's all a balance of karma**

Teenage fatalism is never far away:

***031204 Cosmicray August 28, 2003 - 04:31 pm: all work sucks really**

If a less rigorous definition of 'opportunity structure' is used, and we include all references to occupations in the analysis, a richer picture emerges:

***011002 Extraterrestrial August 26, 2003 - 07:25 am: So wot u wna b wen u leave skl?!**

***011003 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 02:23 pm: i dno1how about u hunnie?**

From some of the first postings, the school students reacted to the traditional view of career guidance as being about occupational choice despite the fact there was no mention of this in the introduction. In fact, there was no explicit mention or discussion of occupational choice in the Futureperfekt web site but the project was introduced to the pupils as a career education forum so it seems natural to discover that occupational choice was raised by the students themselves. In fact, in view of the heavy emphasis on occupational choice given in most career guidance, it might have been predicted that this topic would be given much more predominance by the students than it has – only 27 of the 578 (4.6 %) text units contain a reference to specific occupations or jobs. There were no postings at all raising concerns or anxiety about occupational choice, although as noted elsewhere, there were many postings resisting the pressure to make specific occupational choices.

Of nearly 600 postings, only two refer to a personal specific occupational choice, and another two to the process of narrowing down to an occupational family:-

*030707 Fazer September 01, 2003 - 05:29 pm: i love workin wi peeps so i wanna b a day care officer!i like helpin peeps!

*051321 Darkside September 29, 2003 - 01:16 pm: ermhhh i dnt kno jus yet, need to think about it. watever i choose 2 do it will b something to do with nursing coz dats wot im interested in. wot about u wehaveaproblem?

Ultimately it may prove that this kind of community discussion is not a suitable forum for the elaboration of personal occupational choices, indeed, possibly the school students were reluctant to focus too much attention on their personal hopes and dreams. The kind of discussion a career adviser might have with Fazer (030707 above), exploring the idea that most jobs involve working with people, exploring different ways of 'helping' people, and identifying the unique and particular requirements of a Day Care Officer, would be spectacularly dull for other students in the forum, even if very helpful for Fazer.

Importantly though, the discussion is replete with 'constructs' relating to occupational choice and the opportunity structure (constructs that pupils can use or ignore as they see fit, once they have been elaborated) even though there are few examples of individuals working through their own options. In the few examples already given we have:

Working with people.

Helping jobs.

Job families (eg 'something to do with nursing').

Teamworking.

Social relationships.

Automation versus craftwork.

Dull versus interesting.

This list rapidly expands as the postings are analysed and is precisely the kind of material that career advisers might use to facilitate occupational choice. In the case of Futurepefekt discussion the constructs emerge from the students themselves, within a personal (sometimes even political) context, and significantly, are juxtaposed with other people's constructs.

Analysis of the text units containing reference to occupations adds weight to the recurring theme about the difficulty of narrowing down choice to a single occupation, but also highlights a more subversive view; that occupational choice is both simpler and less important than some career advisers might think:

***020110 Sunshine September 02, 2003 - 09:27 am: what is the point of testing yourself now 2 c what you want 2 do in the future. we are like 16 how are we ready for such a big commitment? Times are changin all the time and we are going to have 2 adapt to the time we are in or we will be stuck in another time frame. Do you even know what you want to do on saturday or are you going to do what i do and diside when the time is right? bu bye xxxxxxxx**

***051009 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:27 pm: i think a jobs a job as long as it pays well and u can keep at it**

Commentary on the more political and radical element of the discussion is made below.

The analysis does suggest that occupational choice is not a central career concern for many of the students participating in the project. This conclusion is supported by evidence that students did indeed feel able to raise topics and steer the discussion according to their personal interests and concerns, be it the BeeGees, or how to mend a broken heart. So, although there was both the opportunity to raise occupational choice, and some encouragement given the broad career education focus, students did not seem inclined to deal with it specifically. Even direct attempts by Sagittarius to steer discussion onto the requirements of different occupations fails to generate any postings (030706) 'When I get a job those are some of the things that will be important to me. What will you look for?'

Other attempts by adult participants to nudge the students in the direction of more conventional 'job knowledge', opportunity structure discussion also lead to dead ends in their respective threads. Nebula (051010) asks 'would you be as happy being a chef as you would being a plumber or a nurse?' and Halfmoon (020113) makes a challenging remark about young people's skills 'Interesting one from Sagittarius about knowing the basics and not relying on calculators. some of the specialties in the Armed Forces having difficulty recruiting as they require skills that a lot of young people cannot achieve without a calculator. Scary!'.

It is impossible to say how the discussion might have been different had a specific topic/theme on the Futureperfekt web site been devoted to personal occupational choices. This option was discounted at an early stage because it was felt that guidance interviews were a more appropriate forum for personal discussion and career education should focus on social and community perspectives. A defining characteristic of the Futurperfekt project, in fact an underpinning value, was the rejection of the intense pressure some career education puts on teenagers to make occupational choices. It seems this decision might have been justified in terms of the responses of the students who displayed resentment of this pressure, but it leaves open the question of just how effective the discussion forum might have been had it focused on helping young people make personal occupational choices.

5. b. i. III. Decision Learning

A similar number of postings were categorised as relating to decision learning as to transitions – 68 in total. These postings are very varied and despite an entire topic devoted to 'decision making', the 'Positive Uncertainty' thread, there was little explicit reference to decision making skills in the postings.

The 'positive uncertainty' topic was designed to take an alternative perspective on decision-making. Unlike a typical career education programme the objective was not to teach decision making, rather it was generate discussion about the value of rational decision making, whether or not we are able to eliminate uncertainty from

our lives, and whether or not an element of risk and uncertainty in life might be a good thing. Many of the ideas in this topic were based on work by Gelatt (1989).

The topic introduction did seem to influence discussion in this area dramatically and there are 30+ postings relating to questions of risk taking and the need for certainty in our lives. A third of the postings are from adult participants, several of whom were very engaged with this issue. There was also a great deal of disagreement about the ways we should think about risk taking. Nebula (060503) writes 'the fact that it does work out beautifully sometimes means that we should keep taking risks and not confine ourselves to the 'safe' option all the time.'. Immediately Sagittarius (060504) responds 'you might take a risk that could end up with you losing something that's important to you. Then you have to seriously think about whether you could live without it; how much of a risk it actually is; and whether the benefits outweigh the risks.'

The school students were also divided about where to draw the line with risk taking, Darkside (060301) writes 'Life is about taking risks, without this there would be no meaning to life.' and Themaster (060502) 'you can end up regretting it'. Wehaveaproblem (060306) 'I think that if you take too many risks in life then its a sign that you are unsure of yourself, Still 'in the closet' as it were. Sorry guys, but i'm afraid you all seem to be a bit misguided. Risks are fine but its up to you to deal with the consequences.'

There was also a great deal of subtlety embedded in this discussion, in particular the question of how much weighing up of the odds was appropriate before making a decision, and how much to rely on instinct becomes a controversial theme. Sagittarius sets a careful, perhaps conservative tone (060504) 'I think it is a case of weighing up the benefits and looking at what you would lose if things go wrong'. Milkyway responds with a interesting take, perhaps too much weighing up pros and cons removes the element of risk (060505) 'if u spend so much time thinking about it-weighing it up etc-by the time uve decided to do it or not surely its not a risk anymore coz uve thought about it so much'. Utilising block capitals, the convention for shouting, Sagittarius's response is emphatic (060506) 'As I said, it IS important to think about things - but TAKING A DECISION, ACTING

upon it and living with the consequences of that decision without regret are necessary too. The amount of time you spend deciding should be in direct relation to how much you gain against how much you lose.' Not all the school students are convinced that a careful approach is the way to go. This beautifully written posting makes the alternative view well:

***060901 Aurora September 23, 2003 - 09:32 am: do we really always thing rationally? to make a decision of the top of our heads can be more productive than thinking about it for days on end and never getting anywhere. we need to make fast decisions on all sorts of daily life or we would become controlled without any emotion or any feelings. without feelings we would become hollow empty rooms dank and dark, without emotions we would be truly dead.**

In fact this controversy erupts in the discussion on other bulletin board topics – this interesting exchange between an adult participant and a student echoes the above exchange. An adult participant, who works as a Higher Education career adviser, Theberries, (051102) 'life doesn't always turn out as you plan. Butyou have a plan - and people who have goals are far more likely to achieve what they want. Go for it!' Naturaldisaster (051103) responds 'or joust take every chance you get!! I do! I dont have a lpan 2 my life'.

A small sample of some of the rich range of constructs raised under this 'Decision Learning' heading includes:

importance of money issues in career planning

importance of fulfilment in occupational choice

need to take a long-term view

being in charge of your own destiny

value of social relationships at work

value of wide social networks

preparing for an uncertain future

importance of deciding yourself, at your own pace

make choices on the basis you may feel different in the future

its essential to plan

you can just take your chances
 you can do anything if you know what you want
 things happen unexpectedly whether you like it or not
 we have little control
 uncertainty is scary
 we must live with uncertainty
 it's good to question our beliefs
 life is about taking risks
 taking too many risks is a sign of being unsure of yourself
 contentment limits personal growth

While it is clear that the discussion has not included practical teaching of decision making skills, it does include a rich and nuanced exploration of personal values relating to risk taking, uncertainty and security.

The DOTS element 'Decision Learning' is addressed in the programme but in a way that challenges the conventional wisdom (represented by the HE Career Adviser TheBerries) that planning and rational decision making are essential. The uneasy compromise between, on the one hand, planning excessively in an ever changing world, endlessly seeking security and certainty, and, on the other, abandoning oneself to fate and relishing unexpected life chances and serendipity, is thoroughly explored.

5. b. i. IV. Self-awareness

157 messages were coded in this huge category suggesting that about 25% of all the postings include an element relating, however loosely, to 'self-awareness'. Although this is clearly the best represented DOTS category, the scale is so much greater than the other categories (2.5 times) because it is such a broad category, most postings containing 'I am' or 'I think' were coded as self-awareness so it could be argued that the size of this category is slightly exaggerated.

In conventional career education and career guidance 'self-awareness' would normally involve an assessment of academic ability, hobbies and interests,

personality and family background and it is striking that, despite the large number of postings that could be coded to this node, practically none of them consisted of this type of self-assessment. In Futureperfekt the pupils were encouraged to take a more dynamic view of personality and consider what they might become rather than what they are like now. The purpose of this shift in focus was to avoid embedding 'matching' (students to jobs) as a core purpose of the discussion – not to kill matching discussion but to ensure that if it emerged it emerged from the students themselves, if that was how they wanted to proceed. The emphasis of the web page was on considering what aspects of personality might be most important for example, and how stable personality is.

The result, as can be seen from many of the postings quoted elsewhere, is a focus on values and deeper questions about what it means to be 'us'. There was active debate about the extent to which our personality might change as our social conditions change.

*020201 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 09:22 am: your own personlaity changes all the time i think. you change when u meet new ppl or u jus adapt 2 things u wud do differently. you cant match ur jobs up 2 ur personality bcoz ur personality may jus b a phase ur going thru

*020205 Naturaldisaster September 08, 2003 - 09:10 am: if u r a strong person u will not just change to fit in with ppl. u r u and they r they.....wots the point in changing just 2 b like them....its not natural. But cant we help changing mayb?? mayb it is natural 2 change towards ppl.

The students were often confused by the topic but they did feel able to express opinions:

*020501 Fazer September 02, 2003 - 07:25 am: i dnt know wot 2 think!i do think every1 is unique but i also think there is personality types!like i think its more 2 do wi ur hobbie types wot kind of job ur best suited 4!like i love danin so i would love 2 b a dancer but thats nowt 2 do wi my personality really!so i kinda have my own opion about this!

These themes were ones in which the adult participants gave considerable added value. They sometimes continued to prioritise occupational choice over other career concerns but added subtlety and nuance to the discussion, engaging the students. Perhaps a 'boring' job might be right for some people in some circumstances, 'boring' is a relative term, perhaps we are happier working with people who are like us:

***030309 Sagittarius August 30, 2003 - 05:47 pm: Interesting points. 1.What seems boring to one person may not be to another. Even when a job is apparently boring maybe people enjoy the opportunity to let their minds wander to other things. 2.Do people like being with others with similar interests to theirs? Do we try to group together with people who are like us?**

***030313 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:01 pm: Extraterrestrial is right, loads of people find stuff that I think's boring really interesting. The jobs like 'working with people' or caring (nurses, care-home, Drs etc.) I know I wouldn't like, but that's what some people live for!**

Some of the students seemed to find it relatively easy to engage with difficult value judgements such as whether or not it was more important to utilise their full potential than to do something they enjoyed. But in some of the more delicate issues there was a tendency to resort to cliché:

***030427 Warpspeed September 08, 2003 - 08:56 am: If u want 2 hav a good time wen ur older its worth working hard now to get what u want then!**

This was balanced by active engagement by the adults, which seemed to raise the level of the discussion; there was also a tendency for the slightly longer and richer postings from adults to attract comments from other adults (e.g. Postings 030431, 030432, 030433).

In the broadest sense, the whole of the Futureperfekt forum can be seen as an exercise in self-awareness, and certainly there is ample evidence that self-

awareness in terms of broad issues relating to personal values is well represented as a theme in the career education forum. On the other hand, self-awareness as an exercise in self-assessment as preparation for occupational matching is practically absent. As noted above, it is possible that a public forum is not the place for navel gazing and is more suited to exploration of students' wider outlook. In short, career education rather than career guidance.

5. b. ii. Family

The balance of family life with other career concerns turned out to be a compelling topic for the participants and one that is rarely covered in conventional career education based on DOTS except in passing. Although there are comments about family life in a number of threads, it is in the topic 'perfect role' that the greatest richness and most extended discussion emerges. In fact, much of the debate can be traced to a posting early in the life of the forum:

***050901 TheMaster September 09, 2003 - 09:25 am: well you see im stuck in a very bad problem on one hand i want to hame a FAMILY but on the other hand i want to become a musician but that takes alot of time to be with both and both are important to me do i follow my dream or go for the other dream of a family:-**

TheMaster's posting is unusual in a couple of respects – it is a rare admission of anxiety from a male student; it is an unusual expression of family values from an male student; and most unusually of all, it amounts to a request for advice and help from the other participants. Perhaps it is this latter point that made this a long-lasting and focused thread (two additional threads on this same issues were opened up on the boards to accommodate all the postings), and partly the fact that there were many polarised views. This topic effectively links an element of guidance for TheMaster, with more general career education for the other participants. Within 5 or 10 minutes of the initial posting alternative opinions were appearing in the thread:-

***050904 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 09:33 am: u nd to get ur priorities straight and sort out ur life wat u wnt and if i was u stuff music and have babies!!**

***050906 Sunshine September 09, 2003 - 09:34 am: ...i cant tell you what to do only time will tell you what to do and you will no when the time is right.**

Sunshine's reluctance to offer direct advice is worthy of note. As discussed above, there is a dominant narrative in much career education that 'you can be anything you want to be' if only you try hard enough and that planning and commitment are all that is necessary. The ideas of 'wait and see' and 'trust your instincts' are practically never represented. Indeed Sunshine's refusal to take a position, and her (perhaps only implicit) suggestion that we have to live with the doubt and make the decisions on our own is reflected in the tensions between career guidance and career counselling – advising and facilitating. Beyonddreams stark comment 'get your priorities straight' sounds a note of tough-minded guidance in contrast to Sunshine's more reflective position.

A remarkable number of possible positions emerged on the bulletin board and this was reflected in a range of intense discussion in the classroom amongst the predominantly female students. The majority of the discussion on this thread (although not the topic as a whole) was contributed by students from School F. The reasons for the imbalance are unclear but the most likely explanation is the buzz of discussion in class which accompanied the posting – most of the key postings were in the period around the 9th to the 18th of September with some late contributions from School C later in the month although by then new threads had sparked the interest of most of the School F pupils.

Although the ideas did not emerge in any clear order and some were posted almost simultaneously, they can be disentangled (and paraphrased) as follows:-

There is a lot you can do without money. You don't need it to have fun and you can live without it. All you really need is family, friends and health and it's not realistic to expect to be rich. Better to be happy with job and family than be rich! Friends and family keep you going through bad and good. If you are too keen on your job it might affect your family. There is always something more important

than work – like children. You need to be able to make time for your partner or you might end up divorced.

On the other hand, a job is important to have a living and you do need money to have a laugh with your mates. But liking a job is as important as getting rich - many people take work too seriously. You need your job to support your family – you need to plan, save before you have a family.

Sometimes we are not sure why we want a family. Some people don't want a family and for them work might be important. Some jobs force us to sacrifice family. If you are patient perhaps you can fit everything in. It might be better to live a little now and then settle down later. There are different types of family life – and many different ways of living can become normal for those involved. Family need not hold women back nowadays, men are getting more involved with children.

Sunshine managed to strike another constructionist and 'arational' (Flyjberg 2001) note in an early posting (050402) 'we are only about 16 and still trying to study at skool and live our teen lives cos we only have a few years left to do this. And you cant say that in ten yrs you are going to have the same hopes and dreams. Anything could happen by the time you are ready to start a FAMILY'. But three important postings, two from students and a later posting from an adult participant, all neatly reject the limiting bipolar context of The Master's question 'Career or Family?'

*050502 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 07:19 am: i think u can have more thn 1 important thing in ur life!

*050907 Darkside September 09, 2003 - 09:36 am: well u cud do both. even if it does mean becoming a part-time parent or musician. this isnt really a problem u jus need 2 kno how 2 handle the both. u'll always have the help of ur FAMILY 2 help u out, so tht shudnt b a problem.

***050912 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:27 pm: I agree with comicray and darksides, do both. I don't believe that musicians don't procreate as a rule - lots seem to get inspiration from their kids. Maybe it just needs a bit of planning and management to do both? Easy way out to say it has to be one or the other?**

This fascinating thread can be read as evidence of the emergence of a holistic perspective, of a social-constructionist mode of learning, of competing perspectives, and of an orientation to exploration of personal values in career education.

5. b. iii. Transgressions and Social Control

Early coding of the data included categorisation of text units into those that involved some kind of 'transgression' (no matter how minor), and those postings that mention another participant by name, that is, those that address an individual directly, or an individual's contribution to the site.

A transgression was defined simply as any evidence of 'rule breaking' or simply playing with the boundaries of the discussion. Revealing real identities, asking for information about schools attended, hostile or ironic comments, and some kinds of teasing of identified individuals, might all, in the widest sense of the word, be considered 'transgressions' of the implicit or explicit social rules bounding the discussion.

Naming simply refers to any direct reference to any of the participants of the forum.

There are 51 text units (8.8%) that contain some kind of easily identifiable 'transgression' or reference to a transgression, 24 out of 98 (24%) threads include a transgression. Many of the transgressions are, of course, very minor.

These transgressions are difficult to categorise fruitfully. Several simply involved a quest to establish background information and the identity of other participants

(which was actively discouraged in the briefing), such as gender, school attended, real name etc:-

***031901 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 07:10 am: wot skls every1
at????????????????**

Many involved teasing:-

***031502 Cosmicray September 02, 2003 - 09:08 am: alrite rogger hows it
going down thier, u left me all alone. ya skunk!!**

Once or twice, teasing developed into a multi-participant flaming (although it is fairly gentle flaming):-

***051303 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 08:55 am: wehaveaproblem: OH
YES WE DO HAVE A PROBLEM WITH UR ATTITUDE TO PPL U CHILL
OUT AND LEARN TO RESPECT PPLS VIEWS!!!!**

Even at its most extreme, the teasing was never vindictive and the objects of the attacks apparently took them in good humour.

In fact there were no serious transgressions; informal and largely implicit social rules seemed to emerge almost spontaneously with very occasional self-monitoring and self-regulating comments by the participants (such as the above emphasis on respecting others views). No moderation of postings was required at any stage in the six week trial.

In some cases the teasing was oblique and of a very personal nature – quite opaque to other participants. This probably indicates that a couple of friends had identified each other and were able to engage in private backchat. For example, this exchange between Aurora and Sunshine:-

***050101 Sunshine September 05, 2003 - 10:19 am: Society. What do they know.
Its like we are told do this do that before they even know who they are talking to.
They dont know me and they dont know you. Its like im a go with the flow kinda**

girl and its like they tell me what to do and it might just be me but when they tell me to do sometign i normaly do the comlete oppisite. But hey thats just me bu bye
XXXXXXXXXX

*050102 aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:22 am: what do they know!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
sunshine is right on the pool table society can be changed but it takes time and percistence and will not be done over night. power to the people who want to be free

*050103 Sunshine September 06, 2003 - 09:01 pm: on ya go aroura but one question whats up with the pool table???????????????? is it just me who has no i idea what ur on about. lol

*050104 Aurora September 07, 2003 - 11:13 am: oh please u so know and if you don't want everyone else to no u will just shut up pool table girl!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*050105 Sunshine September 07, 2003 - 07:35 pm: i was just thinkin what makes society say what it says. Its what us teens say and do. Society coments on the music we listen to, it comments on what music vids we watch e.g how much was said about the vid for Dirrty, society canges with everything we do. dose that meen we have stop bein ourselves? no it just means that we live our lives not paying attention to what everyon else says about u. and aurora one little thing, at least never followed u now who home so dont get wide to me hun!!! bu Bye
XXXXXXXXXX

This superficially unremarkable exchange about the ways 'society' monitors and controls behaviour is made more interesting by the embedded backchat relating to the ambiguity in the phrase 'pool table girl', the suggestion of embarrassing secrets that could be exposed ('if you don't want everyone else to no u will just shut up pool table girl' 050104) on the site contradicts the argument that they live their lives 'not paying attention to what everyon else says about u'.

This exchange exposes what are largely implicit rules about what is acceptable in public discourse and what is not. The boundaries are unstated but are real none the less. The students might be resentful about the wider social forces that control their behaviour, but the same forces of social control are reconstructed by the pupils themselves in the Futureperfekt forum.

The best example is the complex of postings woven in and around exchanges between Darkside and Wehaveaproblem, already alluded to above. These exchanges provide an opportunity to explore the ways in which discussion was controlled and managed by the participants themselves and therefore, need more detailed analysis.

Both these students were highly regarded by their guidance teachers and academically able. They did not know each other and had no connection with one another and were in fact unsure whether or not they even went to the same school (060415). Perhaps their different career interests suggest different worldviews, Darkside is interested in nursing (051321), but Wehaveaproblem wants a job that will 'provide me with plenty money to live off and the ability to gain many 'perks'' (030428). It is unclear whether it has any significance or not, but not only do these pupils come from different schools, they have different genders and belong to different ethnic groups.

From the first weeks of the discussion Wehaveaproblem was using a stronger tone in messages than other students and he had singled out Darkside and addressed her from week two:-

***020204 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 08, 2003 - 09:09 am: OI**

Darkside!!!!

Personality is not a phase!

The exclamation marks, the naming and shout, 'OI', mark this out as a challenge. Later in the day, visiting the site in his own time, he goes further and calls Darkside's comment stupid:

***020208 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 08, 2003 - 02:01 pm: I agree.
However i still feel Darkside is being stupid in their veiws!**

Darkside responds the following day, using capitals (shouting) and including an explicit rebuke:-

***020212 DARKSIDE September 09, 2003 - 08:59 am: ERM EXCUSE ME WEHAVEAPROBLEM i was jus saying that it cud b a phase im not saying tht it is. Tht was jus ma opinion and u shud respect it.**

And immediately after, two or three minutes later and having read posting 020208:-

***020214 DARKSIDE September 09, 2003 - 09:01 am: WOT IM SAYING IS NOT STUPID ITS JUS MY OPINION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Following these postings Darkside immediately jumps to the defence of another contributor who Wehaveaproblem off handedly 'dissed' with 'NAH!!!!!!' (020702):-

***020703 DARKSIDE September 09, 2003 - 09:11 am: WEHAVEAPROBLEM warpspeed has a very good opinion and ur reaction 2 it isnt very mature. grow up!!!**

So the relationship developed with all the classic characteristics of an impending flame war – social distance, asynchronous communications, shouting, name calling and rebukes. Remarkably Wehaveaproblem steps back from escalating the conflict with a striking climb down posted 'out of hours' in his own personal time:-

***020218 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 12, 2003 - 11:42 am: I apologise for my comment earlier in the week. It was fairly out of order. If DARKSIDE is reading this then hopefully u will accept it. I was tired and bored. Sorry!**

Almost immediately peace breaks out and Wehaveaproblem feels free to offer Darkside a motivational career talk:

***051101 DARKSIDE September 18, 2003 - 12:12 pm:** well in the next 5 yrs i hope to b studying in university so i think my main role would be studying hard and foccusig on gettin my degree. In the next 4 or 5 yrs anything could happen maybe i wnt be at uni and i mite have a job. so i guess u could say things mite not turn out but thats my view.

***051106 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 22, 2003 - 09:11 am: DARKSIDE.** You can't hope to achieve anything unless you are 100% confident that you will succeed then you WILL fail!!! If you keep at it, study hard then you will go far. Stay The Path, do not stray! But by the sounds of things then your going to end up poor+lonely living in some hovel!!!

An interesting and key event in the life of the trial follows. Later in the same day, again 'out of hours', a new thread is started:-

***051301 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 22, 2003 - 01:31 pm:** Anyone? Anyone at all? Post your views here on why DARKSIDE takes things too seriously. I feel she/he needs to relax. Take a 'CHILL PILL' DARKSIDE. Take up Bob Marley's view, and just Relax!

The response of the other participants was remarkable. It later became clear that there is a rapprochement between the two main players in this teasing and that the postings are playful as opposed to hurtful, as this comment shows:

***051307 DARKSIDE September 23, 2003 - 08:58 am:** Wehaveaproblem ... i am chillin lol @ bob marley. but thats jus ma opinion. i liked ur posting. it was class!

So it seems that Wehaveaproblem and Darkside are enjoying themselves. Despite this, many participants misread the tone of the new thread. Within two

hours of post 051301 Sagittarius had emailed Futurist (me) drawing attention to the posting and suggesting that I might want to remove it in case it caused offence.

***051302 SAGITTARIUS September 22, 2003 - 03:05 pm:** I actually enjoy everyone's points of view. They are all different and worth reading. I have my opinions on things but I like hearing everyone else's. Sometimes it makes me see things from a different angle - and I like that - it's good to be challenged. It's also good if people agree with you, it makes you feel you are not alone. I don't mind standing alone but it's a nice feeling to think that others feel the same way. Does anyone else enjoy this site for this reason?

This contrived intervention manages both to make the point that the value of the site is in the diverse opinions expressed on it and to change the direction of the thread away from criticism of Darkside, without expressing any explicit criticism of Wehaveaproblem.

The following morning Darkside and her classmates had supervised class time on the Futureperfekt web site and there was some excited discussion amongst a group of pupils about the new thread and what it meant, diverting attention from the introduction of the new Futureperfekt Topic. Seven pupils immediately posted comments arguing for free expression on the site, possibly more excited by the hint of a personal dispute than genuinely angry at Wehaveaproblem. More than a dozen postings follow, some criticising Wehaveaproblem, others arguing for free speech. Sunshine wrote, blissfully unaware that Wehaveaproblem did not know Darkside's gender (see 051301):

***051308 Sunshine September 23, 2003 - 09:00 am:** well.....i am begining to think that you must be intimidated be strong willed females. Darkside can say what she likes and you cant tell ppl to stop feeling the way they feel. Is it not the point of this website tosay how you feel.

These exchanges provide evidence of active monitoring of discussion by many participants, of discussion driven forward out of supervised class time, and of a

powerful social control and self-monitoring process governing the contributions. There is also evidence of very energetic and excited debate and, in particular, of students valuing the forum as a place where participants are free to speak their minds.

This colourful episode has a doubly ironic ending, 21 posts later, after the other participants have moved on, with a friendly exchange between Darkside and Wehaveaproblem about what to study at university. Finally, in the feedback on the project, Wehaveaproblem comments:

***080302 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am: I have learned from the futureperfekt course that people can be sensitive to your criticism, if you are 'attacking' their opinions and beliefs. I thought it was great to see the way the others reacted when i 'slagged off' what they thought. but in saying that they all took it pretty light heartedly, Especially the ones i was aiming at directly. It shows that they know that what other people think doesn't matter. It's good to see that people are being themselves. This website has been a great way to learn these sort of things. WELL DONE FUTURIST!!!!!!**

The keen focus of the participants, the energy with which the other participants responded, and even the spontaneous return of the two main protagonists to career planning issues, all hint at the emergence of a cohesive community with a clear sense of purpose.

5. b. iii. I Backchat

A key dependent variable in the project has been the extent to which the freedom students have to direct and lead the discussion might result in an improved connection with the students' own career concerns – a more 'person-centred' career education. One concern about the lack of direction of the students was that it might result in too much unfocused and unproductive discussion, perhaps completely unrelated to career development. The reverse is true – the backchat proved to be relatively self-limiting, the topics either coming to an early end or getting incorporated into more overtly purposeful discussion.

Some of the early postings suggested that the discussion might become too chaotic. The first topic was simply an ‘introduce yourself’ exercise – designed to help the students familiarise themselves with the forum and the software running it. It was made clear in this early ice-breaking session that it was ok to post anything, within reason. The exercise had three functions:-

- Familiarisation with the design and mechanism of the forum.
- To reduce the stress of the first few postings by making it fun.
- To make it easy for students to characterise themselves online without compromising the pseudonymous nature of the discussion (students were prohibited from posting personal details).

Certainly the relaxed tone was quickly established, even in the very first postings from School C. Some of the students were very comfortable with online discussion:-

***012601 Northernlight September 01, 2003 - 07:10 am: hayho! how u? r u interested the profession of fire fighting or architecture? do you like cars? CHEERS**

***010204 Moonbase Monday, September 01, 2003 - 07:19 am: how do u tell if someone is insane? do they just give up the act?**

The first ‘out of hours’ postings, that is, postings made by pupils out of a supervised classroom setting, came within an hour of the first class, and instead of picking up the career themes the topic was ‘cars’:-

***012701 Omega September 01, 2003 - 09:12 am: alright, are you interested in cars?**

This apparently trivial thread of discussion is interesting for a couple of reasons. In particular it suggests that the ‘backchat’ can play an important role in allowing

participants to play with the medium, testing the boundaries and possibilities, but it also shows that even the most unpromising postings have the potential to be incorporated into the mainstream discussion. Even the backchat might be incorporated into the more focused career planning topics.

This apparently wildly 'off-message' topic rambled on for 17 postings, over about 4 separate posting days, spread over more than three weeks. It included teasing verging on flaming:-

***012208 Omega September 22, 2003 - 09:19 am: missioncontrol do you have any idea about cars at all. i think you better stick to action man or barbies in future. leave cars to men with muscle!**

***012703 Omega September 22, 2003 - 09:16 am: darkside GO HOME!!! how are you going to ammount to anything or travel anywhere! Car defines your status**

It also included evidence of bonding and supportiveness between students from different schools, students who had no knowledge of each other outside the Futureperfekt forum (an out of class hours post):-

***012705 Missioncontrol September 24, 2003 - 10:35 am: Awww its ok darkside! I know nout bout cars either so we can be lower class 2gether! These guys have FAR TOOOO MUCH time on their hands!!!! GEEKS!!**

Three weeks later, this aberrant thread, and the students' enthusiasm for cars gets put into perspective in one of the more serious threads, 'Perfekt Role' (about the life roles society allocates people):-

***051103 Naturaldisaster September 22, 2003 - 09:01 am: or joust take every chance you get!! I do! I dont have a lpan 2 my life - just a goal at the end....thats to own a Range Rover! who knows if i ever will and if i do how i will have got it but it i keep trying hard and take chances then maybe i might get there**

***051105 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:08 am: Naturaldisaster, What kind of a goal is just getting a Range Rover? I would have thought it would be something a bit more interesting, or bigger, like getting a degree, or a big money making job!**

This amusing and, on the face of it, insignificant thread offers good examples of the ways in which backchat and teasing can perform a useful role in the discussion. Ultimately it provides more evidence about the ways in which the discussion is self-regulating. Booster makes the fascination with cars, which was appropriate and useful in the 'Introduce Yourself' topic, seem out of place and even a little silly in the more weighty discussion about life roles, embedded as it is in discussion about the relationship between work and family.

A short thread about 'broken hearts' (0317 and 0318), perhaps a typical teenage concern, can be found embedded amongst extended discussion about 'work and play', even attracting a contribution from an adult participant -

***031702 Borealis September 09, 2003 - 06:12 pm: I've mended my own heart loads of times, by caring about myself too :-)**

- without diverting too much attention from, or in any way compromising, the rest of the career related discussion on the topic. This short thread also adds to the evidence that the use of pseudonyms helped subvert gender stereotyping with one male poster getting involved in that discussion, although keen to emphasise his heart was not broken by a boy (031805).

5. b. iv. Politics and Provocations

As noted above, each of the classroom sessions used a Futurperfekt topic to prompt discussion. Although the topics were generally very loose (i.e. not tightly focused on one question) they did all relate to the traditional DOTS career education curriculum in that they challenged and problematised the conventional agenda. Despite this, discussion took some unexpected turns. In particular there

were regular eruptions of what might be classed as 'political' content. This content can only be roughly categorised but included:

Resistance to career planning:- 020110 'Do you even know what you want to do on saturday or are you going to do what i do and diside when the time is right?'

Fatalism:- 020115 'are our jobs going to be taken over by computers or are we going to be abducted by aliens(well we never no)?', 020116 '...and anyway were gonna get hit by that big ass asteroid in 2043 or wotever and be plunged into an ice age. Au revoir future!!'

Resistance to narrowing occupational choice:- 020304 'Who is it to tell us that we have 2 do one thing.', 020602 'we are still developin into ourselves and for someone to turn rounde to us in the prime of our lives that we have 2 do one thing for the rest of our lives is stupid. Its like yeh we are unique and for our lives to be maped out makes us miss out on learning wo we are.'

Debate about the importance of salary:- 030426 'Stand back and look at what you are doing,If you think yeh thats cool then carry on. If you think it's a pile of poo go for what you want todo forget about the dollars lifes to short'

Libertarianism:- 050101 'Society. What do they know. Its like we are told do this do that before they even know who they are talking to.', 051309 'ppl have no right to tell other ppl what to say or wot to do.', 050102 'power to the people who want to be FREE'

Debate about social class:- 060401 'do u think people get in to big, well paid job because they haave had a good education or because they come from rich family', 060419 'my m8 never got da job he went 4 coz they didn't like were he lived so having money is a big part of live'

Freedom of speech:- 051306 'look this website is about freedom of SPEECH darkside is only stating there point of view like everyone else'

This varied group of postings consists of 48 text units in 14 out of the 98 threads. All the threads involved were started by students and only six of the postings were by adult participants. The majority of the text units fall into the 'Debate about social class category', 18 in total, and only one of these postings is from an adult:- 060405 'Journalist wanted. Must be born to an Earl and possess at least £100,000. ???'. This post is unique not only because it is the only adult contribution to this compelling debate (which attracted posts from 9 students), but also because of the sarcastic tone. The tone seems to suggest that the school students concerns with the impact their social class, and the quality of the school they go to, will have on their life chances is absurd and even irrelevant. The absence of any encouraging adult contribution in this political thread is all the more interesting because of the richness of the discussion and its longevity.

The range of constructs unfolds steadily; beginning with how your parents occupations (and their opinions) affect whether or not you go to university, how well off you are and who you socialise with (some disagreement, 051209 'I think it has nothing to do with your parents'); moving on to how a rich well-connected family might be more important than education; how the quality of your school is important; the benefits (or otherwise) of a private education; the impact of your peers; the effect of luck, and even the lessons to be learned from the USA experiments with bussing in the sixties! In fact this latter posting (060413) is itself unique in that it was practically the only occasion in which classroom teaching from school subjects was drawn into the discussion. There is considerable debate in the career education literature about ways in which career education can be embedded in the school curriculum and it is encouraging to see that pupils will start to make links themselves when provided with the opportunity, even if this is a rather isolated and oblique example.

These findings raise several interesting issues. Most starkly, it would be useful to understand why the adult contributors appeared to steer clear of this overtly political discussion that so engaged the students. On a concrete level, it seems that there may be a lesson to learn here about the level at which school students can engage with career planning issues, this thread relates very closely to the

'opportunity structure' element of the DOTS curriculum but in a way that is rarely elaborated by career education. The students are explicitly reflecting on how their family background, their school, their friends and their luck might impact on their opportunities, they are disagreeing and expressing contradictory opinions about how much control they have over their future. This echoes classic debates in the career education literature (Roberts, 1977, Daws, 1977) and in particular criticism of the ways in which some forms of career education reinforce a 'Pollyanna' outlook of 'You can be anything you want to be, do anything you want, if only you keep at it and work hard'. Here some students expressly critique that optimistic outlook with the presentation of a range of constructs that, more or less, hint at ways in which their opportunity structure might be circumscribed by social factors out with their control.

Traditionally, the opportunity structure element of DOTS considers employment opportunities, changes to the labour market, educational and training opportunities. In the Futureperfekt discussion, the students spontaneously take a step further and question the implicit assumption of 'equal opportunities' which underpins much career education, ultimately helping to contextualise opportunity structure thinking in a wider political frame and introducing consideration of personal values into the discussion.

It seems unlikely that the specifically Marxist analysis presented by Distopia would be likely to feature in the average school career education class, showing how external participants can stretch and extend the career agenda:

*031507 DISTOPIA September 14, 2003 - 02:12 pm: Totally agree with Nebula - you can love your work and still leave at 5pm (or earlier). If jobs are hard to come by employers can take the mickey out their staff by creating a competitive, long hours atmosphere. Work is an exchange of labour for money, why should we be put in a position where we have to constantly discount the value of our work?

5. b. v. Naming and thoughts on Pseudonymity

Naming another participant in postings turned out to be uncommon (this refers simply to use of another participant's pseudonym – not to exposure of a participant's real name). Only 48% of the threads, contain any text units with naming and only 8.3% of text units directly refer to another participant. There are many instances of participants clearly speaking directly to one or two other individuals but not naming them directly – these postings are not included here. In total 108 of 1306 text units included naming. The modest number of occurrences of naming and the ease with which naming can be identified made it simple to categorise. It was associated with the following:-

Disagreeing:	4 text units
Identifying (asking about 'real' identity):	5 text units
Questioning ('What do you think about'):	5 text units
Teasing:	29 text units
Agreeing/Supporting:	54 text units

In fact, naming and disagreeing with a particular individual turned out to be extremely rare. Verbal combat and jousting between individuals – especially outright disagreement, is practically absent from the forum. This outburst from Wehaveaproblem is very much an exception:

*020204 Wehaveaproblem September 08, 2003 - 09:09 am: OI Darkside!!!!
 Personality is not a phase! It's wot defines you as an individual and separates u from the rest of the world. Personalities do change, but not in phases, they evolve over time as u mature and experience new things. If our personalities changed all the time then we'd all be phsyncotic and end up like the Americans!!!

On the contrary, a significant number of text units demonstrate explicit agreeing with a named participant (13 times more likely than disagreeing). The following posting is much more typical:

***020213 Extraterrestrial September 09, 2003 - 09:00 am: Darkside has a very gd point and i agree totally with wot she is sayin. U may not thnk ur personality changes but it does!!!!**

A small number of postings were from participants keen to identify other participants, either to find out their real name, or to find out what school they were from:

***012302 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 07:11 am: oh this is very weird!!!! are you susan?**

All but one of the five attempts at identifying other participants, which were explicitly breaking ground rules discussed with students, and perhaps testing the boundaries of the discussion, all occurred in the ‘experiment wildly’ introductory topic – before more ‘serious’ structured discussion was introduced. Students quickly became comfortable with the pseudonyms and it was obvious from class observation that complete privacy was maintained in all but a few cases.

An equally small number of postings involve questioning named participants:

***051319 Wehaveaproblem September 24, 2003 - 10:28 am: by the way DARKSIDE. wot is it you want to do at uni? just out of curiosity?**

Normally the questions do not receive a reply – an undoubted weakness of the format was the difficulty all participants experienced monitoring the whole of the discussion. It is likely the participants to whom the questions were addressed may not even have read the questions and had moved on to other topics. The example above is practically unique in that it met with a reply:

***051321 Darkside September 29, 2003 - 01:16 pm: ermhhh i dnt kno jus yet, need to think about it. watever i choose 2 do it will b something to do with nursing coz dats wot im interested in. wot about u wehaveaproblem?**

The final category into which text units that name participants fall is ‘teasing’:

***090206 Northernlight September 23, 2003 - 08:37 am: no omega i do not over large teeth infact they r a perfekt size! r u asking me bout sizes bkoz ur conscios of a size of a part of ur body? an the beegees r wiked.**

This message is typical of a small number of jokey remarks that generally appear in very short threads and in one or two cases were experiments between neighbours logged into side-by-side computer terminals. They rarely interrupt more serious structured discussion and in all cases but one (the flaming between Darkside and Wehaveaproblem) are short 2 or 3 text unit exchanges. This kind of teasing, although not actively encouraged, was quite acceptable. Students were given a free hand to use the bulletin boards for their own purposes as well as the structured discussion arising from the Futureperfekt web site.

Pseudonymity was a key element in the research design and it was hoped to explore the role pseudonyms might have to:-

- Ensure the privacy and safety of the pupils online**
- Enable discussion and interaction free from stereotyping based on factors such as age, gender, academic ability, social class and race.**
- Disrupt entrenched power relationships between school students themselves, between adults and students, and within the educational institution of the school.**

The evidence that naming was relatively uncommon might suggest that there was an emerging sense of community amongst participants. For example, it was only in the experimental introduction to the forums that there was any significant evidence of attempts to establish other participants' identities. Possibly the effect of the pseudonyms was levelling, as indicated in the literature (see above).

The feedback from the participants shows clearly that they appreciated the benefits of pseudonymity. Saggitarius, an adult and the most prolific contributor, anticipates Wehaveaproblem's comment quoted above (080806)

***080111 Sagittarius October 07, 2003 - 04:20 pm: From a pupil's point of view, I would think posting in privacy under a pseudonym removes or certainly reduces the fear of commenting in front of fellow pupils. As some others have said there is no visual judgement of individuals. There is also the possibility of taking the time to compose postings so that comments are understood in the way you mean them - a boon for shyer individuals. I wonder if anyone took an active part who finds it hard to speak out in class?**

The pupils were very positive both informally in class discussion and on the bulletin boards, Milkyway's comment is typical

***080504 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:19 am: i agree with millenium. its better having pseudonyms than using your real name. it gives you a chance to say what you really think without feeling you HAVE to say certain things coz its what people expect of you.**

Psychic (an adult poster) second-guessed an early objective of the Futureperfekt web site (see discussion for a further exploration of this topic):-

***080908 Psychic October 09, 2003 - 03:31 pm: I think it might be interesting if parents would join a web discussion like this. With pseudonyms, not knowing who is who. I wonder if it would help parents and the younger generation to talk more freely with each other, without the roles there are usually present and difficulties in listening to each others opinions?**

Distopia (also an adult poster) is the only participant who expresses any reservations about pseudonymity, in a lengthy and thoughtful posting (080510). He speculates that pseudonyms may be unnecessary and notes that a few pupils revealed their pseudonyms to their friends anyway. The main issue Distopia raises is the value of allocating pseudonyms rather than allowing participants to choose – he argues ‘I don't know whether particular names have a class bias? Even the pseudonyms have baggage - some were jokey, some where sinister, some were geeky. I suppose that this is better than the complete anonymity of

numbers or codes. Ultimately if pseudonyms allowed for a more free and frank discussion then they are a good thing.'

Notes made immediately after the first meetings with the pupils indicate considerable excitement amongst the pupils – they seemed engaged and thrilled by the opportunity to post relatively anonymously. It was explained to pupils that they were allocated pseudonyms, instead of choosing them, specifically to prevent them giving subconscious clues to their identity – the participants understood that gender and other clues to identity were to be deliberately subverted.

5. b. v. I. Naming and Transgressions

Before leaving the general issue of how and when the participants addressed one another, it is worth noting that there is an overlap between text units including naming and text units involving transgressions – 17 of the 51 (33.3%) text units identified as transgressions also include naming compared to the 8.3 % of the total number of text units. Clearly certain kinds of teasing are more likely to occur between people familiar and comfortable with each other, and equally, those seeking to provoke a reaction (051318 'i've only said wot i have in order to spark resentment amongst some of the others.) may prefer to target individuals. Off-topic postings (those not obviously related to Futureperfekt topics) were more likely to contain naming and teasing generally.

As noted above, research on the impact of pseudonymity on online discussion appears contradictory, with some research (Chester and Gwynne, 1998) indicating a range of benefits and some older research, indicating an increased risk of flaming, particularly when posting is anonymous as opposed to pseudonymous). These results support the view that pseudonymity need not lead to flaming and community breakdown and, in fact, might even help shift the focus from personalities to content – the data suggests that naming is associated with transgressions, backchat and flaming, the off-topic material.

5. b. vi. Role of the Adult Participants

In the final iteration of the Futureperfekt project there were many fewer adult participants than was at first anticipated. The original attempt to establish a full scale trial was to involve 20+ adult participants, logistically this was extremely hard to manage, in particular because of the difficulty getting schools to commit to timetabling the classes. A more ad hoc approach was eventually adopted, easing the organisational complexity of the trial, which involved upwards of 50 people and which was constrained by access to schools, and by the schools' respective timetables. 10 adults participated in the final trial (a few more registered but did not make any significant contribution) and of these the extent of participation varied, with as few as 4 postings from one adult and as many as 64 from another. Analysis of the results make it clear that although the school students were not relying on adult contributions to support constructive discussion, the adults did make an important and quite particular contribution on a number of levels.

Some very active threads were driven entirely by the pupils. For example, the 'Career or Family' threads (0504, 0505) have few adult postings, yet were amongst the most sustained topics of discussion. There is ample evidence that despite the lack of a detailed briefing and instruction, the adults played an important role in discussion. The postings from adults fall into distinct categories.

5. b. vi. I. Nurturing and Advising

Many of the postings can be characterised as 'nurturing' or 'encouraging'. These seem to be designed to generate good spirit, reduce conflict, and to validate personal feelings and emotional responses. There is a relentless 'positivity' in some adult postings, as if they were frightened of revealing pessimism, cynicism or self-doubt. This may reflect the kind of people prepared to participate in discussion of this nature, but it might also reflect deeper nurturing instincts to encourage and protect young people from harsh realities and the arbitrariness of life. Borealis is perhaps the best example of a contributor who takes great care to set a positive, nurturing tone. She made 11 postings to the site, contributing to a wide range of discussion but always with great sensitivity. She addresses

contributors directly, 'Way to go Booster :-)' (021009), 'I agree with Beyonddreams. I think she/he is perfect exactly as she/he is' (021003), 'Poor old Distopia' (090106). She also takes the pupils' own threads seriously, as already noted above, contributing to the 'How do you mend a broken heart?' thread, and is happy to debate the merits of the BeeGees (090203). She is also keen to contribute to the career oriented discussion but with the same calculated, positive tone, for example in the debate about 'positive uncertainty':

***020121 BOREALIS September 09, 2003 - 06:08 pm: It's great to B able to surprise yourself, learn new things and open new doors. Create your own world! The unknown can be exciting.**

Sagittarius is equally determined to see the glass as half full:

***020606 SAGITTARIUS September 03, 2003 - 03:34 pm: Every experience in life adds something to your character and that is how we all develop. It is up to you to get the most out of each experience. Even if it is something you have no wish to repeat it can be worthwhile if you make something positive out of it.**

And Nebula too, makes a big effort to sustain a positive tone:

***020118 NEBULA September 05, 2003 - 08:24 am: I think Sunshine is right...if we constantly think about all the terrible things that might happen to the world in a hundred years time, we'll miss out on the opportunities we have right now...and maybe if we make the most of some of these opportunities, the world might not be such a bad place in 2104.**

Some of these postings also have a quality of 'advising' – it is gentle advising, often nudging in the direction of subtle, positive and productive ways of orienting ourselves to the future and life's difficulties, but none the less, it is advice. Advice giving is often said to characterise guidance, separating guidance from counselling (Watts, 2000) (many counsellors resist advising clients, seeing it as potentially directive). On the whole the adults avoided giving direct advice,

mostly entering into discussion, offering personal opinions, and suggesting positive orientations as noted. There were a small number of notable exceptions:

***030426 THEFORCE** September 03, 2003 - 01:04 pm: Stand back and look at what you are doing, If you think yeh thats cool then carry on. If you think it's a pile of poo go for what you want todo forget about the dollars lifes to short

The Force had a different background to the other contributors, a fisherman in the west highlands of Scotland, he is used to direct talking. But Sagittarius, for example, the most prolific contributor, also offered some advice, but in a more subtle way:

***020105 SAGITTARIUS** September 01, 2003 - 09:42 am: I think some people will always strive to beat the machines, to take their potential a shade further. But I think it is important for everyone to learn the basics - for instance in maths - learn to count, not just use a calculator. Where would we be if the technological carpet was whipped from under our feet?

The different voices lend different accents and tones to what often amounts to essentially the same advice, and in some postings alternative perspectives are given:

***030431 Distopia** September 14, 2003 - 01:55 pm: I think its good to have a job thats 'challenging', which I think means 'hard to do' coz at least you always have to think, the kind of job that I would hate is one where its so easy that you are basically on autopilot all day..... but, if it paid well and it was really secure maybe I could do the challenging stuff outside work?

It is continuity and depth that makes the advising by the adult participants so helpful – they develop each other's arguments helping to sustain interesting threads, here Nebula notes a comment by Sagittarius and some of the students and adds her own perspective, reminding everyone that sometimes we are scared to change:

***030505 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 07:55 am: I guess then we should all be aware of what we are doing - not mindlessly following the same pattern day after day.**

***030506 Motherearth September 08, 2003 - 06:55 am: if u are happy following a pattern then follow it but u will realise that after a while that u have missed things out because it falls without ur ordinary pattern. dont b affraid of change.**

***030509 Nebula September 09, 2003 - 06:26 am: Motherearth makes a good point. Sometimes we just go on doing what we're doing because change is scary...it can be frightening to change where we live or where we work, but often when we finally make that change we wonder 'why didn't I do that ages ago?'**

There are some threads in which student led discussion develops very erratically because either the postings jump randomly from topic to topic or say the same thing over and over as in the following example of three successive but overlapping postings from two students:

***050603 Sunshine September 12, 2003 - 07:22 pm: right now i would. im only 15 and im not saying that in the next few years im not going to want to get a job but for now i want to be a teenager and have a laugh with mates but maby you want a job and maby you dont its just depends on who you are**

***050605 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:17 pm: i don't want a family in 10 years.i'll only be 26 and want to have some fun and do what i want to do befor starting a family**

***050606 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:20 pm: i'm only 16 i don't want to grow up yet but i do think a career that i would like much later**

In complete contrast, in the following example Darkside has, unawares, identified three postings by adult participants (presumably 031311, 031312, 031313) which caught her imagination and started her own thread to pick up on their articulate comments:

***032001 Darkside September 18, 2003 - 12:25 pm: In reply to DISTOPIA, Sagittarius and Nebula: i agree with all ur points of view... A challenging job is always good as ur excersising ur brain all the time but it is also important 2 get on with ur colleagues as u need 2 be in that friendly atmosphere 2 really enjoy ur job. If you are in a job that u despise then u need 2 focus on things which will get u through the day and this will also help u geton with ur job.**

In fact, the students were perhaps more likely to offer direct advice than the adults, Warpspeed, for example, is not afraid to offer advice using a direct tone that often seems to be avoided by the adults 'If u want 2 hav a good time wen ur older its worth working hard now to get u want then!' (030427).

5. b. vi. II. Questioning and challenging

Nebula, unlike Borealis, is comfortable challenging the students:

***051010 NEBULA September 18, 2003 - 12:56 pm: Not sure i agree with Buzz...would you really be as happy being, say a chef as you would being a plumber or a nurse**

Spacemonkey also feels free to challenge the students directly:

***020114 SPACEMONKEY September 03, 2003 - 04:33 pm: Wot sunshine says hurts my head - if don't know what the future will be like and don't know what i will like next week then me got nothing to go on. Wot am i supposed to do when it comes to make your mind up time ?**

Direct questioning is very rare, but in a few cases the adults try to direct and lead the discussion using questions, Constellation asks 'What about the changing/fixed

personality thing?' (020402), Borealis asks 'What is perfect, are you perfect when you are happy with yourself, does it matter when you don't get on with someone else?' (020203), and Sagittarius asks 'What makes someone a failure?' (030306) and 'When I get a job those are some to the things that will be importantly to me. What will you look for? (030706).

*050207 Sagittarius September 18, 2003 - 01:26 pm: I'm interested
what do you think is good about being the Prime Minister? Why would you like the responsibility, Blueplanet?

The few instances of questioning by school students tend to be very short personal questions, rhetorical questions or exclamations of puzzlement.

*012203 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 09:09 am: Eh?!?!?!?

*020405 Beyonddreams September 02, 2003 - 07:29 am: u may think u like that now because u r in ur comfort zone a safety barrier but will u be brave enough to leave it one day and grow up and explre????

In actual fact there were few examples of adults expressing outright disagreement with pupils' comments, the adults generally were deeply, perhaps overly sensitive to the views of the students.

A comment from Distopia in the Feedack topic sums up much of this analysis:

*080409 Distopia November 02, 2003 - 04:55 pm: I would say so. I don't think the site would desecnd into idle chatter if there was no adult input, but I think it has helped to keep some of the threads focused on career issues. Also it has been of benefit to me (adult) to here the opinions of the younger contributors. As far as I can tell none of the adult input ws heavy handed or didactic, but it was questioning the other contributors on their opinions more than offering their own (at least I was).

Often alternative perspectives were expressed as provocations or irony. Some of the adult posters made use of irony but this was not a feature of the student postings. The effect of these postings on the students and the development of the discussion is unclear. In the following posting The Berries ignores the serious and interesting pupil lead discussion hinting that social class and opportunity structure might have more to do with occupational choice than is often admitted;

***060405 THEBERRIES** September 18, 2003 - 09:00 pm: Job Advert: Journalist wanted. Must be born to an Earl and possess at least £100,000. ???

But the irony appears to go over the head of the students and is ignored, the discussion is taken up where it left off before The Berries contribution. On an amusing note, it is also ironic to note that Spacemonkey's sarcastic comment;

***020122 SPACEMONKEY** September 10, 2003 - 03:45 pm: the futures so bright you gotta wear shades

...is a response to one of Borealis' (also an adult) more heavy-handed nurturing/positive contributions quoted above (020121).

Constellation's (an adult contributor) ironic criticism of the Futureperfekt web site is a good example of a provocation, and uniquely, one that started a lengthy thread of discussion:

***020401 CONSTELLATION** September 02, 2003 - 07:24 am: I know what I am doing, where I want to go, what I want to do next. Why should a careers website of this type interest me ?

Distopia too, whose contribution to the site was in excess of 1500 words, also indulged in ironic comments 'PS I'm sure lots of money monkeys really do like their jobs :-)' (030308)

These kinds of knowing and layered contributions tend to separate the adult posters from the students but there is little evidence that it particularly engaged students. The students in the main ignored these remarks.

Ironically the most didactic and patronising contributions came from the only teacher involved in the discussion and notes I made in class at the time show that the students understood immediately that this was their guidance teacher.

***020408 CONSTELLATION** September 02, 2003 - 07:33 am: You are all very right. Good answers. Well done. What about the changing / fixed personality thing ?

On the whole there was great sensitivity shown and strenuous efforts were made to avoid a patronising tone. There was a little evidence of adults moderating their language to 'hang out with the kids'. In particular, Spacemonkey did adopt a few textisms – 'wot' for what, 'u r' for you are, and 'praps' for perhaps. This posting suggests he is imitating the students style:

***020114 Spacemonkey** September 03, 2003 - 04:33 pm: Wot sunshine says hurts my head - if don't know what the future will be like and don't know what i will like next week then me got nothing to go on. Wot am i supposed to do when it comes to make your mind up time ?

Distopia highlighted the use of txt speak in one of his comments in the feedback:

***081016 DISTOPIA** November 02, 2003 - 05:37 pm:I enjoyed the use of txt language and am sure it should not be discouraged (it seemed to me to work pretty well) but I do not naturally use it, marking me out as an adult again. I have an open mind about whether txt can fully cope with the complexity and depth of some issues. One way or another, it was the first time in a long time that I felt marginalised in conversation because my (txt) vocabulary wasn't up to the job :-)

... ..

Distopia's liberal attitude to text speak was not typical of the adult participants and in informal communications most of them expressed irritation and sometimes bewilderment. One potential participant withdrew citing uncertainty about how to adopt an appropriate tone. On the other hand, English was the second language of another adult participant who in fact had no reservations about contributing.

5. b. vii. The 'out of hours' postings

As discussed above, many of the students took the opportunity to post 'out of hours', that is, in their own time out of the supervised class. It is worth taking a look at the nature of these posts, which are made in a wide range of contexts and times. Some students posted from work, others from their home pc's in their bedrooms, late at night. For the purposes of this discussion postings made in the school period following the supervised classroom time (when the pupils stayed on in the lab voluntarily to continue contributing) have been excluded, as have postings by students who posted only 1 or 2 out of hours postings. The table below shows data relating to the posting patterns of the seven students who posted out of hours three or more times (excluding the period following supervised class time as noted).

Column one shows the number of out of hours posts made (x 5). Sunshine, by far the most active out of hours, made 15 out of hours postings (practically 50% of her massive total of 33 posts overall), amounting to nearly 1000 words, often late in the evening or at weekends. Columns 3 and 4 show the average length of each out of hours posting (3) and the average length of all the students' postings. Most of the students wrote marginally shorter postings out of hours than they did in class. The final column shows the number of individual days the students posted out of hours (x 5), for example, Wehaveaproblem posted on 6 days out of hours, and Sunshine 10. Most students only posted out of hours on 3 or 4 days during the six week trial. It needs to be emphasised that number of postings does not indicate number of visits to the Futureperfekt web site – many students visited often, to read the messages out of hours, but did not post.

It is significant that the four most prolific posters overall are all represented in the group of seven who were regular out of hours posters. Fazer posted 12 out of 36 posts out of hours, Wehaveaproblem 10 of 34, Aurora 6 of 29, and Sunshine 15 of 33! One or two very active posters are not represented, Cosmicray posted 26 postings, only one of which was out of hours. Although Fazer made many contributions they were mostly very short e.g. 'The failures!' (030305) – her out of hours postings were much shorter than her overall average length of post (15 words compared to 23), she was firing off several short postings in the space of a few minutes to a whole range of different threads. Fazer's rapid fire short postings can be interpreted as the bulletin board equivalent of nodding your head during FTF communication, or the equivalent of vocalising 'uh huh' – these 3, 4 and 5 word posts glue the community together, letting lots of different people see that their postings are being read and considered without going to the trouble of making long contributions to each of the threads. This contrasts markedly with Sunshine, nearly all of who's posts were lengthy and thoughtful, indeed one of her postings exceeded 300 words. It seems that the students are able to take on board specific 'social roles' which reflect the ways FTF Groupwork is managed (with leaders, reflectors, thinkers and facilitators) – diverse ways of interacting with the discussion emerge.

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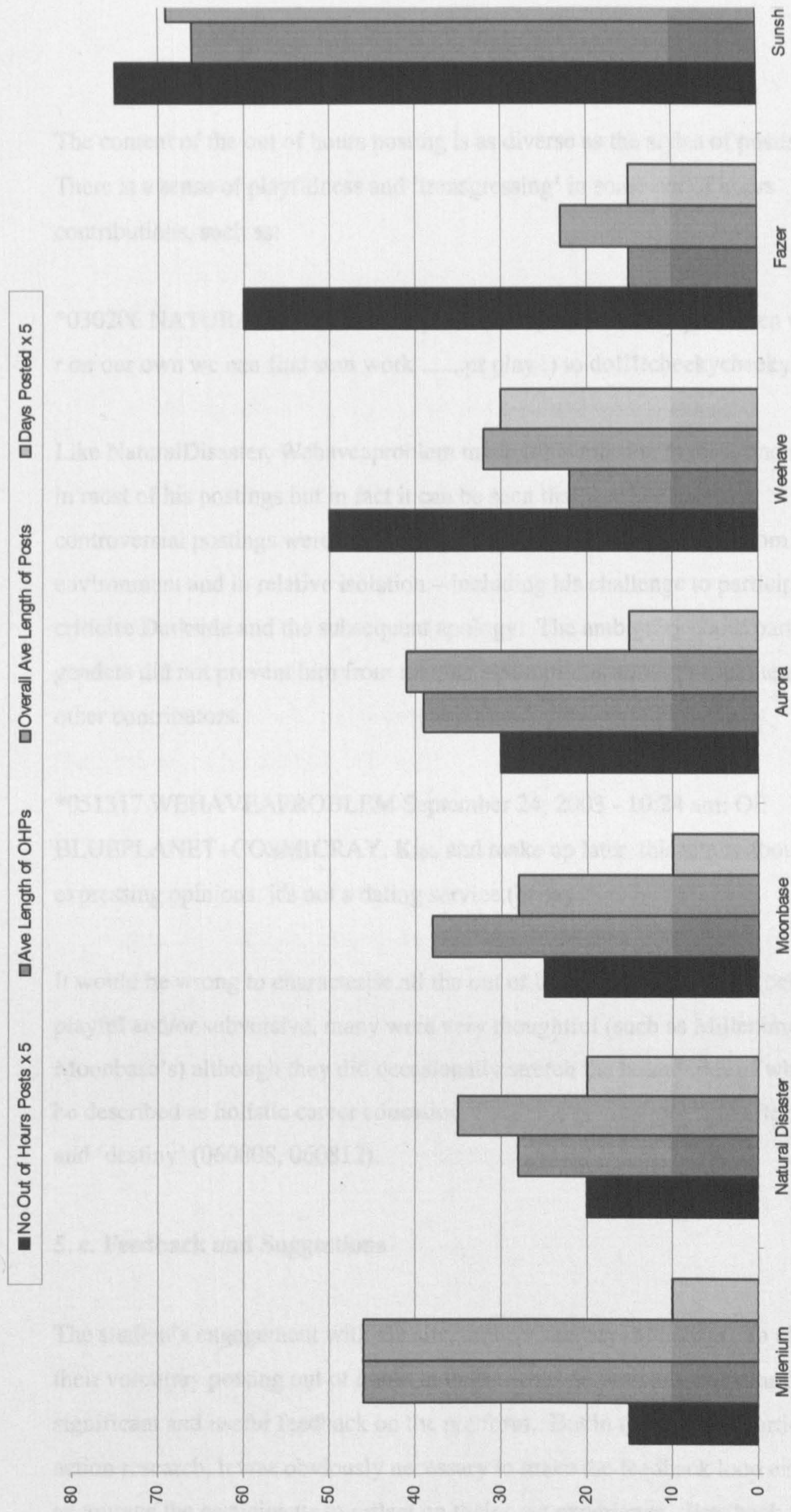


Table 16: Out of hours postings, 7 most active out of hours posters.

The content of the out of hours posting is as diverse as the styles of posting. There is a sense of playfulness and ‘transgressing’ in some out of hours contributions, such as:

***030206 NATURALDISASTER** September 01, 2003 - 12:17 pm: Even when we r on our own we can find sum workpr play ;) to do!!!!cheekycheeky!! 12

Like NaturalDisaster, Wehaveaproblem made it his mission to tease and subvert in most of his postings but in fact it can be seen that some of his most controversial postings were made out of hours, away from the classroom environment and in relative isolation – including his challenge to participants to criticise Darkside and the subsequent apology. The ambiguity about participants’ genders did not prevent him from making assumptions about this and teasing other contributors:

***051317 WEHAVEAPROBLEM** September 24, 2003 - 10:24 am: Oi! BLUEPLANET+COSMICRAY. Kiss and make up later. this site is about expressing opinions. it's not a dating service.(haha)

It would be wrong to characterise all the out of hours contributions as being playful and/or subversive, many were very thoughtful (such as Millenimum’s and Moonbase’s) although they did occasionally stretch the boundaries of what could be described as holistic career education, Sunshine posts about ‘life after death’ and ‘destiny’ (060808, 060812).

5. c. Feedback and Suggestions

The student’s engagement with the site, their (voluntary) attendance in class, and their voluntary posting out of hours in their own time probably constitute the most significant and useful feedback on the platform. But in the spirit of participatory action research, it was obviously necessary to make the feedback loop explicit, to encourage the participants to reflect on their own experience. Feedback from participants was recorded in a number of ways:-

- During the Groupwork with the school students informal notes were made in response to comments and events.
- A single informal focus group was held with pupils from School F.
- All participants were invited to make comments in response to the following series of questions posted on the bulletin boards:-

How is this different from discussing things in class with a teacher?

Has discussion changed your opinion about any career planning issues?

What have you learned during the Futureperfekt project?

Are there benefits to having adults in the discussion?

What are the pros and cons of using a pseudonym instead of your real name?

Can you think of other ways we can use this kind of Internet discussion to improve your learning in school?

Suggest ways Futurist could improve the web site?

Did you ever read or post messages outside of our class time? What encouraged you to do this?

Parents... would it be better or worse if they were involved (with their own pseudonyms of course)? What could be done to encourage parents to participate in the discussion?

- The students began their own feedback thread under the rubric 'Was this site GOOD or BAD? (Be Honest Guys!!!)'
- Some participants emailed comments.
- One adult participant and the guidance teacher responsible for the pupils in School F were both interviewed informally after the trial had ended and invited to comment and expand on various aspects of the project.

No pressure was put on the participants to provide feedback, in keeping with all the contributions to the project participation was voluntary. The fact that school

students opened up their own feedback topic on the bulletin board suggests an enthusiasm to contribute to site development. About 20 participants contributed to the online feedback topics, another 8 (some overlap) were involved in the focus groups and 3 more emailed feedback comments. Two thirds of the participants gave direct feedback. There is an unresolved question about the feelings of those who did not offer direct feedback – they may have had significant doubts about the project that remain unrecorded, or their lack of participation may indicate a strong negative response. This question remains moot, participation in the project was voluntary, and no formal, informal, oral or written negative feedback was received.

5. c. i. Pupils Comments

In response to the question – ‘How is this different from discussing things in class with a teacher?’, the students claimed they could speak more freely.

‘You can say whatever you want’ (080101), ‘you don’t feel you have to say anything’ (080102), ‘It’s more open, you can say what you think without worry’ (080104), ‘You can get anything that you are thinking off your chest’ (080107).

Some especially valued the ability to be private, ‘People can’t have preconceived ideas about you’ (081003), ‘it gives us privacy to discuss things’ (080108). Sagittarius suggests it ‘reduces the fear of commenting in front of fellow pupils’ (080111) and is backed up by the students themselves, ‘You can say what you think without worry if it sounds stupid or pointless’ (080104), you can speak without ‘worry that anyone will judge you’ (080107).

Paying more attention to other students was an unexpected benefit raised by some, ‘I found that it really helped to listen to other people and find out what they thought’ (080107), ‘people talk to everyone....you are not just talking to your friends’ (080110).

On the down side, one student commented 'the only thing which is better about discussing things face to face is that you get (even from most teachers!!!) an ansr straight away' (080105).

The students were occasionally erudite and often, as noted above, surprisingly political. If there are doubts about the potential of communication to achieve 'perspective transformation' and 'emancipatory knowledge', the following extraordinary comment can put them to rest: 'If we can say what we thing 2 adults and teachers online, why can we not have the freedom to do so - in a nice way - face to face? This is a country where we have freedom of speach. This has highlighted the fact thatwe still hav sum kind of tradition to treat teenagers like children!!! who knows!' (080105). It appears that the relatively unrestricted discussion has highlighted the constraints of the classroom. Perhaps this experience is what Sherry Turkle (1996) has in mind when she writes about 'depayement'.

Most students were not able to be specific when asked how discussion had changed their opinions about career planning. Millenium was interesting, suggesting that discussion helps shape opinions 'it helps to kind of mould what you think is the best thing' (080202), and in a later posting 'it helps you to take in a lot more views' (080303). Milkyway comments on the holistic tone of the discussion 'it has made me take into account other issues ...it has also made me focus more on what i want my life to be like in the future which is closely linked to my choice of career.' (080203) and Booster says he has 'learnt a few things and been able to look at things from a different perspective' (080204). Redshift makes one of the most specific comments 'money isn't the most important thing in a career, hapiness and job satisfaction are, which often derive from careers where you 'make a difference' to someone' (080205). One of the most fascinating postings in the feedback section was the comment by Wehaveaproblem on what he had learned (he was the instigator of the mock flamewar with Darkside) in which he hints at the potential of this kind of online discussion to refine debating and interpersonal skills in a relatively safe environment:

***080302 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am: I have learned from the futureperfekt course that people can be sensitive to your criticism, if you are 'attacking' their opinions and beliefs. I thought it was great to see the way the others reacted when i 'slagged off' what they thought. but in saying that they all took it pretty light heartedly, Especially the ones i was aiming at directly. It shows that they know that what other people think doesn't matter. It's good to see that people are being themselves. This website has been a great way to learn these sort of things. WELL DONE FUTURIST!!!!!!!**

The views of the students on the role of adults in the discussion were complex. 'can't really tell who's who, so it doesn't make any difference to me.' (080402) and 'its near impossible to tell the difference between teenagers and adults' (080403) were typical. Despite this, there is also a sense from the students that adults played an important role 'they often can redirect the thread well if it gets away from the point, Sagittarius often has gd points to make along with others, that really make you think. Don't know how but it makes it a lot easier to get into a thread if one good one is posted that really makes u think about it/or makes u disagree!' (080402), 'its easier to make a good posting if there are already some good/thought-provoking ones there' (080406). Redshift puts it nicely:

***080404 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:24 am: I think it must be worthwhile to have input from adults who have had much more life experience than students, this could help us make better, more informed choices about life.**

Perhaps Milkyway's comment sums up the students feelings 'it does help to have adult input even if you dont know its from an adult' (080408)!

Feedback about pseudonyms has been discussed above, but in response to the question about pros and cons of pseudonymity, Redshift sums up the issues:-

***080503 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am: Pros: easier to say what you really think, no-one knows who anyone else is, more secure. Cons: Maybe people would take some topics more seriously if they new who they were talking**

too, maybe they would be more careful in what they say. (don't know if this is necessarily a good thing).

There were a few suggestions for other ways to use the discussion forum, Booster (080602) thought that social education classes might benefit from anonymous discussion, and Millennium and Aurora thought that it might be a useful tool for helping pupils deal with bullying (080603+04).

There were also suggestions for improvements, two of which seem particularly apt. There was a couple of comments raising the idea that the site could 'have an 'interactive chat' section which you could organise on a regular basis i.e. once a week at a certain time' (080703) and a facility 'which shows who is online now, so you could look out for an immediate reply' (080705). It is likely that the inclusion of a 'real time' communication facility would change the tone of the discussion quite dramatically. One concern would be that the vitality of live discussion would undermine the thoughtful, relaxed pace of bulletin board discussion – students might prefer the instant gratification of live chat to the more thoughtful and deliberative perusal of bulletin board postings.

The second suggestion, from an adult, was that more use should be made of links to other web sites, 'it would be helpful to include links to relevant sites, asking people to comment on how useful/informative they are and why. This might encourage self-guided research re particular topics' (080709). Although the Futureperfekt site did have a wide selection of links to other career planning web sites, these were not used systematically and it was left to the students themselves to explore these links if they were interested. This is certainly an interesting option for developing a more sustained career education programme or for managing career education resources remotely.

One of the most disappointing aspects of the development of the site was the difficulty developing a mechanism that would engage parents in the online discussion.

The students themselves were ambivalent about the possibility of engaging their parents in the discussion. Although they were certainly interested in the idea, they were also acutely aware of the problems. Several key issues were raised, 'they are so busy' (080902), 'most hav little or no knowledge on how 2 use them!' (080903), 'parents may feel a bit frightened by the prospect of having a younger person making a better point about their views??' (080905). In fact there was some indication that this latter point might be very relevant – some of the adults reported that they did find the web site stressful to use (adapting to the tone of the students, text language, concerns about being patronising).

Despite the difficulties envisaged, there were no real objections to the concept of involving parents, 'it would be kinda wierd to talk to your parents without knowing it was them. but i think it would be a good kind of wierd coz you'll get to know what they really think about stuff...' (080904), 'there has bn adults on the site alreid n we hvnt even noticed there age and it mite b gd 2 get a parents point of veiw and for thm to see wot the younger generation r sayin' (080907). Of course, one of the ideas of the project was that parents would find out what the students really thought about things. The students were also quick to identify a central paradox; '...but then you wouldn't know if it was them or not, would you? ... i was never sure who were adults and who werent; still what they have to say is more important (to me anyway) than who they are.' (080904). In fact the original objective is expressed most articulately by one of the adult participants and it is a pity that Futureperfekt was unable to produce any evidence to test her ideas:

*080908 Psychic October 09, 2003 - 03:31 pm: I think it might be interesting if parents would join a web discussion like this. With pseudonyms, not knowing who is who. I wonder if it would help parents and the younger generation to talk more freely with each other, without the roles there are usually present and difficulties in listening to each others opinions?

5. c. ii. Pupil Endorsements

One of the most heartening aspects of the feedback was the creation of a thread by the students themselves. This spontaneous feedback was more loose and unstructured than the responses to the questions posted on the web sited to direct the feedback. Clearly this project was something of a novelty for the students and a welcome break from more structured (and assessed) teaching, so the responses are likely to be subject to the now well understood 'Hawthorne Effect', where any change to an organised system can result in a temporary increase in productivity (Gillespie, 1991). However, the contributions to this thread took place over two weeks, included adult contributions, and were not posted in the presence of the researcher, so it might be supposed that there is an element of thoughtfulness and reflection in the comments. There were no negative comments in any of the 16 postings to this thread and it should be noted that the option to abandon the pseudonym and post completely anonymously to the site was available for all the feedback threads. The adult comments are discussed below.

General remarks included 'I feel this site was pretty damn good!!!... a huge success!' (081001), 'yep spot on!' (081002), 'i think that this site has to be one of the best i have ever gone in' (081008), 'the web site was a great success' (081012), 'I still think that this site is one of the best things brought to my school and i really hope that they keep it going on in other school and collages' (081012).

The reasons cited by the pupils did not tend to relate specifically to career planning issues and were more general, relating to a more holistic perspective and hinting that the person-centred quality of the discussion was appreciated, 'it lets us descirbe how we feel towards carrers and the life thats before us' (081009). They singled out the online notes that were used to stimulate discussion. The formal feedback thread did not mention this aspect of the site, so it is helpful to note that the students enjoyed these, 'i loved the notes. they were a big help in giving me inspiration for my postings' (081007), 'the notes at the beginning were a really good way of easing you into a topic, it got ur brain ticking over before you got into the posts' (081006), 'One of them that really was good was the one

on the different personalities, like having only so many groups defining people or having everyone as unique ... that one really did get me thinkin.’ (081006).

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the student initiated thread was the emphasis they put on the dynamic of the online forum – the specific ‘content’ seemed to be less important to them than the strangeness of the learning environment and the way it made opinions and perspectives explicit and open to challenge:-

‘really did develop my opinions on things and also shaped several of my opinions , befor i did not hav one on sum subjects’ (081002)

‘very thought provoking, and peoples responses to postings, and how they react with one-another, are very interesting’ (081003)

‘it just allowed me to think more about them and possibly change how i thought about things’ (081004)

‘This site was good in teaching us to express ourselves’ (081011)

‘The best thing was debating - I like hearing other peoples opinions.’ (081012)

‘everyone here has had the same oppertunity to get there point accross and get to have people give them a fair go.’ (081013)

‘i enjoyed reading things even if i dont agree with what you are saying i still thought about where everyone is coming from.’ (081013)

One anonymous poster (081013) makes a touching posting, hinting at the anxiety a future orientation can cause and the ways in which a collective approach can help: ‘i have never thought about what life would be like i nten years at the thought has always scared me but now i have faced the fear about were am i going to be and how am i going to get there and yeh im still scared but everyone i talked to about things like that have helped me deal with the thought of it’.

5. c. iii. Adults’ Comments

The adult feedback was richer than that of the students and included some subtle consideration of the pros and cons of different aspects of the project, much of which has been alluded to elsewhere in this chapter. Overall the feedback was positive. Given one important goal of the project, namely to avoid privileging

discourses of occupational choice and the labour market in career education and to explore possibilities for a holistic and person-centred approach, the following comment from Theberries (a qualified higher education career adviser) is significant, indicating that this objective was, at least in part, achieved:

***080210 Theberries October 11, 2003 - 08:39 am:** This site has changed my views about career planning issues, which is important to me as I work as a Careers Adviser! In one thread of conversation the pupils talked about the pressure they were under to make decisions. In my job it's easy to forget how difficult it can be to start exploring career issues before you are ready. In group work, and when interviewing students I have been more aware of their 'readiness' and their styles of decision making.

Psychic, who was not a native English speaker made an important contribution to the discussion wrote:

***081014 Psychic October 09, 2003 - 03:19 pm:** I think this site is great. For me it has been a wonderful chance to share thoughts with people I would never have met otherwise. It is always good to hear different opinions and views, it helps you getting a wider perspective.

Distopia, a computing specialist, also identifies the 'person-centred' quality of the discussion:

***080211 Distopia November 02, 2003 - 04:50 pm:** I wish this site had been available when I was at school. I remember it being very difficult to discuss serious issues about the future without sounding over worried or 'uncool'. It seems to me that this type of anonymous chat has allowed some serious issues to be discussed informally, I have been quite surprised at the thoughtfulness of some contributors.

As might be expected, Distopia also took an active interest in the technical side of the web site and the bulletin board discussion forum:

***080710 Distopia November 02, 2003 - 05:20 pm: Web site was excellent in design terms, it looked good, the design was cohesive and followed good practice. The futuristic and forward looking style of the content was well reflected in the visual design. Also, unlike many temporary or experimental web sites this one looked professional and permanent and clearly involved significant development effort.**

Distopia also had some suggestions for consideration. He did not like the 'daughter windows', would have preferred a warning that the web site used 'cookies', thought that it needed development work to make it suitable for use by visually impaired participants, and that in the longer term it could be developed into a more sophisticated 'virtual learning' environment. He also commented that 'In terms of constructive criticism I thought that the discussion splintered into too many threads to be easily followed' (080710). This latter point is critical. If the discussion becomes too arcane, with more threads and postings than participants can reasonably follow, there is a risk that the 'community' becomes fragmented into sub-groups of like minded (or conflicting) individuals. The reason that the bulletin board used cookies was so that users accessing the site from the same computer regularly could be notified (using highlighting) of recent postings. There was also a facility to search for recent postings. Some users obviously didn't understand this facility, and for others, such as Distopia, it obviously did not help much. But The Berries highlights this:

***081015 Theberries October 11, 2003 - 08:47 am: The site was excellent. The fact that it was so easy to use made the conversation flow! The 'last day' 'last week' functions and table of last posted messages made it easy to catch up with new conversation.**

Two issues arise from this, firstly the amount of training and support needed to use the site, and secondly, the optimum size of the 'community'. Because of the great difficulty getting access to school students the introduction to the bulletin board was rushed and possibly too informal, and the adults had practically no support at all – they were left in a sink or swim situation. Ideally much more support and detailed instruction would be available for both students and adults to

ensure that those with well-honed technical skills did not have a special advantage. On the second point, it is unlikely that the discussion would have benefited from an increased number of participants as it was already becoming difficult to keep up with the barrage of posting over the six weeks of the trial – but it is interesting to speculate what an ‘optimum’ number of participants would be. Naturally this would depend on the energy the participants themselves devote to posting but it is likely that an adult to student ratio of between 3:7 and 1:2 might have benefits. Smaller numbers of students involved would increase the pressure on individuals to post, making ‘constructive lurking’ (enjoying reading the postings, chatting in the class, but making few contributions to the bulletin board) harder.

The adult contributors did highlight benefits of the mixture of class discussion and more gentle, thoughtful, online discussion, for example, ‘the possibility of taking the time to compose postings so that comments are understood in the way you mean them – a boon for shyer individuals’ (e.g. 080111)

Chapter 6: Discussion

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6. a. Introduction to the Discussion

It is hard to know where to start with a discussion of what was a continually evolving and cyclical project, combining elements of participant observation, action research and hermeneutic inquiry. Participatory action research does not sit comfortably in much of the social sciences, coming as it does from a very specific political perspective on methodology. Silverman's generally useful undergraduate text 'Doing Qualitative Research' (2000), is one of several that do not even include the phrase 'action research', it seems to lack the status of 'professional' research; the province of the amateur and small-scale experimentation. The inherent focus on values, interpretation, emancipation, and practice make it unfashionable in psychology, much of which is still modelling itself on the 'natural' sciences. None the less, this 'unnatural' science seems to have made a home for itself in educational research in particular and is well represented in teaching, community education, youth and community work, and increasingly also in nursing and health care. The focus on professional practice need not preclude the possibility that action research can contribute to the process of theory building, but only if its objectives are 'mini-theories' or Nietzschean 'humble truths'. As noted in the Methods chapter, Community and Critical Psychology have embraced action research, and participatory action research is well suited to the most neglected and most important of Aristotle's three types of knowledge, phronesis. The practical wisdom of phronesis is tailor made, as Flyvbjerg (2001) notes, to balance instrumental rationality with value rationality. We cannot identify what is 'effective' unless we know what we want to achieve. In this way of thinking, the political is not repressed behind a veil of 'objectivity'; it can, and indeed it should, be embraced, celebrated and dissected.

The results then, indicate some humble truths, some provisional and perhaps contradictory interpretations. They cannot be summed up as a sequence or a hierarchy of data. The results of participatory action research are more than the sum of the parts, and, in as much as they belong to all the participants (all the *researchers*) individually and collectively, must inevitably be open to contesting. For example, it was impossible to use all the participants to check for inter-coder consistency in the QSR Nudist analysis of the data, and despite the fact that the

initial analysis was set on course by class feedback, and the analysis was reviewed with a school guidance teacher, and two of the adult participants, the bulk of the participants (the school pupils who have since moved on) were not in a position to comment on the final analysis.

It is tempting to discuss this thesis in terms of a critique of career education. But, as Lyotard (1974) argues, a critique can only ever be reformist and is eternally trapped in the sphere of the criticised. Here he is firmly in the tradition of post-structuralist thinking since Nietzsche (1887, Aphorism 276) 'I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation.' It is not the purpose of the thesis to negate career education or to remain trapped in the relatively stable (bipolar) positions explored in the literature review. Lyotard is suspicious of the whole process of critiquing and building 'theory':

(the) trap consists in quite simply responding to the demand of the vanquished theory, and this demand is: put something in my place. The important thing is this place, however, not the contents of the theory. It is the place of theory that must be vanquished. (Lyotard, 1974, p. 104)

The results of this thesis amount to a *discourse* on career education; even a multiplicity of discourses; an ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives that Feyerabend might recognise as 'knowledge'. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) method seems to be vindicated in a number of important regards, but in particular it allowed Futureperfekt to develop, with the help of a wide range of contributors, alongside formal Career Education and Guidance (CEG) (neither as a replacement for nor as a negation of the status quo). Radical discourses emerged within the school system itself, sowing the seeds for reflexivity and thoughtfulness in a constructive way. But secondly, in keeping with the Community Psychology ethical principle that everyone involved should learn something, the research produced rich and constructive learning experiences for all the participants as is clearly shown from the Stage 2 and Stage 3 data gathering. The PAR contributed to developing alternative approaches to CEG, to social psychology of the Internet and to educational research, but also, in its focus

on professional practice and ‘practical wisdom’ (phronesis), on the place of theory in CEG. Rather than recommending a new framework for CEG, this thesis amounts to an elaboration of the values that underpin CEG.

The following discussion roves from the specific to the general, from professional practice, to consideration of the tension between critical theory and post-structuralist (and post-modern) thinking. It is divided into three key sections following the core objectives set out in the Introduction:-

Involving the Community in Career Education

Person-Centredness in Career Education

Using emerging technologies to enhance career education

6. a. i. Ambiguity in the Career Education Curriculum

In a book remarkable for its unusual engagement with political and ethical underpinnings in career education, Harris (1999), ‘Career Education: Contesting Policy and Practice’, emphasises the contestability of the definitions and content of career education. Taking a historical and sociological perspective she notes its ambiguous relationship with the economy and shows how career education has been redefined according to each change in political, social and cultural context, arguing that the dominant discourse is always that defined by the government rather than practitioners:

while careers education is concerned with the individual and their career development, it is positioned in an educational system which undermines, or even denies, individuality in the interests of the economy, social cohesion and social order. (p. 2)

For Harris, career education has a hidden curriculum that, through rules, regulations and routines, shapes individual behaviour to institutional demands. The behaviour of those delivering career education is therefore managed partly by ambiguity about what career education should actually be about – the more ambiguous, the easier it becomes for the career education curriculum to be

appropriated. She identifies four alternative and more or less conflicting and overlapping conceptions of career education:

- matching talents to jobs;
- teaching job finding skills;
- producing workers (preparing for working life); and
- developing citizens (preparation for life after school and not just working life).

The DOTS career education curriculum tackles the first three of these conceptions but is weak on the fourth – developing citizens. It is this fourth conception of career education that the Futureperfekt project seems most suited to. Harris sees a potential conflict between the objective of producing ‘compliant’ workers and career education that ‘is a liberating and enabling agent by which individuals can take control over their own lives’, a conflict that hints at the difficulties practitioners might face when attempting to implement career education for ‘developing citizens’ alongside a well established DOTS curriculum. The task of developing citizens, active participants in society, is complex:

no social subject can promote a questioning participation in an unequal society without either provoking controversy and criticism, or disguising or legitimising the inequality. (Gilbert, 1984, p. 27)

Much of the effectiveness of the social-constructionist framework Futureperfekt put into place depends on the ways in which it addresses, without disguising, the conflicting aims of producing workers and preparing citizens. The results show that it was a forum where questions about inequality could emerge and be addressed by school students themselves (for example the discussion about public schools improving ‘life chances’). Equally, the analysis of the results showed that many of the traditional elements of a DOTS curriculum emerged spontaneously, although often heavily contextualised by the students themselves. Where there is discussion of going for job interviews (Harris’ second conception of career education – ‘finding work’) it is raised in relation to prejudice about social status

and how one can be disadvantaged by being 'from the wrong side of the tracks'. The extended discussion about family values and work-life balance is also useful evidence, again supporting the idea that Futureperfekt was helpful for addressing the project of 'developing citizens'. It is important to bear in mind that the school students themselves initiated many of these threads. The career education curriculum is being extended, and it is being extended in directions identified as significant by the school students themselves.

Introducing the online career education discussion forum does not address the fundamental ambiguity about what career education should be about, nor does it solve the problem that this ambiguity allows the formal career education curriculum to be appropriated in the interests of the economy or social order. In many ways Futureperfekt exploited this ambiguity to create a different kind of learning experience for the school students. It created a space where the formal curriculum itself can be problematised by the students, and just as importantly, a space where the students' own personal concerns can be explored, either on their own terms, or in relation to the formal curriculum. In short, it successfully introduced a 'student-centred' component to a structured national curriculum, which many argue is potentially manipulative. It is an opportunity for the students themselves to control the agenda of 'ambiguously defined' and 'politically charged' career education.

In terms of the 'social-constructionist' agenda, the programme achieved three other objectives – it involved adults from outwith the school community, it involved school students outside their timetabled school classes, at home, at their places of work, and in school during their 'uncommitted' study time (free periods), and it established a forum where pupils could counter and challenge the DOTS agenda and the optimistic, perhaps even naïve, 'you can do anything as long as you work hard' discourse of much career education .

6. b. Involving the Community in Career Education

Core Objective: to find ways to take school student career education out of the confines of the schools themselves and into the wider community.

An important element of the social-constructionist agenda was to engage the pupils with career education outside of their classroom learning.¹ 28% of the student postings were made outside the allocated classroom periods, and 9% of their postings were outside of school hours, posted from their homes or their work places. This suggests that at least some of the students were personally engaged with the project and were thinking about the issues raised in a range of personal and social contexts. Some of the pupils' enthusiasm for the project can undoubtedly be explained by the novelty of the experience and the apparent lack of rules and structure, which might have made it seem exciting at first, but it cannot entirely explain the fact that some pupils were posting to the web site at midnight, or that pupils regularly stayed in the computer lab after the class had ended to continue writing contributions. It might be supposed that Futureperfekt was providing a forum for social expression, and academic jousting, otherwise unavailable to the students.

The programme was certainly beginning to extend the career education outwith the boundaries of the school, creating the possibility of discussion at home with the extended family, and even in the work environment with colleagues.² The simple fact that the discussion took place in a variety of social contexts itself implies subtle but important shifts in perspective were taking place. It can be argued that Futureperfekt has successfully, like much Internet communication, disrupted conventional conceptions of social space and shifted a component of career education into a fragmented space where multiple perspectives are not simply possible, but become the norm. School students could be sitting shoulder to shoulder in a school computer lab one day, chatting about and interpreting postings from an unidentified person, each unaware of the other's contribution,

¹ See Chapter 2 Literature Review, sections 2.d. (p. 62), 2.e. (p.64) and 2.f.i. (p.69) for example.

² Also see 2.d. (p.62) and 2.e. (.64)

and the next day be isolated but in the comfort of their home, reflecting and posting at leisure, surrounded by quite different social cues. The social rules of engagement naturally differ depending on social context, the online forum unsettles the social context, it becomes arbitrary and strange, unbounded.³ The impact of the resultant reduction in FTF social cues, as discussed above, is itself contested, but many authors identify an increased focus on content (e.g. Rhiengold, 2000, Chester and Gwynne 1998, amongst others), the ideas themselves, along with a sense of detachment from the discussion which makes it easier to adopt multiple perspectives – to think two impossible thoughts at the same time. Indeed, the rather individualistic humanist idea of ‘person-centredness’ is itself disturbed; a social-constructionist position might imply that we are in fact very different people in different social contexts.⁴ Perhaps the asynchronous discussion represents contributions from fragments of some of our possible selves.

The benefits of involving external adult participants are ultimately a matter of opinion and judgement. Pupils seemed to value the attention they received from adults when they identified them as such (often a result of tone, language used, or simply length of posts) but were often genuinely unaware who were and were not adult participants. As noted above, many of the richer adult postings were ignored by the pupils who seemed unsure how to engage with them and in some cases there was evidence of adults debating with each other, perhaps attracted by the richer postings.

More disappointing was the fact that the adult participants did not engage with some of the most interesting pupil led discussion, especially the more provocative and controversial material. There is good evidence of a ‘nurturing’ role adopted by some adults, determined attempts to keep the discussion in some of the threads active, and also attempts to introduce some more conventional ‘job’ related concerns. The point of adult participation was not to monitor and control the

³ Turkle’s (1996) concept of *dépaysement* is relevant here (p. 86)

⁴ The posting from Antigravity *125, discussed on (p. 157) is striking in this context ‘peoples views on the same person are different and complex. Maybe it is you who is making that person character where every action equals an equal and opposite reaction. So in reality is everyone not there own third self. There is only one person that knows your self because when do you know you are changing into a different person.’

discussion, to keep it 'on track' so to speak, it was to share personal thoughts and experiences about career development. Importantly, some student feedback indicated that they valued the 'redirection' by adults and that the adult postings 'really made you think'. It is well worth noting that the benefits were two way, the adult participants got a unique insight in to the minds of the school pupils and clearly appreciated this. The example of one adult participant being taught to use HTML code to enhance her postings (underline, bold and colour) by a relatively anonymous school student is pertinent.

On reflection, there were two unequal communities of participants in Futureperfekt; the school students, and the adult participants. The students had a circle of support in the supervised classes; their friends were near, help and encouragement was always available. There was a palpable sense of excitement in the class, a buzz of activity, excited chatter and noisy sparring and teasing. Each pupil was alone in a group – they came together and went their separate ways on a weekly basis, accessing the online discussion in different environments as the fancy took them. On the other hand, the adult participants were isolated. They had no support network, were writing messages into the faceless void of the Internet and relied on purely textual feedback or often did without feedback altogether. They were forced to rely entirely on a few instructional emails, their own instincts about whether what they had to say was relevant and their own judgment about whether postings were from adults or students, serious or ironic, good spirited teasing or cruel jibes.

Perhaps even in this age of the Internet, it was a significant error to assume that the adult participants would necessarily be more confident and at ease online than the 'net savvy' school students. Informal debriefing interviews with some of the adult participants suggested that inexperience with the medium led to some degree of insecurity, in particular about the 'tone' that should be adopted. In a debriefing interview, 'The Force', a fisherman in the west highlands, who was articulate, very active on the Internet, especially trading on ebay, but had no formal education and was negative about his own school experience, reported feeling nervous about how and what to post in a debriefing interview; specifically, he reported feeling the need for much more guidance in the early stages. The Force

dropped out after three postings, apparently simply because of inadequate support. Although most of the adults recruited to participate were active on the Internet, chat and bulletin boards are a very particular domain that, loosely speaking, the school pupils were much more familiar with than the adults.

An interesting point that arose from a couple of debriefing interviews (The Force, Saggitarius, Distopia) was that the requirement for pseudonymity caused some adults at least to feel reluctance to reveal things about themselves; the requirement for pseudonymity suggested to them that they must avoid giving clues to their identities. Consequently there were few examples of the age and experience of the adult participants being reflected in their postings; they participated in the debates but without introducing many practical, corporeal examples that might have enriched some of the discussion. Distopia specifically reported holding back on his personal experience in order to avoid giving away his adult identity. In future iterations, the level of adult support and the issue of encouraging adults to contribute fully on the basis of their whole life experience would need to be addressed.

The adult participation is certainly not an essential component of online career education discussion (I don't think the site would descend into idle chatter if there was no adult input, 080409), however the adult contribution enriched the project dramatically and was appreciated by the pupils. In retrospect there is much that could be done to improve the management of this aspect of Futureperfekt, in particular, better briefing, regular encouraging updates keeping them in touch with the topics the students were addressing, and perhaps some kind of indication who the adults are (both to avoid them entering into lengthy debates with each other and to avoid any sense of subterfuge or attempts to adopt student patois to fit in). One student suggested that adults work in groups in the same way as the school pupils did (080903), a suggestion that hints at a potentially exciting, although difficult to manage, way forward. With the bureaucratic and administrative support of the schools and Careers Scotland, there is obviously great scope to extend the range and variety of adult participants in this kind of exercise.

University school liaison officers, disabled people, training providers, employers, elderly people and many other groups could all be used to enrich the discussion.

In terms of the values that underpinned the research, it is quite clear that Internet discussion forums can provide a mechanism to challenge the age related lateral segmentation that is a feature of modern society. For a complex of reasons, it is apparent that young people in some areas spend more and more time with their peers, and less and less with the older people who might traditionally have been role models. On the most basic level, extended families are giving way to nuclear families and single parent families. The Internet provides a safe and effective way for adults of all ages and sectors of the community to bring some of the wisdom of age, which we might even label 'phronesis', to bear on the jejune knowledge and outlook of school students. It could be argued that there is no better focus for this kind of interaction than the process of developing citizens, reflecting on a path through life; career education.

6. b. i. Summary

It is possible to:

- conclude that much of the online discussion was not dependant on the adult participation, the pupils worked hard and created rich and complex threads of discussion even when the adults were not contributing;
- identify examples of discussion that were developed and prolonged by articulate and sustained adult contributions. The pupils reported that, although it was not necessary to have the adult involvement, it added a unique and helpful element to the discussion (see results section above for detail);
- argue that had the adults been better briefed and supported throughout the project, the discussion might have been enabled to make better use of adult contributors' experience and personal life-career paths;
- conclude from comments made by the adult participants that it can be rewarding and useful learning experience for all the participants, not just the school students;

- argue that the technology does make it possible to extend the school pupils' networks into the wider community in a safe and productive way; and
- use the technology to take career education outside the school. It was a very concrete element of the success of the project that some students contributed outwith school hours, from their places of work and from their homes.

6. b. ii. Notes on involving Parents and the 'Wider Community'

These conclusions and findings need to be considered in a much broader context. An early objective in the first iterations of the project was to involve parents of the school students; the feedback from the students suggest that this might have had both disadvantages and advantages. They indicated that, as long as pseudonymity was maintained, then they were broadly in favour of parents joining in, although some thought that parents might be both too busy and too lacking in Internet skills! The evidence gathered from the trials suggest that, even with a carefully selected group of adult contributors, that is indeed often the case.

One or two students felt that 'it is our site' (comments made in a classroom debriefing with students) and seemed reluctant to share it with people who already probably have a very strong voice in their lives. All the participating school students were told at the outset that their parents or guardians could join in if they would like, so it is interesting to speculate about the fact that none took up this opportunity. It seems likely (although there is no evidence), that some of the students may not have given their parents the leaflet inviting them to join-in. One or two parents expressed interest at the outset and were allocated pseudonyms and passwords, but none followed through and participated. The evidence from adult participants (again from informal debriefing interviews) who signed up to participate but effectively dropped out suggests, as noted above, that there is a need for a great deal of support for adult participants, certainly as much as is provided for the school students, in order to overcome uncertainty and natural caution about participation and what is and what is not appropriate. It is likely

that this point might be even more pertinent to the general population of parents than it was for the carefully selected and personally invited adult participants in Futureperfekt.

As noted in the literature review above (e.g. Irving, 2000), one of the most fundamental criticisms of career education has been its lack of parental and community involvement. In general terms, it can be seen that Futureperfekt addressed these concerns and it points the way forward in using technology to embed career education in the wider community, and to extend its focus and context out with the school. In more colourful language then, and to return to the arguments outlined in the Introduction above (specifically Haraway, 2000), it is clear that the technology can help, in small ways, to ‘reconstruct the boundaries of daily life’. We have seen that it can facilitate the ‘grid of control’ (nomothetic psychometric testing, matching tools etc), but it can also be used to facilitate a powerful reflexive communications technology. Lyotard (1979) tells us ‘the goal of emancipation has nothing to do with science’ (p. 41), but here we can see technology facilitating the only kind of legitimation that Lyotard accepts, rather than being concerned with authority and consensus (e.g. Habermass, 1973), it is ‘legitimation that springs from (our) own linguistic practice and communicational interaction.’ (p. 41). This kind of legitimation (although certainly not ‘emancipation’) springs from ‘communities’; it is socially constructed.

This brings us to an important impasse, one that writers on career education fail to address – whose community? As noted in the introduction with reference to Bauman (2001) and Hobsbawn (1996), amongst others, notions about what constitutes ‘community’ are hotly contested. Even the role of parents, the assumption that the power of the parent must be privileged (e.g. Irving 2000), is challenged by post-modern thinkers (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, make a fierce attack on the psychoanalytic holy trinity - ‘mommy-daddy-me’).

The core objective of the thesis of involving the ‘wider community’ in career education seems dangerously superficial and imprecise in the light of the Futureperfekt online discussion and the above reflection. For example, the list of possible participants in the online career education forum suggested above

(parents, employers, career advisers, college recruiters etc) is simply a list of people who are already powerbrokers in the school students' lives. The de-powering effect of a veil of pseudonymity cannot disguise the fact that these are the very people who already have a vested interest in managing the opportunity structure for the students.

Delanty (2003) identifies the root problem of this impasse rather neatly:

community must be understood as an expression of a highly fluid *communitas* – a mode of belonging that is symbolic and communicative – rather than an actual institutional arrangement, capable of sustaining modern and radical social relationships as well as traditional ones. (p. 31)

There is no reason why the Internet communication community should be expected to include representation from every corporeal social institution that structures and controls the participants' lives in order to be a valid 'community'. Unlike Bauman (2001, see Introduction), rather than seeing new technology and the free flow of information as undermining community, Delanty argues (in line with many key writers on the Internet, Rhiengold, 2000, Turkle, 1996, Castells, 2001) that 'ICTs have created powerful new expressions of community that go far beyond all hitherto forms of community' (p. 167). Communities on the Internet are seen as new kinds of polymorphous and highly personalised social groups.

It seems rather conservative then, to have created an online community in this hierarchical way; one participant researcher selecting participants that represent one imaginary 'wider community'. Ultimately it represented only the bias and social network of the main researcher. A radical and potentially rich alternative might be to attempt to establish the online community in a more rhizomatic way, one that might enable the community to reflect the social network of the school students themselves (i.e. all the researchers). The school students could be encouraged to invite appropriate contributors of their choice into their discussion. This might include parents, and the usual suspects listed above, but it might also include quite unexpected contributors. There is no reason why the principle of pseudonymity could not be maintained using this arrangement.

Castells' (2001) view is that communities are built out of networks, and that the networks are built as a result of choices made by the social actors in the networks, it therefore seems reasonable to argue that the school students be allowed to make some choices about the constitution of their online career education community.

Regardless of the viability of this proposal, it is clear that it is unhelpful to speak about the 'the wider community' in a loose and abstract way. In fact it may be better to resist making claims to have involved the wider community in career education (particularly in the light of the failure to recruit parents of the school pupils). There is evidence that Futureperfekt did create the kind of online community that Castells describes and that, as Delanty puts it, 'has a positive effect on social interaction, enhancing democratic possibilities and offering people a more communicative means of ordering their relations.' (p. 176). Using a mixture of FTF and CMC, Futureperfekt was able to avoid a dualistic separation of the virtual and the real, creating a rich and complex reflexive relationship between online and classroom communication, between local and remote, tight and loose networks. In particular, it was able to open school students up to the possibility of alternate identities straddling multiple but overlapping communities. Paraphrasing Foucault (1984), to encourage the development of thought and action by proliferation, juxtaposition and disjunction.

6. c. Person-Centredness in Career Education

Core Objective: to experiment with ways of preserving person centeredness as a value in career education.

The phrase 'person-centredness' is a more politically correct version of the 'client-centredness' at the centre of Rogerian Counselling and in turn has sometimes been adapted in this thesis as 'student-centredness'. Rogers was enthusiastic about the potential for applying his Humanist approach to counselling to construct a Humanist framework for teaching and learning. In 'Humanising Education' (1967) he argues that the interpersonal relationship between teacher and learner is key in facilitating learning. His claim that (p. 25) 'Teaching is, for

me, a relatively unimportant and vastly overvalued activity.’ bears examination in the context of this thesis. He argues that ‘teaching’ raises the wrong sort of questions: What shall we teach? What from our superior vantage point, does the other person need to know? He goes on to say ‘I wonder if, in this modern world, we are justified in our presumption that we are wise about the future and the young are foolish. Are we really sure as to what they should know?’.

For Rogers the assumption that what is taught is what is learned is ‘obviously untrue’ and he goes further, pointing out that content driven, ‘banking’ (to use Freire’s (1972) word) education, even if effective, is only useful to the extent that our world is unchanging. Modern man, he argues, lives in an environment that is continually changing and therefore the function of education must be the facilitation of change. If correct, his conclusions are particularly relevant to career education, which is, after all, about preparing for the future.

Rogers promotes his time honoured formula for counselling as a model for learning that facilitates change, based firmly on the relationship between the learner and the facilitator; the facilitator must be genuine, accepting of the learner, empathic, but above all, must trust the capacity of humans to develop their own potential. He believed that learners in contact with problems that are genuinely relevant to them will inevitably ‘want to grow, seek to discover, endeavour to master, desire to create, move towards self-discipline’.

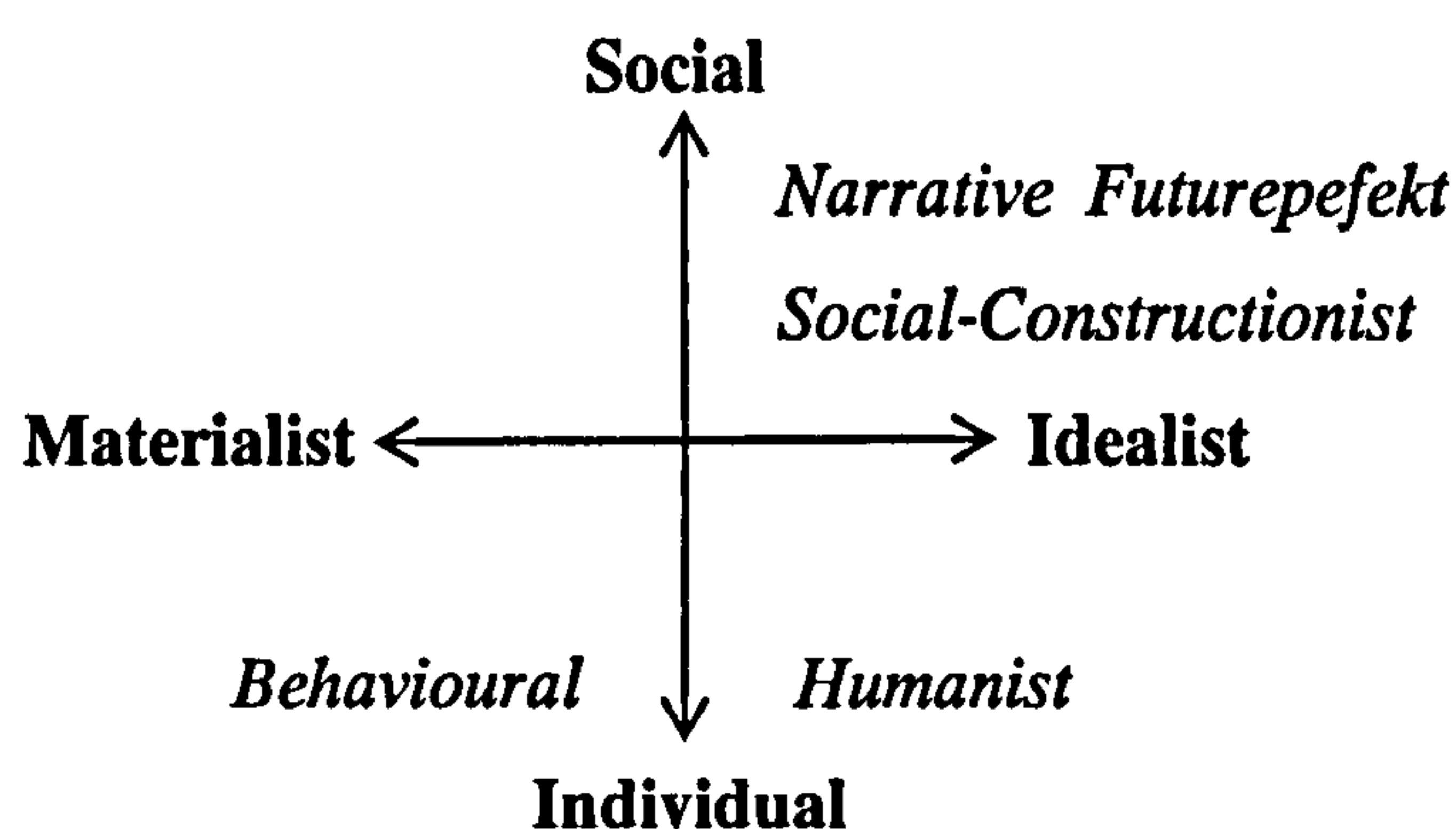
Like Habermas’ communicative action, Rogers’ prescription is a set of rules to promote transformatory or emancipatory, communication and learning and is firmly in a modernist tradition where progress comes from an ultimately liberating structure of rules and procedures, which can guide us to a more ‘enlightened’ way of living. The quest for ‘student centredness’, at the heart of this thesis, was a response to the controlling influence of state bureaucracy in career education and the implementation of a national curriculum for career education in Scotland based on the DOTS model, as discussed in the introduction and literature review. Futureperfekt brought together a community of facilitators and learners in what amounted to an attempt to let school students set their own agenda for career education, to grow, discover and manage their own learning.

Mayes (2002) echoes some of Roger's thinking, arguing that never has there been so much agreement about the pedagogical fundamentals, resulting in a widespread consensus 'rejecting a view of learning in which knowledge is acquired, in favour of a constructivist view in which learning is primarily developed through activity' (p. 165). In *Futureperfekt* the content of the career education was 'socially constructed' and negotiated, through the activities of reading, and both FTF and CMC discussion. Some contributions to the discussion were posted, read and then left to lie; others sparked interest and extended debate. It was the students themselves who chose when to extend the discussion and when to let threads die. The result was richness and variety that goes much further than formal career education programmes. Clear and sophisticated shared discourses emerged. One of the best examples is the recurring theme about the pressure to make early occupational choices. The increased volatility of the labour market, rapid personality changes during adolescence, and the probability of an extended period of post-school education were all raised, by the students themselves, as arguments for postponing occupational choice. This perspective runs counter to the dominant DOTS discourse that early decision making leads to goal focus and academic achievement, and to the need of career service bureaucracy to record occupational choices of school students as early as possible to facilitate economic development planning (marketing of higher education courses and particular occupations, for example when there is a shortage of teachers).

There are elements in *Futureperfekt* that reflect Rogers' humanist perspective on learning, both in the relationship of the main researcher (a facilitator to use Rogers' term) to the learners (genuineness, empathy, acceptance etc.), and in the process of choosing content; much of the content sprang from the personal experiences and concerns of the school students themselves. There might be some justification then, on the basis of the content of the discussion, to conclude that it was more 'student-centred' than traditional career education. Rogers' 50 year old perspective does not seem to capture the complexity and subtlety of the processes at work in *Futureperfekt*. The social nature of the processes and the reflexive nature of the contributions suggest that it might have as much in common with group therapy or even narrative therapies (where our stories and

discourses about our lives are reworked and challenged iteratively either individually or in groups) than Rogerian Person-Centred Therapy. Mayes (2002) emphasises that the social aspect learning can seem diluted in Rogers' approach; he argues that learning tasks 'need to be made meaningful to the individual through the social context in which they are performed, and providing the learner with the opportunity for feedback and reflection' (p. 165).

David Smail (2005) has developed an interesting framework for understanding the relationship between different psychological helping strategies using two orthogonal axes; idealist-materialist and social-individual.⁵ For example, Smail plots learning and helping strategies based on behavioural approaches in the quadrant 'material-individual' because they focus on both the individual and adopt a tough, evidence based positivistic approach to understanding the individual's behaviour.



Using Smail's framework, we find humanist approaches and post-modern (narrative and social-constructionist) approaches at opposite ends of the social-individual construct. The former (humanist) is in the extreme of the idealist-individual category, and the latter in the social-idealist category. This way of thinking introduces a helpful tension into the above analysis of Futurepekt as more 'student-centred'. It may be that Futurepekt is more idealistic and less materialistic (that is, less reliant on behavioural outcomes such as job search

⁵ The word 'Idealist' is used in the philosophical sense of meaning that there is no concrete reality on which we can depend; it is probably debatable whether Humanist perspectives can be characterised in this way.

skills) than conventional approaches to career education, but it is also clear that Futureperfekt is more 'social' than individualistic. A fundamental problem with the conception of Futureperfekt becomes apparent; the social-constructionist framework borrowed mainly from educational practices is at odds with the objective of increasing the person-centredness of career education suggested by the humanist rhetoric underpinning some career education and guidance theory (Lent 1996).

Mayes (2002) strongly advocates a focus on the relationship between the individual and the community in on-line learning, noting that much student behaviour is as much to do with peer esteem as the curriculum and that motivation often comes from the desire to raise self-esteem by becoming a legitimate member of a community. He notes that the opportunities provided by new technology require the main focus to be on the relationship of the learners to other people, rather than information. The learner must identify with the dialogues of other learners, rather than on direct engagement with the subject matter.

In Futureperfekt it could be argued that the individuality of the participants themselves was deliberately submerged in the interests of creating a 'community' of learners. The requirement for pseudonymity played a major part in this process. The participants were prevented from being 'genuine' or 'real' in the strict sense described by Rogers. In the interests of facilitating change and perspective transformation, the participants were invited to play with their own identity and were explicitly given permission to contradict themselves and adopt multiple positions in the debates. More significantly, on an individual basis, participants had very little control over the specific content of Futureperfekt; but as a social group they had complete control. It is only when there were shared interests and a shared language that the discussion developed. Negotiation and interest were the keys to determining content – not personal agendas.

The core objectives of this thesis can be understood as being in conflict; community building and person-centredness are not necessarily compatible ideals.

Once again the focus on emancipation and perspective transformation (Mezirow 1981) that influenced the development of this project, is seen to be inadequate.⁶ Community requires ego-loss, loss of individuality and compromise, all of which seem a long way from the romantic goal of personal emancipation. This brings us full circle and back to the Introduction: 'Perhaps identity and community are locked in a permanent battle, on the one hand identity only becoming possible as community collapses, and on the other, community relying on a special understanding, 'reciprocal binding sentiment' (Bauman, 2001, p. 10), an abandoning of individual will in favour of the collective. Alternatively, as the data suggest, perhaps our multiple selves, our fragmented sense of self, interact in complex ways within layers of community in which we are more or less active participants. Even within Futureperfekt, as noted above, there were sub-communities. Rather than inviting participants to submerge their identities, the unsettling of standard classroom surveillance allows alternative, latent identities to emerge and be expressed.

Morss and Nichterlein (1999) argue that the temptation to emancipate comes from good intentions, but question the very possibility of emancipation and the modernist position that it is achievable if correct techniques are adopted with appropriate sensitivity. In rejecting the language of emancipation they argue; 'Along with the dream of emancipating the client goes the fantasy of overthrowing the monstrous system, more or less single-handed. Almost a fantasy of omnipotence ...?' (p. 173). Action to facilitate change (to return to Rogers' objective) must be collective. Instead of 'emancipation', Morss and Nichterlein propose 'resistance': successful outcomes might relate to the will and competence to resist some power structure consensually agreed to be operating. Indeed this process of resistance is characterised by the school students' refusal to

⁶ 'Doesn't emancipation of children and teenagers, once the initial phase of revolt is passed and once there has been established the principle of the right to emancipation, seem like the real emancipation of parentsthe young students seem to sense it in their always more insistent demand (though still paradoxical) for the presence and advice of parents or of teachers. Alone at last, free and responsible, it seemed to them suddenly that other people have possibly absconded with their true liberty.' (Jean Baudrillard 1988 p. 182 – 183)

make early occupational choices or to undertake detailed planning about future paths through life.

Divergent positions emerged and were debated actively; neither individual participants nor the government endorsed DOTS agenda, were able to dominate the discussion - everything was open challenge and contesting. The focus in conventional career education on occupational choice was subverted, and one of the dominant discourses became a commentary on the dangers of making premature occupational choices. As explained below, this process of subversion can be characterised as a post-modern process of multi-voiced deconstruction.

6. c. i. Summary

Tentative conclusions (humble truths) can be drawn:

- Concepts like person-centredness and emancipation are too simplistic and unreflexive to describe the processes at work, they might better be understood as a social-constructionist project of examining, unsettling and disturbing dominant discourses and power structures in career education.
- Most of the DOTS curriculum, advocated by the education bureaucracy, was covered spontaneously by the school students in the discussion, although often in ways that contested and problematised dominant perspectives.
- The online forum provides an effective medium for school students to raise personal concerns in a broad career related social context; the career education curriculum is extended and, in some regards, freed from bureaucratic control.
- School students are able to use world-wide web resources unsupervised, follow personal interests and concerns, and actively engage with and subvert the discourses they encounter. Although much of the career theory

might benefit from interpretation and mediation by a teacher or career adviser, this is not always necessary. Without any instruction at all, students picked up theory from the web pages and integrated it into postings, referring specifically to the work of Gelatt, Holland, and Kelly for example.

- School students were helped to reflect on their career in their own social contexts, in their own social networks and communities.

6. c. ii. Notes on Social Education

There was another unexpected and potentially important finding. Career education in schools is often criticised as being a 'bolt on'; a small component of social education programmes introduced dutifully but unenthusiastically for two or three hours each school year. In contrast, the career education discussion in Futureperfekt extended in some remarkable and unexpected directions. The students' use of aphorisms, poetry and song lyrics in their postings is a fascinating example. Students quoted literature and homilies (090107, 061001, 030406, 030407) on several occasions and indeed were even playfully duelling with them at one point. It seems that they were bringing their learning from their English classes to their career education classes and, as such, introducing a very creative, and indeed post-modern, use of language and metaphor to the online discussion. Perhaps less compelling as an argument, but still tantalising, the students' concerns with the nature of love and friendship suggests interesting possibilities for considering 'career maturity' in extraordinary new ways; learning to sustain relationships and social networks for example. The school students themselves, in their feedback threads, suggested the online discussion be extended to other school subjects and in particular identified social education as a subject that could benefit from pseudonymous communication (sex education and combating school bullying were identified as possible topics - 0806). There does indeed seem to be a compelling logic in the idea that 'social education' should be a social activity, involving a 'wider' (or diverse) community.

Pseudonymity, disruption of spatial and temporal boundaries, and the potential ambiguity and richness of career education, all hint at the remarkable possibilities for Futureperfekt-style online communities to embed and integrate career education in the wider curriculum. It is obvious that, with this model, there is an opportunity to integrate career education neatly with social education in school, and perhaps to go even further, encouraging the student led discussion to draw on many school subjects, English, Business Studies, Modern Studies, Economics and Geography for example. Even an aspect of the DOTS framework, such as consideration of the 'opportunity structure', could be drawing directly on learning in Economics and Geography inter alia, to produce complex reflection and linking between many different disciplines.

Rather than achieving the core objective of making career education more student-centred, Futureperfekt appears to make career education more social, better integrated into the wider curriculum, more reflexive, more colourful and, crucially, more political in the post-modern sense of generating diverse subjective experience. On the one hand the student's individuality is submerged in a new negotiated social world, and on the other it is fragmented and can express itself in multiple ways. Roger's person-centredness is transformed into a process of social construction; his 'holism', his attempt to see the whole person, becomes a deliberate fragmentation of the person, and a process of seeing people as always 'becoming', constantly evolving, but also, essentially contradictory.

6. d. Using Emerging Technologies to Enhance Career Education

Core objective: to experiment with using emerging technologies in career education

A number of aspects of the Futureperfekt project have relevance, beyond the confines of career education and guidance, to more general questions regarding educational technologies and the social psychology of the Internet. The model utilised by the project provided an intense and rich experience for all the participants. The application of pseudonymity, the self-policing of the participants, the gender differences, models of online learning, disinhibition, *dépaysement* and perhaps most of all the tightly constructed cycles of FTF and CMC communication (reading, writing and speaking), all suggest some interesting outcomes that merit exploration.

As discussed above, dramatic claims have been made about the benefits of Internet discussion forums, and the medium has had some high profile advocates such as Howard Rheingold, Shelly Turkle and Manuel Castells, as well as many social psychology and education researchers. Some of these claims are given considerable support by the data gathered here. Chester and Gwynne's (1998) study of a pseudonymous online learning environment was a major influence on the research design used here and their findings a source of inspiration for the earliest research proposals. Their finding that students were able to relate to one another in more open and less stereotyped ways in the pseudonymous online learning environment, in line with Turkle's (1996) concept of '*dépaysement*', is aptly demonstrated in this touching quote from one of their students:

A female student sent the following reflection following a meeting with one of the male students, from the virtual course, in real life: 'I would not have gone near him ... the physical perception put me right off ... then I thought wait on a sec, if I get on so well online maybe I should give him a chance. As it turned out, it was worth it.'

It was certainly heartening to identify parallels in the feedback from the school students in Futureperfekt, despite the fact that Chester and Gwynne were working with University students and Futurepefekt was directed at much younger school students. The following comment is one of the best examples:

***080110 SUNSHINE October 03, 2003 - 11:42 am: well i htink this is a good way to communicat to people in classes because people talk to everyone. they dont know who you are so your are not just talking to your friends and are talking to everyone nomatter who you think they are and even if youdont talk to people in the class you get to know the person behind the mask. Eveyone behind behind a persona that people know you as. The person known as 'the class geek' (soz if i splt it wrong) to 'the brain' to 'the slut' everyone is different around people amd when you read what they say you are reading about the real them, about there veiws that you would never have knows about before this site.**

The experiment with pseudonymity brought a number of important dimensions to Futureperfekt, not least, this strong sense that participants could leave behind their stereotypes and, to borrow Rhiengold's (1994) words, be seen as 'thinkers and transmitters of ideas, and as feeling beings.' It enabled school students to play with identities, to interact with peers they normally do not interact with, and it gave them an opportunity to interact with adults without the typical status and power differential. Despite this, there are some timely reminders in the results that it does not do to take too naive a view of the online discussion, and perhaps even that online discussion aught to be integrated with FTF work when possible.

There can be no guarantee in a school setting that pseudonymity will be maintained, and results from the small scale, single class trial showed that one influential individual from the corporeal social network can easily become a hub, or a focus, of communication online if identities are divulged. The risks of this are massively reduced in the Futureperfekt model when more than one school is involved. School students can, of course, make an educated guess about which school other participants belong from the pattern and timing of postings, but this rarely happened in practice.

More to the point, the online discussion does not create an level playing field. On the contrary, it simply replaces one established network of power relations with another. Futureperfekt dovetails neatly with a community psychology model described by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005), who argue disadvantaged groups do not need 'empowerment' (as if power is something that can be easily passed around between individuals and social groups), but rather they need dominant social groups to 'depower' themselves, or to be depowered. When teachers, adults, parents etc enter into pseudonymous, asynchronous online discussion, this can more easily be characterised as a voluntary process of depowerment. In the Futureperfekt model, the power structures are re-negotiated in the text based discussion; by entering into the pseudonymous communication, teachers and adults surrender some of the status that would automatically be accorded them in FTF communication. The key is understanding that the online environment is not an idyllic virtual world in which everyone speaks with an equal voice, rather it is one where the rules are rewritten.

Much of the research on online communication indicates that men tend to monopolise discussion. Morahan-Martin (1998), in a useful summary of research on gender and Internet communication notes that 'males monopolise online conversations in both the number and length of their postings' and that 'when women try to have an equal footing they are ignored, trivialised or criticised by men' (p. 183) and go on to argue that these findings support the view that if women speak more than 30% of the time they are perceived as dominating. On the contrary, in the Futureperfekt discussion, the female participants posted more frequently and at greater length than the male participants. The contribution of the two groups is unequal and seemed to favour the female participants.⁷

The explanation for this turn of events is not clear but there are a number of interesting possibilities. Pseudonymity effectively hid the gender of the participants online, and as discussed in the results, there is evidence that on the whole participants did not identify the gender of other posters (even although clues were often apparent in the content of some of the social postings). Even if

⁷ See Chapter 5 a.ii. p.171

this is a partial explanation for the apparent lack of gender competition, it does not in itself explain why the females posted almost 50% more than the males. In recent years girls have been out performing boys academically in several school subjects, including English, and the findings may reflect the superior communication skills of the girls as a whole. It is also possible that the subject matter itself, and the reflective, discursive nature of the discussion might have suited the female school students more than the males. Morahan-Martin (1998) also suggest that males and females have a different communication ethic online, the males preferring forthright debate and being more prone to offensive language, the females being more considerate of the 'needs and wants of others' and more likely to be polite and supportive.

So, the online discussion is certainly not status and power free 'communicative action', the power plays that are embedded in all human interaction are simply reconfigured online. The danger of the asynchronous text based communication is that it becomes a tyranny of the literate, those with the best written language skills dominate at the expense of those who might prefer oral, synchronous communication styles. Writers now tend to argue (see Hiltz and Goldman, 2005) that this problem is alleviated by asynchronous models, which allow participants to take their time to construct messages, again underlining benefits of the Futureperfect model that relies on asynchronous communication online as well as (synchronous) FTF communication. Anecdotally, this researcher noted that in most but not all cases, students who participated least online also tended to make more modest contributions to the FTF discussion.

6. d. i. Self-Policing

Introducing pseudonymity into the high school environment initially seemed like a high-risk strategy. Typically High Schools are highly controlled and regulated social environments and discipline and order are seen as central to student learning; the need to be able to hold students to account for their behaviour is paramount. On the one hand pseudonymity was, to some degree at least, viewed with suspicion as a risky aspect of the project by the school authorities, particularly in the light of the media scare stories about the Internet and chat

rooms in particular. But there was also a concern that students would simply abuse the forum. Paradoxically, the fact that neither the schools nor the school students involved could be identified online added an element of security to the venture. The threat to the stability of the institution from unaccountable school students was seen as being increased by pseudonymity, while the threat to school students from malevolent forces on the Internet was seen as being reduced. In a debriefing interview, a Guidance Teacher in School F commented that there had been problems in the school in the past with online bullying, even with hate web sites being established, therefore although it took a degree of persuasion to get permission from the school management team to go ahead, the fact that the school had a tried and tested policy on Internet abuse helped. He argued that any potential risks from Futureperfekt were minor compared to the students' activities unsupervised in their own homes.

At the heart of the problem with pseudonymity for the schools was the notion that somehow the students would cease to be accountable for what they did online, that a kind of anarchy would develop and flame wars would be the outcome. The fact that ultimately the online discussion was so productive, and so well self-policed by the participants is therefore important.

The online spat (a sub-flamewar) between Wehaveaproblem and Darkside, discussed at length in the results, is the most interesting example. It is one more study in how the sense of 'anonymity', potential lawlessness and strangeness of online communication is possibly exaggerated. The communication between these two participants read like a hostile exchange only when the postings were read out of posting order. The adult participant Sagittarius read one posting (misleadingly posted as a new thread, 051301, although the continuation of a discussion from another thread) out of context, and immediately responded, fearful that another student would be criticised and picked on. The student's humorous, teasing posting was misunderstood, but instead of dealing with it directly and explaining that it could be misunderstood, she attempts (but fails) to divert attention from it:-

*051302 SAGITTARIUS September 22, 2003 - 03:05 pm: I actually enjoy

everyone's points of view. They are all different and worth reading. I have my opinions on things but I like hearing everyone else's. Sometimes it makes me see things from a different angle - and I like that - it's good to be challenged. It's also good if people agree with you, it makes you feel you are not alone. I don't mind standing alone but it's a nice feeling to think that others feel the same way. Does anyone else enjoy this site for this reason?

The attempt at social engineering this posting represents failed, but the postings that followed, directly criticising Wehaveaproblem for inviting people to criticise Darkside, succeeded and as a consequence Wehaveaproblem was suitably humbled. In the final stages of the project Wehaveaproblem seems contrite, even over enthusiastic in his appraisal of Futureperfekt, seeming to go out of his way to emphasise that his approach was playful and constructive:-

***080302 WEHAVEAPROBLEM September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am:** I have learned from the futureperfekt course that people can be sensitive to your criticism, if you are 'attacking' their opinions and beliefs. I thought it was great to see the way the others reacted when i 'slagged off' what they thought. but in saying that they all took it pretty light heartedly, especially the ones i was aiming at directly. It shows that they know that what other people think doesn't matter. It's good to see that people are being themselves. This website has been a great way to learn these sort of things. WELL DONE FUTURIST!!!!!!!

Wehaveaproblem is at great pains to demonstrate his good spirit. In fact he makes a key point – on the whole, people were being themselves, or at least projecting important aspects of their selves. Although he has done nothing wrong, broke no rules, was pseudonymous and in fact even helped promote discussion and bind the community, he still feels a need to explain himself, to manage the way people see his role online. It is clear that some of the participants had invested heavily in the identity they created online, and perhaps for some it was as important to be liked online as much as to be liked FTF. There are it seems, strict limits to the ways people will allow themselves to experiment with their online identity. The guidance teacher referred to above commented on this incident in the debriefing and described it as extremely minor, likening it to cheeky backchat in class.

What makes the Futureperfekt setting different is that rather than being secretly shared between two or three pupils, the backchat is recorded and available to scrutiny and ultimately censure by the whole online community.

Pseudonymity might go some way to undermining age, social class and gender stereotypes, but it does not create a community of ego-less individuals without any sense of social responsibility. The identity of each participant played a role in the community - a collective with informal social rules and a sense of purpose. The participants made a significant personal investment in the Futureperfekt community. Perhaps 'Wehaveaproblem' was not simply living up to his name after all.

6. d. ii. Disinhibition

There are a number of social psychological models that attempt to provide explanations for the relationship between disinhibition effects and group cohesion in online communications. There is not space to detail these models here, but Joinson (1998, 2003) gives useful summaries. The 'two-component self-awareness' model, and the 'social identity explanation of de-individuation effects' both predict circumstances that might lead to an increase in public self awareness (where attention is directed toward the environment – in this case the Futureperfekt forum) as opposed to private self awareness (inner directed goals and motives). Some studies (Joinson, 2003) report an increase in private self awareness in CMC, suggesting participants are not deindividuated, but in fact are responding in tune with their innermost thoughts, attitudes and goals. However, this needs to be considered alongside the view that anonymity (and perhaps pseudonymity) leads to the activation of social, rather than personal identities, that is, behaviour becomes regulated by the norms of the salient social group. Joinson (2003) also cites research evidence that suggests strong group membership, combined with relative anonymity in the group, can in fact lead to enhanced conformity to group norms rather than anti-normative behaviour. The data gathered in the Futureperfekt forums suggest that even when there is pseudonymity, young people's communication is not anarchic and disruptive, but highly rule governed and social. In Futureperfekt it is possible that public

awareness was further enhanced by the classroom work, where participants sat and discussed issues shoulder to shoulder before turning round in the computer laboratory and interacting through the screen, so to speak. It is interesting to speculate whether the failure of some of the students' early, playful attempts to identify other participants might in the long run have helped establish the sense of 'public awareness' and the emergence of a group identity. Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1996) in relatively early work on interactive communities identify 'symmetry in contributions, creativity and productivity, agreement, humor, and sense of belonging' as being key to developing sustainable online communities and the Futureperfekt forums clearly reflected, more or less, all of these as well as healthy and constructive disagreement. In particular, Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1996) were hoping for structural interventions that might increase interactivity, and the mix of FTF and CMC in Futureperfekt is just such a structural intervention as is discussed in more detail below. It is clear though, that in Futureperfekt there was evidence of disinhibition but that it facilitated interactivity rather than disrupting it.⁸

The cycle of FTF and CMC was absolutely fundamental to the pedagogical dynamic. And in that regard one potentially productive opportunity was missed: The logical next step for class room work would be to take the analysis of the discussion into the classroom with the pupils – allow them to deconstruct and contradict their own pseudonymous contributions. That final layer of reflexivity might ultimately be the layer that helps pupils create new ways of thinking about career for themselves while at the same time developing a healthy cynical perspective on the powerful single voice that dominates most school career education.

⁸ See Chapter 5b. iii. P. 201

6. d. iii. Models of Online Learning

Although the final iterations of Futureperfekt were designed over three years ago, it was based on emerging theory at the time.⁹ The online format has now been extensively validated in higher education in particular (Pelz, 2004, Swan and Shea, 2005). Pelz (2004), in the *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, provides a good example of current thinking in online learning. He identifies three principles of effective online pedagogy, all of which were embedded in Futureperfekt. Pelz's useful summary suggests:

- The students must do most of the work;
- Interactivity is the heart and soul of asynchronous online learning; and
- Strive for presence.

Although it should be remembered that his experience is in Higher Education not schools, echoing Rogers and Mayes above he notes that overall his work implies a diminishing role for the teacher as an instructor and arbiter of the curriculum, in favour of a role in 'instructional design' – creating learning environments.

He emphasises student led discussion, student discussion of web resources, students helping one another learn, case studies, collaborative research papers, etc., all of which are widely discussed in the literature, but it is the social psychological question of 'presence' that seems most subtle and interesting. A great deal of early research on online asynchronous learning networks was focused on this idea of presence, with many researchers questioning whether or not low bandwidth media (text based online discussion for example) can convey the social support (one type of presence) necessary to sustain learning communities (Vygotsky, 1962, Dewey, 1963). Swan and Shea (2005) note that current literature is remarkably consistent in its affirmation of the potential of online courses to develop a strong sense of community. The emphasis needs to be on the word 'potential'. Rovai (2002) attempted to quantitatively measure this sense of community with his 'Sense of Classroom Community Index' and interestingly his findings seem to suggest that a sense of

⁹ Refer to Chapter 2 g. p. 80 for discussion of research in this area.

community tends naturally to develop in traditional FTF classroom work, but that its development is more variable online and must be consciously supported by the participants/facilitators.

Much recent thinking on presence represents an implementation of work by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000, 2001a, 2001b inter-alia), referred to above, who attempt to find a structure to help analyse online communication.¹⁰ In particular they were attempting (Anderson et al 2001) to identify constructs to help them evaluate critical discourse in a community of inquiry. 'Presence' is categorised in three ways, each of which can be applied to the role of both the teacher and the students:

- Cognitive presence;
- Social presence; and
- Teaching presence.

Cognitive presence reflects the ways in which the participants construct and confirm meaning through sustained discussion in a community of inquiry. Social presence relates to the ways participants help establish a community of learning by projecting their personal characteristics into the discussion. This is seen as being either affective (expression of emotion, feelings, and mood), interactive (evidence of reading, attending, understanding, thinking about other's responses), or cohesive (responses that build and sustain 'belongingness', group commitment). Teaching presence (Garrison et al, 2000) is the facilitation and direction of cognitive and social process for the realization of personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes. Anderson et al (2001) analyse teaching presence in terms of three other variables:

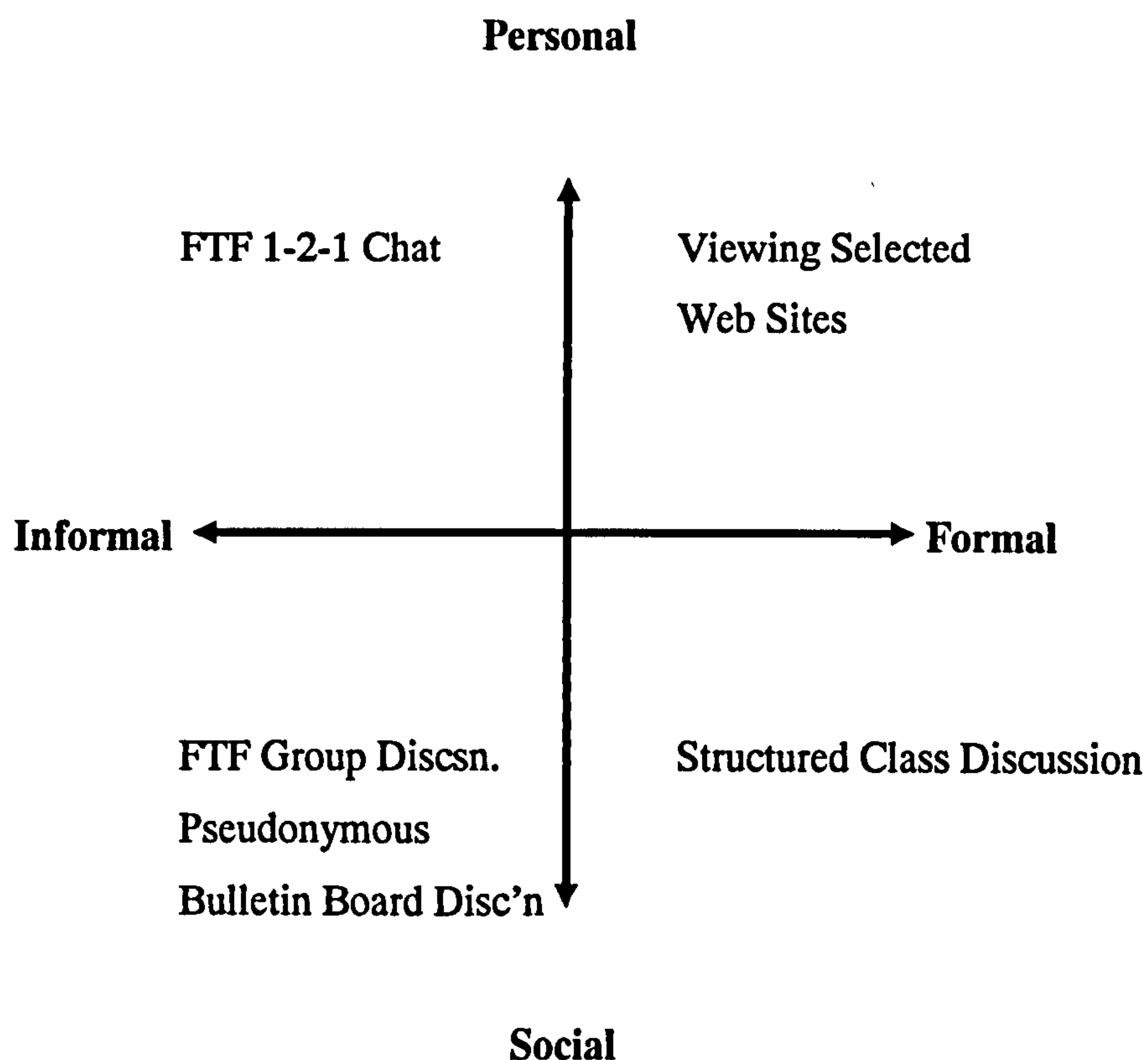
- Instructional design and organisation;
- Facilitating discourse; and
- Direct instruction.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3 . p. 96

Pelz (2004), like many current researchers, is extremely positive about the potential to create a shared community of learning online, arguing that online students bond earlier and 'better' and noting that online students tend to self-disclose to a greater extent than those sitting face-to-face (because of social psychological factors such as disinhibition, reduced private self awareness etc. discussed elsewhere). There is nothing in the Futureperfekt project to disconfirm this analysis – indeed there is ample evidence of cognitive, social and teaching presence in the data, as demonstrated in the results section.

There are two ways in which Futureperfekt extends the model used by Andersen and Pelz etc. Firstly, there was no 'direct instruction' (online), and there were, in a sense, many teachers because, as the results show, the adult participants did indeed see themselves as 'facilitators of discourse'. Secondly, the online discussion was integrated with classroom FTF discussion in a relatively unusual way. The cognitive, social and teaching presence of the 'teacher' (in this case the researcher) and school students was divided between a pseudonymous, online presence and a FTF classroom presence. This created a powerful cycle of communication that was able to integrate formal and informal, social and personal learning.

Table 17 Personal / Social – Informal / Formal Education



As already noted, the social-constructionist perspective suggests benefits from ensuring that formal teaching environments are supplemented with informal, social learning environments. The Futureperfekt environment created a series of stages, cycles of engagement in fact, that both disrupt and enhance the sense of 'presence' described above. Here are just some of the cycles embedded in the model:-

Figure 18 Cycles Embedded in the Futureperfekt Model

personal → social → personal
 Informal → formal → informal
 speaking → writing → speaking → reading
 FTF discussion → pseudonymous CMC → FTF discussion
 in-school → out-of-school → in-school contributions

The possibilities for multi-layered contributions and a multi-faceted sense of presence (cognitive, social, or teaching presence), are unusually rich.

All the participants have the potential to engage in computer mediated communication as illustrated in table 23. The school students, their teachers and career advisers, and parents, also have the opportunity to engage FTF communication (table 24).

Table 19 The Internet Network

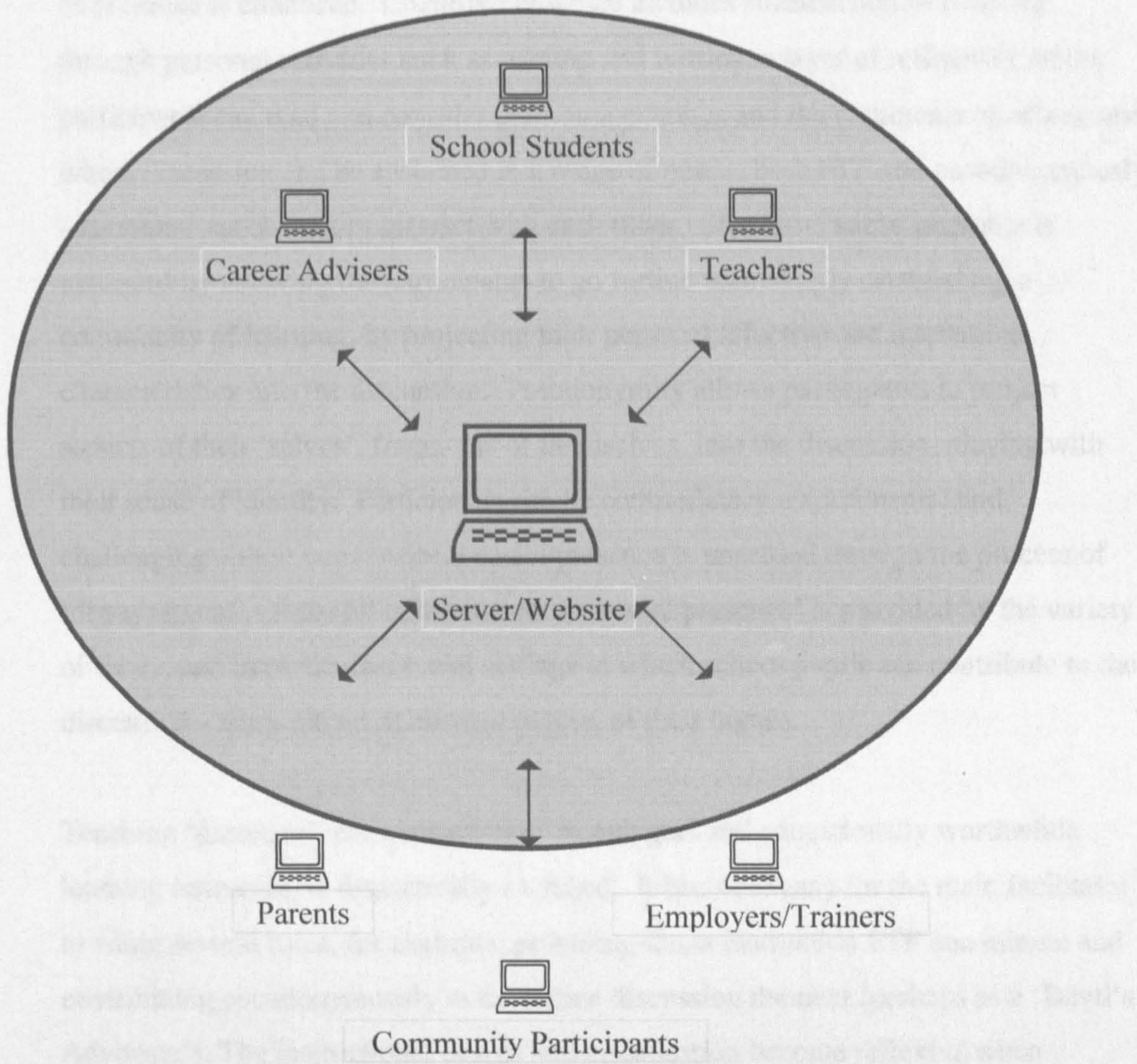
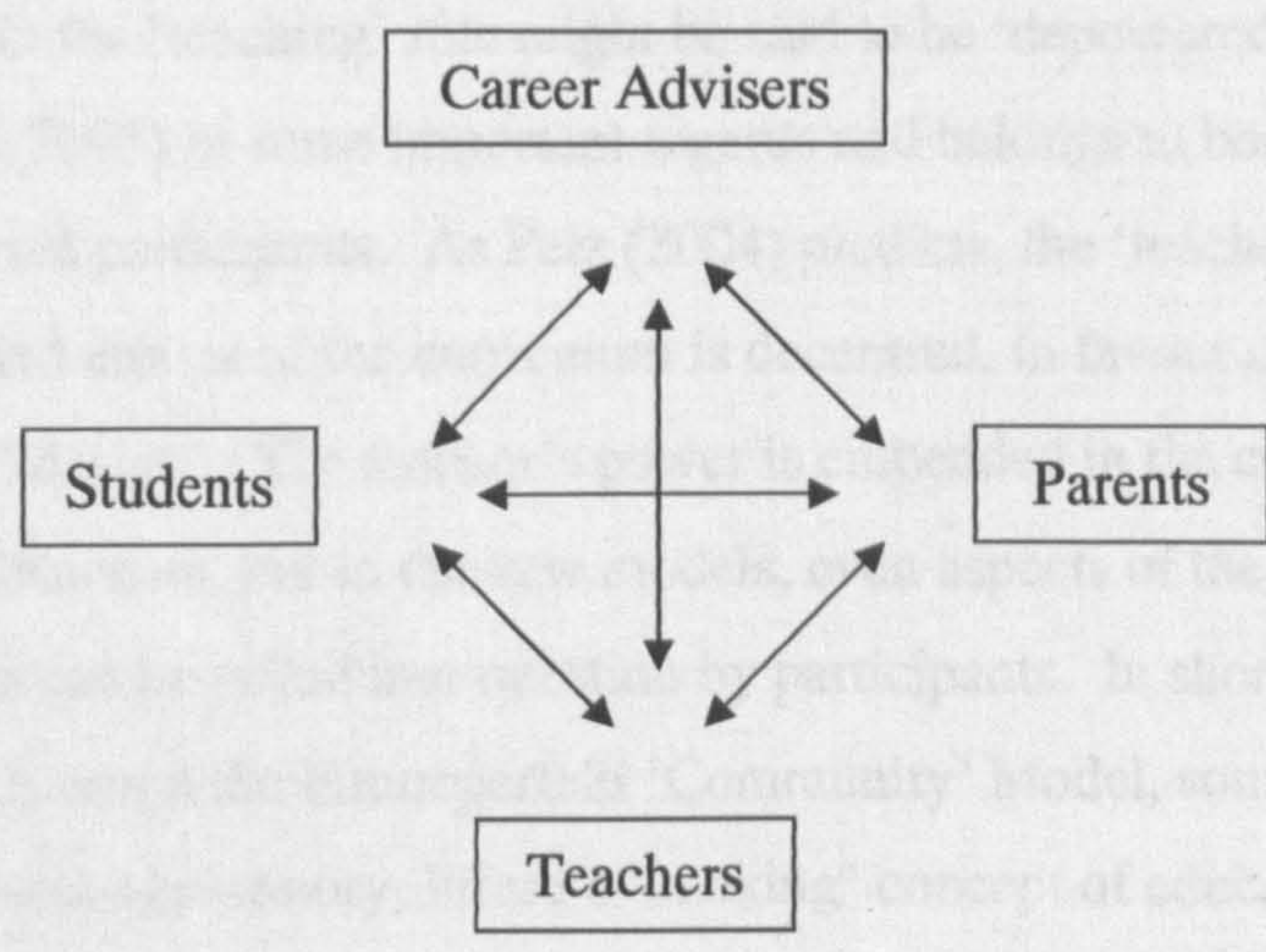


Figure 20 The FTF Communication Embedded in the Futureperfekt Model



As a consequence of the complexity built into the model of learning, each of the types of presence is enhanced. Cognitive presence includes construction of meaning through personal activities such as reading and writing, a layer of reflexivity where participants can read and consider their own postings and the comments of others, and where discussion can be sustained in a range of groups, both FTF and pseudonymously - communities of inquiry interact with each other. Similarly, social presence is extended by allowing the participants to go further than simply establishing a community of learning, by projecting their personal affective and interactive characteristics into the discussion. Pseudonymity allows participants to project aspects of their 'selves', fragments of themselves, into the discussion, playing with their sense of identity. Participants can be contradictory, experimental and challenging – their conventional social presence is unsettled through the process of 'depayement'. A useful enhancement to 'social presence' is provided by the variety of times, and in particular, social settings in which school pupils can contribute to the discussion - from school, their workplaces, or their homes.

Teaching 'presence', the realization of meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes, is dramatically enriched. It becomes easy for the main facilitator to adopt several roles, for example, providing direct instruction FTF one minute and contributing pseudonymously to the online discussion the next (perhaps as a 'Devil's Advocate'). The instructional design and organisation become reflexive when critiqued in the teacher facilitated discourse. But, perhaps most interestingly, theoretically, the power invested in the teacher ebbs and flows cyclically at various stages. In fact the 'teaching' role might be said to be 'depowered' (Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2005) in some important regards and belongs to both the school students and the external participants. As Pelz (2004) predicts, the 'teacher's' role as 'instructor' and arbiter of the curriculum is decentred, in favour of a role in 'instructional design'. The teacher's power is embedded in the creation of the learning environment, but in the new models, even aspects of the learning environments can be called into question by participants. In short, career education has become, through the Futureperfekt 'Community' Model, something that is participative and exploratory, Friere's 'banking' concept of education has been replaced with a reflexive and problem posing approach, career education is transformed into a communal process of career learning.

Although there are many software platforms available for managing online learning, (WebCT and Blackboard etc.) the research focuses on distance learning courses with distributed learners, or on using software platforms to support traditional university based education courses. There is little research with secondary level school students. The Futureperfekt mix, using participants within and without the educational institution, FTF and CMC, synchronous and asynchronous, pseudonymous and eponymous etc. is unusual.

Alvi and Duffner (2005) discuss systems contingency models that attempt to understand the ways in which the systems, and technologies, are embedded in a wider environment. They note that models which attempt to link different software platforms, to different types of group processes, to different types of organisations, cultures etc., suffer because they tend not to recognise the implications of the increasing permeability of social groups, organisations and cultures. They argue 'organisations lack the rigid boundaries of the past. Instead, shifting, permeable boundaries meet the needs of stakeholders such as students, educators, or employees.' (p. 206). The implication is that the systems will need to vary depending on the types of communities and cultures in which they operate. These 'systems contingency models' focus mainly on human computer interaction, and Alvi and Duffner believe that this creates 'communication but not conversation', perhaps suggesting, a kind of lifelessness, or dryness in Asynchronous Learning Networks that lacks the spark and immediacy apparent when people meet FTF. Indeed, there is a sense of dissatisfaction in some of the literature on research that focuses on ever more sophisticated software platforms without really addressing simpler and more important issues, Goldman and Hiltz (2005) argue 'none of the systems today seem to be constructed with the primary purpose of supporting collaborative, multimedia, and synchronous and asynchronous communication' (p. 267).

These are the very problems that the simple Futureperfekt model was able to address. Shifting the focus from the systems themselves (the way the software and hardware interact with people) to the community of collaborative learners; the permeability of organisations (in this case the school) was used as a mechanism to enhance learning; the online text based asynchronous 'communication' was complemented by

synchronous 'conversation'. Futureperfekt suggests that it is not necessarily more complex and sophisticated software that is needed, but an emphasis on the collaborative communities themselves and ways in which different 'contingent systems' might interact to support them. Increasingly complex (and expensive) software packages can facilitate more effective surveillance and assessment of students (who comes online most often, who contributes the most/least, who looked at what information) and introduce interesting 'bells and whistles', indicating who is online at any one time, integrating instant messaging, mail, live chatrooms and bulletin boards in a single interface – all of which is helpful, but these facilities are available now, free of charge to students and educators without buying into complex systems. There is a sense in which the focus on software systems can become inward looking and controlling – to paraphrase Lyotard (1984), it is the systems themselves education must escape. The relationships between the students, and between the students and the facilitator, are the key.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7. a. The CEG Curriculum – Hidden or Hyper-real?

Using Baudrillard's (1994) language, we might argue that bureaucracy generates a hyper-real curriculum, a curriculum that is 'fixed', one from which 'all meaning and charm, all depth and energy of representation have vanished' (p. 23), a political construction whose perfect, logic and rationality 'replaces' the chaos and complexity of the 'real'. When career education becomes focused on matching talents to jobs, teaching job finding skills, and producing workers (preparing for working life), everyone subject to it must, by perfect logic, be participating in a process of matching, job finding, or preparing for working life. Harris (1999) refers to a 'hidden curriculum', but alternatively, if it is seen as a simulation, an impossibly perfect reality, a hyper-real curriculum, in its very unreflexive explicitness it becomes a perfect expression of bureaucratic power, 'the empty place you must know how never to occupy, but that you must know how to produce so that others will be swallowed up in it' (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 79).

Ultimately it is a matter of politics whether or not we call the curriculum 'hidden' or 'hyper-real', whether we understand its construction using Habermas' Marxist influenced 'critical theory' or Baudrillard's Nietzsche influenced 'more joyous way of seeing things – an ironic theory' (1983 p.92). The effect is the same - the repression of career education that is about developing citizens, conceptions of family, the politics of social class, gender and race, the transfer of power between generations, in fact the repression of any career education that is about how the world *might* be rather than how it is.

The modification that Futureperfekt-style Internet discussion offers career education can therefore be helpfully understood in two contrasting ways. Firstly, as transformative and emancipatory, in Harris' sub-Marxist analysis 'a liberating and enabling agent by which individuals can take control over their own lives'. It could be argued in this context that the content of the discussion is managed in a more 'person centred' way and issues are resolved through rules based, rational and open debate. This is the Habermas model, where rules can be established to facilitate 'communicative action'. The Internet is seen as a new technology of communication that surpasses geographical and community boundaries, the normal classroom hierarchies of power and social stereotyping, and therefore that ultimately can be a medium for emancipatory education.

Alternatively, it can be understood as deconstructive and ironic. The technology interferes with the conventional balance of classroom power by, for example, introducing the option of pseudonymous communication and decontextualising contributions to the discussion both temporally and spatially. This post-modern position assumes that we understand everything in terms of the ways we construct things in language – to generate new understandings we must disrupt the language that structures our knowledge. In Baudrillard's (1999) words, we must be 'debauched, cynical, poetic and metaphorical' – words become weapons. For example, re-constructing the word 'career' to mean 'path through life' instead of 'job' or 'series of occupations'. Every time we find new ways to play with words, to disrupt, to interrupt, the power structures that are embedded in our ways of talking about things, we shift and unsettle the balance of power. We can use the new technology of communication to play, to disrupt, to tease, to stretch and distort the way language

structures our world. ICTs are a new game, with an alternative set of rules and structures that might not lead us to a new and emancipatory ideology but which can certainly help generate diverse perspectives and provide a forum for views, opinions, and most profoundly, a space where new values can be generated.

7. b. Challenging Humanism in CEG

The above considerations might seem arcane and ultimately irrelevant to career education initially, but in fact they have considerable significance. The post-modern celebration of cynicism immediately calls into question the idealism of Marxist liberation theory. What exactly do Friere, Mezirow and Habermas have in mind when they speak about transformation and emancipation? They intend us to be ‘transformed’ in very particular ways of course, our ‘false consciousness’ must fall from our eyes so that suddenly we can see how we are ‘oppressed’. The emancipation they have in mind is emancipation from capitalism and imperialism, emancipation from the controlling strictures of social class. Emancipatory education is in danger of simply becoming a process of substituting one (potentially oppressive) ideology for another, as Lyotard (1974) explains, it is the place of theory that needs to be vanquished. Similarly, the humanist values that underpin so much career education and guidance (Lent 1996) come to be seen as hopelessly idealistic when viewed through the problematising lens of postmodern perspectives. The traditional criticisms of person-centredness, such as the impossible tension between the strictures for the helper to be at once genuine (to be ‘herself’, to be real) and to show unconditional positive regard for the client (Mcleod 1999), pale into insignificance when we begin to question what it means to be a ‘person’, when we begin to argue that each individual has many, competing and more or less fragmented and evolving, ‘selves’. Perhaps one of the most serious concerns for the Futureperfekt project is what happens to the person centred concept of ‘holism’ when it is subjected to this cold, cynical gaze. As has been noted above, in its concern with flow (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984) and the emphasis on ‘becoming’, the post-modern project suggests we are never whole, never completed – we are fragmented. In fact, the cherished humanist core of career education and guidance is at stake.

State bureaucracy, and the systems of surveillance and regulation within which it operates, subverts the 'humanism' of CEG. Career advisers are at once expected to be person-centred and to manage the labour market for the benefit of the economy.

Along with this very practical difficulty, a fierce process of philosophical and political deconstruction by post-modern thinkers has begun to undermine humanism.

Futureperfekt provides an alternative to bureaucratically controlled career education. It can operate either instead of conventional 'curriculum-based' career education, or, more likely, in parallel to conventional career education classes. It leaves space for informal, communal and dynamic constructions of career education to compete with the formal, less flexible, constructions of society and the state. More significantly, it provides an alternative to humanist concerns with person-centredness and holism. In a post-human, cyborg world, Futureperfekt created an interplay of technological (computer mediated) and interpersonal communication that was able to unsettle the participants' sense of identity and community, it was diverse, fragmentary, playful, multi-voiced and communal in ways that seem more in line with the post-modern, post-human, cyborg world of Harraway, Baudrillard, Lyotard et al than the enlightened, humanist world of Rogers, Mezirow and Habermas. The Teachers and Career Advisers are depowered, and the teaching role is dispersed between the participants.

It is apparent that the Futureperfekt discussion forum was no more successful at engaging with the 'whole person' than any other model of career education could be. From the perspective of much post-modern thinking the attempt to be holistic is both impossible and misguided. Impossible because it is an error to imagine that people are ever fully formed, ever 'whole', misguided because the attempt to pin down and describe a whole person is in itself a form of oppression, the creation of a simulation; a 'hyper-real' person that is itself the murder of the real. To paraphrase Wittgenstein (1958), 'here is the whole: if you complete it you falsify it'.

So, on reflecting on the Futureperfekt project, it does not seem to be a step in the direction of a more 'holistic' career education, instead it seems to have been an opportunity for individuals to express many selves rather than their 'whole selves'. The participants had licence to contradict themselves, to argue with themselves, to be

inconsistent, to think two impossible thoughts at the same time. Sitting at home they could reflect on their reflections in school. The online discussion was able to disrupt the discourses of both the related web pages (an inverted DOTS), and the conventional career education curriculum (DOTS). The only constraints on the discussion were those negotiated by the group themselves and there is ample evidence of tolerance of inconsistency, metaphorical and creative use of language, and playfulness. If the project was successful on any terms, it was not those of one ideological position over another (holism or emancipation for example), rather, it was successful in that it bridged the virtual and the corporeal in novel ways; it created a playful space where understandings could be constructed and deconstructed; where school students could share their own concerns and interests, and where voices outwith the school community could contribute. It was successful not in terms of humanism or holism, but in terms of fragmentation, deconstruction and perhaps pluralism.¹¹

Harris (1999), argues that it is the ambiguity in career education that makes it easily controlled by the government, but, on the contrary, it is the thesis here that it is in fact the lack of ambiguity about what constitutes career education that makes it potentially oppressive. In this conception, careers are the property of individuals and their communities rather than bureaucracies; infinitely diverse.

¹¹ One might say (ironically!) that in its playful spirit, Futureperfekt had 'no relation to reality whatsoever, it is its own pure simulacrum' (Baudrillard 1994 p. 6).

7. c. Summary – Key Outcomes

What has emerged is:

an affirmation of the value of the social-constructionist perspective (perhaps not surprising as, in education theory at least, the approach seems to have become an orthodoxy, although not in practice);

an affirmation of the potential of the technology to support the social-constructionist agenda and facilitate community building;

an indication that DOTS is potentially limiting and that pupils have both wider career concerns and the capability to engage critically with the DOTS agenda;

useful confirmation of much Internet research about the pros and cons of pseudonymity, depayement, online community and online learning;

a useful model for creating active community-based learning in schools that integrates the virtual and the corporeal, the classroom and wider communities, the synchronous and the asynchronous, and disparate elements of the school curriculum; and lastly

a strong sense that neither the (conflicting) bureaucratic management nor the humanist rhetoric of the career service are able to deliver the kind of sound theoretical base we need to escape career education and guidance that is part of the emerging ‘grid of control’.

What it actually means to be 'human' is evolving, and CEG can support new and diverse ways of living by embracing both technology and values driven professional practice (and implicitly, by rejecting instrumental and technical rational perspectives). It is possible to reintegrate, episteme, techne and phronesis in CEG.

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Appendix 1: Network Diagrams from Formative Trial

In order to investigate the dynamics of the online communication, the pattern of postings was explored using a primitive, but helpful, form of network analysis. It should be emphasised that this exercise was formative, to help prepare for a larger trial; formal social network analysis is a powerful research and business tool that deploys increasingly sophisticated computer software. Incoming and outgoing messages were charted for each participant. This type of analysis, as noted in the discussion of methods, can be helpful in showing the emergence of cliques, powerful 'focal' players in the discussion and gives an indication of who is most influential. However it tells us nothing about the 'quality' of the communications and it must be noted that some of the messages were 'content light', consisting of backchat, teasing and experimenting.

The following illustration (Table 4), shows each participant as a black circle with a three letter identifying code along with the number of outgoing (shown first) messages compared to incoming messages. Each line linking a participant represents a posting to the bulletin board. The direction of the posting was determined by who posted to which thread – a posting was considered 'outgoing' if it was a contribution to a thread started by another participant, and 'incoming' if it was a posting to a thread started by the participant concerned. It is immediately apparent that the communication on the bulletin board was not evenly spread. 'NDR', Natural Disaster, and 'AGY', Anti-Gravity, were established as close friends before the trial and it is obvious that they were communicating much more frequently with each other than with other members of the group. Their friendship outside the class influenced their participation in the exercises.

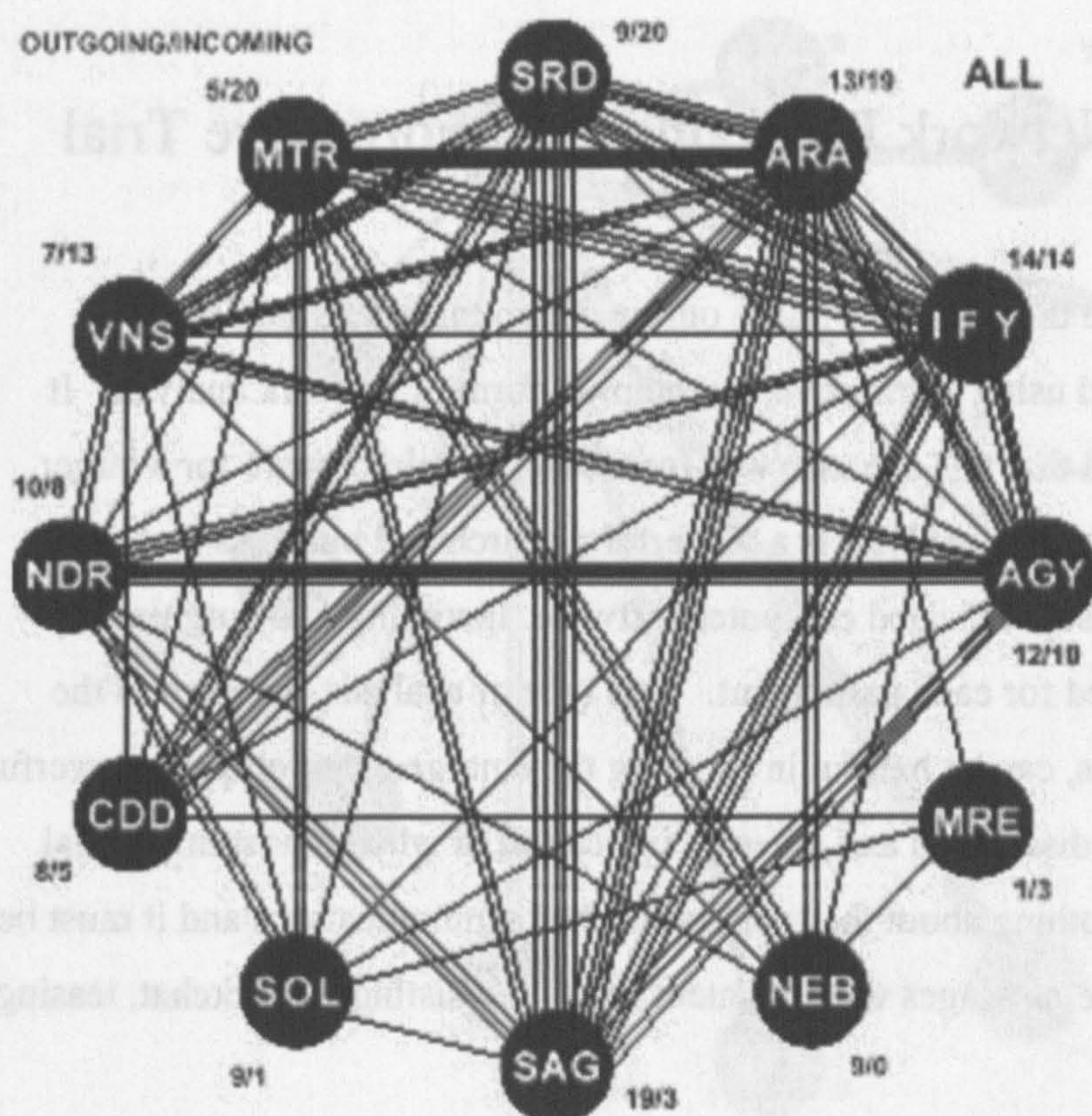


Figure 4

'MTR', The Master, was a senior prefect in the school and a highly intelligent pupil who was on course for an Oxbridge higher education. As a consequence he was respected, the focus of much of the social attention of the girls in the class. The network diagrams for MTR, showing incoming and outgoing messages indicate very clearly that he was, to some extent at least, setting the agenda for some of the discussion. Despite only making 5 postings to (3) other participant's threads, MTR's own threads attracted 20 incoming postings (involving all the participants bar one).

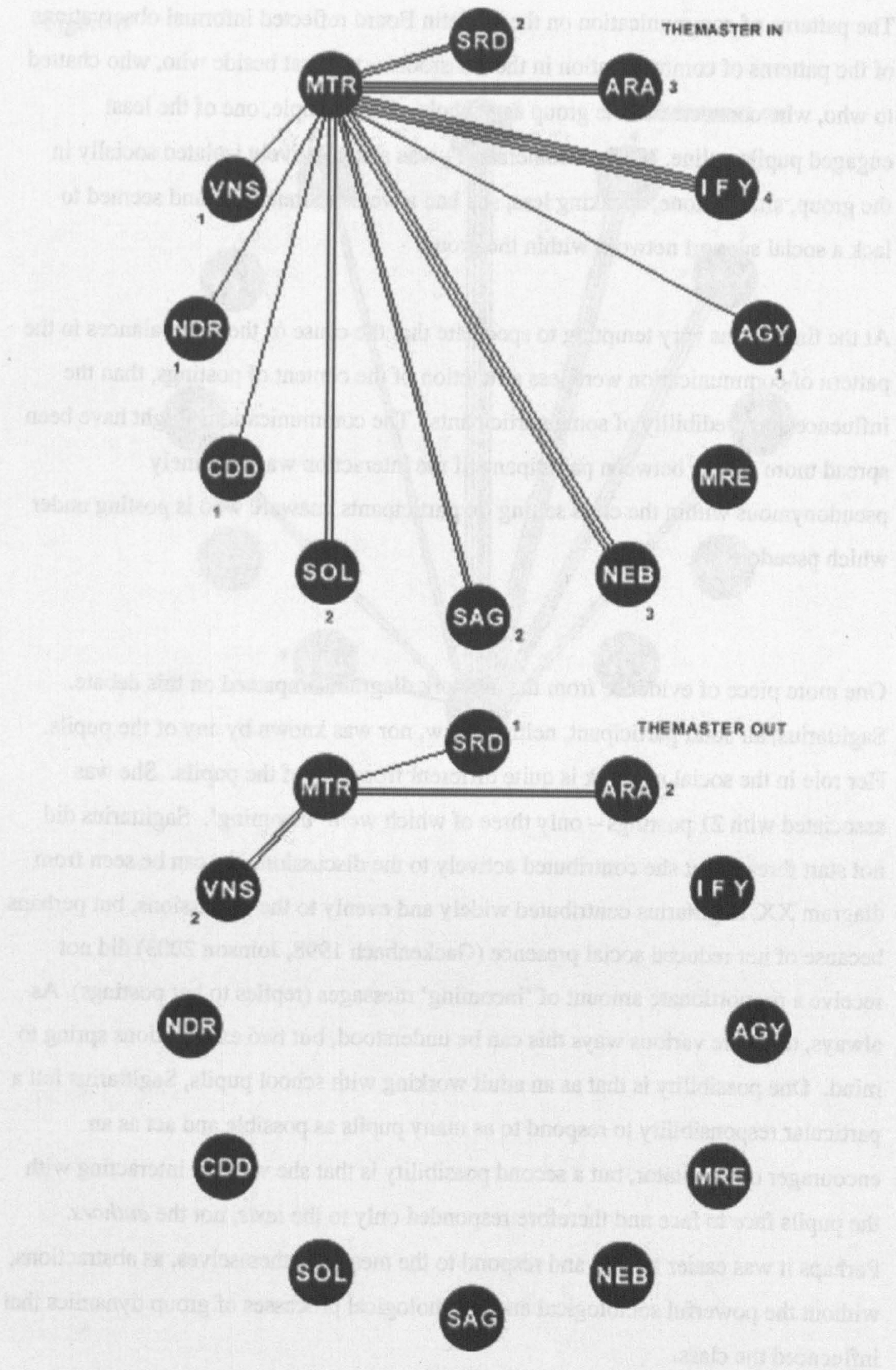


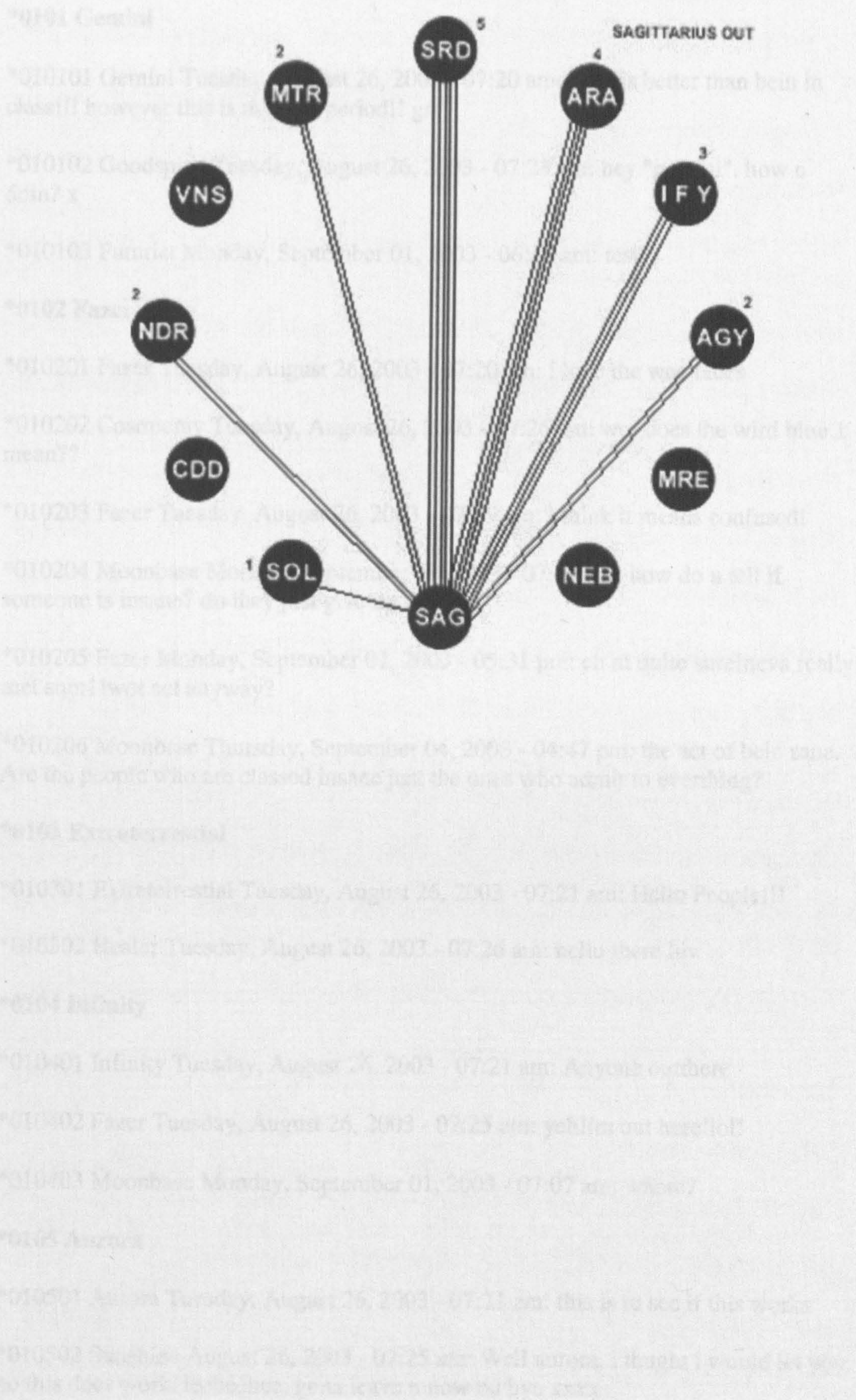
Figure 5

The patterns of communication on the Bulletin Board reflected informal observations of the patterns of communication in the classroom – who sat beside who, who chatted to who, who connected to the group as a whole. For example, one of the least engaged pupils online, MTR, ‘Motherearth’, was also relatively isolated socially in the group, sitting alone, speaking less, she had a weaker attendance and seemed to lack a social support network within the group.

At the time it was very tempting to speculate that the cause of these imbalances in the pattern of communication were less a function of the content of postings, than the influence and credibility of some participants. The communications might have been spread more evenly between participants if the interaction was genuinely pseudonymous within the class setting (ie participants unaware who is posting under which pseudonym).

One more piece of evidence from the network diagrams impacted on this debate. Sagittarius, an adult participant, neither knew, nor was known by any of the pupils. Her role in the social network is quite different from that of the pupils. She was associated with 21 postings – only three of which were ‘incoming’. Sagittarius did not start threads but she contributed actively to the discussion. As can be seen from diagram XX, Sagittarius contributed widely and evenly to the discussions, but perhaps because of her reduced social presence (Gackenbach 1998, Joinson 2003) did not receive a proportionate amount of ‘incoming’ messages (replies to her postings). As always, there are various ways this can be understood, but two explanations spring to mind. One possibility is that as an adult working with school pupils, Sagittarius felt a particular responsibility to respond to as many pupils as possible and act as an encourager or facilitator, but a second possibility is that she was not interacting with the pupils face to face and therefore responded only to the *texts*, not the *authors*. Perhaps it was easier to read and respond to the messages themselves, as abstractions, without the powerful sociological and psychological processes of group dynamics that influenced the class.

Figure 6



**PAGE
NUMBERING
AS ORIGINAL**

Appendix 2: Raw Data from the Final Trial

*0101 Gemini

*010101 Gemini Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:20 am: This is better than bein in class!!! however this is my free period!! grr

*010102 Goodspirit Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:23 am: hey "gemini". how u doin? x

*010103 Futurist Monday, September 01, 2003 - 06:45 am: test

*0102 Fazer

*010201 Fazer Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:20 am: i love the wee faces

*010202 Cosmicray Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:26 am: wot does the wurd blue 1 mean??

*010203 Fazer Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:29 am: i think it means confused!

*010204 Moonbase Monday, September 01, 2003 - 07:19 am: how do u tell if someone is insane? do they just give up the act?

*010205 Fazer Monday, September 01, 2003 - 05:31 pm: eh nt quite sure!neva really met sum1!wot act anyway?

*010206 Moonbase Thursday, September 04, 2003 - 04:47 pm: the act of bein sane. Are the people who are classed insane just the ones who admit to everthing?

*0103 Extraterrestrial

*010301 Extraterrestrial Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:21 am: Hello People!!!

*010302 Healer Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:26 am: hello there luv

*0104 Infinity

*010401 Infinity Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:21 am: Anyone outthere

*010402 Fazer Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:25 am: yeh!im out here!lol!

*010403 Moonbase Monday, September 01, 2003 - 07:07 am: where?

*0105 Aurora

*010501 Aurora Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - 07:21 am: this is to see if this works

*010502 Sunshine August 26, 2003 - 07:25 am: Well aurora. i thught i would let you no this does work. teeheehee. gona leave u now bu bye xxxx

***0106 Hello everybody**

*010601 Goodspirit August 26, 2003 - 07:21 am: hello everybody how you all doin?
x

*010602 Halebopp August 26, 2003 - 07:28 am: im tired. cake day on thursday!!

***0107 Sunshine**

*010701 Sunshine August 26, 2003 - 07:22 am: well hello..... im just goin 2 c if this works so bu bye xxxxxxxx

*010702 Aurora August 26, 2003 - 07:24 am: hey this is fun

*010703 Buzz August 26, 2003 - 07:26 am: i'm buzz it's such a cool name. u don't no who i am but i no u

***0108 Healer**

*010801 Healer August 26, 2003 - 07:22 am: hello there ppl. ha ha

***0109 Buzz**

*010901 Buzz August 26, 2003 - 07:23 am: hi i'm called buzz

*010902 Aurora August 26, 2003 - 07:27 am: hey buzz thought i would say hi

*010903 Sunshine August 26, 2003 - 07:33 am: well buzz if tht is ur real name i do no who u r so hahaha bu bye xxxxxx

***0110 Fazer**

*011001 Fazer August 26, 2003 - 07:23 am: this web site is kool!better than useal pse!

*011002 Extraterrestrial August 26, 2003 - 07:25 am: So wot u wna b wen u leave skl?!

*011003 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 02:23 pm: i dno1how about u hunnie?

***0111 Extraterrestrial**

*011101 Extraterrestrial August 26, 2003 - 07:24 am: I duno wot to write!!

*011102 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 02:25 pm: tell me u love me!lol!

***0112 Hello!!!!**

*011201 Gemini August 26, 2003 - 07:24 am: well im hungry and am in desperate need of food!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Lol

*0113 Monin

*011301 Halebopp August 26, 2003 - 07:24 am: its too early

*011302 Infinity August 26, 2003 - 07:26 am: Far too early

*0114 Hey

*011401 Themaster August 26, 2003 - 07:28 am: hello!

*011402 Cosmicray August 26, 2003 - 07:33 am: alrite skunk!!

*0115 Halfmoon

*011501 Halfmoon August 28, 2003 - 08:34 pm: Community health and a healthy community might be one and the same thing!

*0116 Hello!

*011601 Motherearth September 01, 2003 - 07:05 am: hi there. how r u today?

*011602 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 07:07 am: im fantastic, is your name nigel?

*0117 I smell

*011701 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 07:05 am: of roses

*011702 Motherearth September 01, 2003 - 07:08 am: hey there how r u?

*011703 Warpspeed September 01, 2003 - 07:09 am: I NOW WHERE YOU LIVE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*011704 Fazer September 02, 2003 - 07:07 am: where do i live then?

*011705 Theforce September 03, 2003 - 10:56 am: IN A HOOSE

*0118 Hi

*011801 Naturaldisaster September 01, 2003 - 07:06 am: hi people!!

*011802 Milkyway September 01, 2003 - 07:10 am: hey! this is fun. love the name by the way.

0119 Hello

*011901 Milkyway September 01, 2003 - 07:06 am: hey people! whats happening?

***0120 Why did the chicken cross the road?**

*012001 Warpspeed September 01, 2003 - 07:06 am: To get to KFC

*012002 Fazer September 01, 2003 - 05:32 pm: lol!so nt funny!

***0121 Test**

*012101 Redshift September 01, 2003 - 07:07 am: Just to see if it works..

***0122 Modified Cars**

*012201 Wehaveaproblem September 01, 2003 - 09:07 am: Who likes modified cars?

*012202 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 09:09 am: YOUR A GEEK!!!!

*012203 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 09:09 am: Eh?!?!?!?

*012204 Moonbase September 01, 2003 - 09:10 am: Dodge vipers are the way forward

*012205 Naturaldisaster September 01, 2003 - 09:11 am: What ever turns u on i suppoz!!!!!!!!!!!!

*012206 Missioncontrol September 01, 2003 - 09:11 am: I like the Ford Mustang GT400 with 10,000gegahert fuel injection engine, neon plated dash, and the turbo max nostank! but then again, i dont get out much.

*012207 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 02:21 pm: misson control - i am afraid you are clasified as a geek as well!!! sorry GEEK

*012208 Omega September 22, 2003 - 09:19 am: missioncontrol do you have any idea about cars at all. i think you better stick to action man or barbies in future. leave cars to men with muscle!

*012209 Omega September 22, 2003 - 09:19 am: mIssioncontrol do you have any idea about cars at all. i think you better stick to action man or barbies in future. leave cars to men with muscle!

***0123 Reply!!!!!!!! (please!)**

*012301 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 07:08 am: Hey hey. how are you all. who needs capitals eh?! oohhh....im sitting in the se room.....but where?!?!?

*012302 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 07:11 am: oh this is very weird!!!! are you susan?

*012303 Notasweknowit September 01, 2003 - 07:11 am: Hmmm trying to figure out who you are. i am siting in the se room 2.....but where?!?

***0124 Notasweknowit**

*012401 Notasweknowit September 01, 2003 - 07:08 am: Death of a Salesman

*012402 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 07:11 am: such a rubbish book!

***0125 Cars**

*012501 Omega September 01, 2003 - 07:09 am: alright, are you interested in cars?

*012502 Cosmicray September 02, 2003 - 07:00 am: yeah,wot school do u go to?

***0126 Northernlight**

*012601 Northernlight September 01, 2003 - 07:10 am: hayho! how u? r u interested the profession of fire fighting or architecture? do you like cars? CHEERS

***0127 Cars**

*012701 Omega September 01, 2003 - 09:12 am: alright, are you interested in cars?

*012702 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 09:03 am: not really ere wot skl u at ?

*012703 Omega September 22, 2003 - 09:16 am: darkside GO HOME!!! how are you going to ammount to anything or travel anywhere! Car defines your status

*012704 Wehaveaproblem September 24, 2003 - 10:32 am: hahaha omega. that was GREEEAAAT!!!!

*012705 Missioncontrol September 24, 2003 - 10:35 am: Awww its ok darkside! I know nout bout cars either so we can be lower class 2gether! These guys have FAR TOOOO MUCH time on their hands!!!! GEEKS!!

***0128 Oi!!!!!!!**

*012801 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 07:05 am: hey der peeps wot skls is every1 ere from?

*012802 Aurora September 05, 2003 - 09:40 am: well im from firrhill u sex

*012803 Sunshine September 06, 2003 - 08:46 pm: well hey ppl.i just thoght tht i would say hey cos im kinda bored. Well auora we hae something in common cos im fi firrhill 2. What about u darkside wre u from. bu bye xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

***0129 WAZZSITALABOOT**

*012901 Theforce September 03, 2003 - 10:52 am: WOULD SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT THIS SITE AND WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT AS I KNOW WHO IS BEHIND IT BUT I WOULD LIKE AN INTELLEAGENT ANSWER.

***012902 Futurist September 03, 2003 - 11:07 am:** Dear Force! This site is all about 'discussion' - bringing school students together with people in the wider community to discuss career issues. Each topic has a web page to stimulate discussion, and then it's up to participants to get on with enjoying the debate.....

This page: <http://www.futureperfekt.net/workandplay.html>

Relates to this:

<http://www.futureperfekt.net/discus/messages/8/8.html?1062586702>

And this:

<http://www.futureperfekt.net/perfektyou.html>

To This...:

<http://www.futureperfekt.net/discus/messages/7/7.html?1062526990>

Two hundred and 15 messages posted and only one week in, something is going right. Join in any of the discussion threads if you like....

***0201 What kind of world will I be living in?**

***020101 Distopia August 26, 2003 - 08:26 pm:** What I will become in the future might depend on what becomes of the world....I might have to be a soldier :-(Or maybe I can herd flocks of genetically modified tomatoes.

***020102 Sagittarius August 28, 2003 - 10:11 pm:** Scary idea! Worse because I can see it in my mind! What other new jobs might we do in the future? What kind of job will always be there? Distopia - you have made me think!

***020103 Distopia August 30, 2003 - 02:09 pm:** I sure lots of new kind of jobs will be good, but lots of them seem to be computer of science style jobs, is there new jobs in the arts (apart from DJ)? I think most basic jobs have been around for ages but they have splintered into specialisms. Teacher, banker, farmer, doctor etc.- people have been doing these things since forever, but as the world gets more complicated they specialise to react.

***020104 Redshift September 01, 2003 - 09:32 am:** What will happen as technology expands?. Will we become too over-reliant on computers/machines? Will we turn into slobes with computers doing everything for us? People complain that humans use such a low percentage of their brain - in the future computers may almost think for us.

***020105 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 09:42 am:** I think some people will always strive to beat the machines, to take their potential a shade further. But I think it is important for everyone to learn the basics - for instance in maths - learn to count, not just use a calculator. Where would we be if the technological carpet was whipped from under our feet?

***020106 Cosmicray September 02, 2003 - 09:22 am:** i think every1 is unique except from 'themaster' hes a skunk

***020107 Extraterrestrial September 02, 2003 - 09:23 am:** well i thnk we all need to carry on doin the basic jobs eg. doctor teacher tht kind of thng but if we rely on

computers to much and become slobs will ne1 b clever enough to become a doctor or a teacher?

*020108 Aurora September 02, 2003 - 09:24 am: in the future we will have to learn to change with the time. if we don't then we will be stuck in the past with nowhere to go. we will always need more than one type of person in the world because life with the same conversations and the same entrests to me seems extremely dull.

*020109 Beyonddreams September 02, 2003 - 09:24 am: the things that detere ppl from jobs is the high expectations of there qualifications and the courses that have to be done and by the time they do that you have gone off the idea of doing that job!!!!

*020110 Sunshine September 02, 2003 - 09:27 am: what is the point of testing yourself now 2 c what you want 2 do in the future. we are like 16 how are we ready for such a big commitment? Times are changin all the time and we are going to have 2 adapt to the time we are in or we will be stuck in another time frame. Do you even know what you want to do on saturday or are you going to do what i do and diside when the time is right? bu bye xxxxxxxx

*020111 Crazydiamond September 02, 2003 - 09:28 am: i dont think high expectations of qualifications put ppl off but motivate them to try harder and achieve what they want

*020112 Nebula September 02, 2003 - 01:33 pm: Maybe it isn't what you learn just now that is important but the way you use what you have learned later on. Or possibly we should see what we learn at school as a foundation that we build upon as we go through life.

*020113 Halfmoon September 02, 2003 - 07:23 pm: Interesting one from Sagittarius about knowing the basics and not relying on calculators. some of the specialties in the Armed Forces having difficulty recruiting as they require skills that a lot of young people cannot achieve without a calculator. Scary!

*020114 Spacemonkey September 03, 2003 - 04:33 pm: Wot sunshine says hurts my head - if don't know what the future will be like and don't know what i will like next week then me got nothing to go on. Wot am i supposed to do when it comes to make your mind up time ?

*020115 Sunshine September 03, 2003 - 09:29 pm: When i think about what life might be like in ten yrs its scary. We are getting ourselves ready for the future but we dont know what is going to be left of the world, is war going to take us away, is the 3d world going to grow to other parts of the world, are our jobs going to be taken over by computers or are we going to be abducted by aliens(well we never no)? WE dont have the answers to questions lke this but we do know that we need to rely on basic skills like reading, writing and maths. even if computer do take over the world we are stil relyig on the skills we learn now to work them, but we cant keep thinking about what the future holds just like we cant keep asking how was the world formed we dont have the answers but we can live our lifes. Learn skills, have friends and live life to the full who knows we might not be here tomoro. Just hold your head high and smile. bu bye xxxxxxxx And soz if im scarin ppl i dont mean 2. :-)

***020116 Moonbase September 04, 2003 - 06:52 pm: you'll always need people to make hand-made pots. Since robots and machines don't have hands you'll always need people to do that. If however handmade pots become extinct then people will cease to exist...and anyway we're gonna get hit by that big ass asteroid in 2043 or whatever and be plunged into an ice age. Au revoir future!!**

***020117 Moonbase September 04, 2003 - 06:54 pm: You'll always need people to make hand-made pots. Machines and robots don't have hands so as long as there is a demand for hand made pots people will always be employed. Don't know if you're all talking about the future that asteroid is gonna collide with the earth and plunge us into an ice age in 2040 or whatever date it is. Au revoir future!**

***020118 Nebula September 05, 2003 - 08:24 am: I think Sunshine is right...if we constantly think about all the terrible things that might happen to the world in a hundred years time, we'll miss out on the opportunities we have right now...and maybe if we make the most of some of these opportunities, the world might not be such a bad place in 2104.**

***020119 Motherearth September 08, 2003 - 09:08 am: u should work in the present but don't forget ur past because it helped u get where u r and the future is still to come. u can look into it and plan ahead but not too far otherwise u forget what u r doing in the present**

***020120 Motherearth September 08, 2003 - 09:08 am: u should work in the present but don't forget ur past because it helped u get where u r and the future is still to come. u can look into it and plan ahead but not too far otherwise u forget what u r doing in the present**

***020121 Borealis September 09, 2003 - 06:08 pm: It's great to be able to surprise yourself, learn new things and open new doors. Create your own world! The unknown can be exciting.**

***020122 Spacemonkey September 10, 2003 - 03:45 pm: the future's so bright you gotta wear shades**

***020123 Sagittarius September 11, 2003 - 09:35 am: Could that be put down to global warming? The future IS bright - even when we think we know where we are going life can be a bit of a mystery tour! There will be good bits and bad bits - you can console yourself that when things are really bad, they can only get better. (Apologies if that sounds like a party slogan!) I am excited about what the future might bring, I don't dread it. I know I will cope if I have to. Being excited about the future doesn't only have to be about far distant dreams and it doesn't mean I don't appreciate each day, but it's a comfortable frame of mind to be in.**

***020124 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:45 pm: The only problem with being 100% bright and breezy about what the future holds is that it can make you complacent..... I think we should all be at least a little worried (even if we don't lie awake at night). Maybe it's not being worried enough is why lots of people don't even**

vote anymore. That being said a positive outlook seems to help positive things happen.....

***0202 Darkside**

***020201 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 09:22 am:** your own personlaity changes all the time i think. you change when u meet new ppl or u jus adapt 2 things u wud do differently. you cant match ur jobs up 2 ur personality bcoz ur personality may jus b a phase ur going thru

***020202 Constellation September 02, 2003 - 09:27 am:** Very true. But remember that the phase you are going through will still have a long term effect on your eventual personality. Make sure its a good one.

***020203 Cosmicray September 02, 2003 - 09:32 am:** hey hey captain mc c how u doing?

***020204 Wehaveaproblem September 08, 2003 - 09:09 am:** OI Darkside!!!! Personality is not a phase! It's wot defines you as an individual and separates u from the rest of the world. Personalities do change, but not in phases, they evolve over time as u mature and experience new things. If our personalities changed all the time then we'd all be phsycotic and end up like the Americans!!!

***020205 Naturaldisaster September 08, 2003 - 09:10 am:** if u r a strong person u will not just change to fit in with ppl. u r u and they r they.....wots the point in changing just 2 b like them....its not natural. But cant we help changing mayb?? mayb it is natural 2 change towards ppl.

***020206 Wehaveaproblem September 08, 2003 - 09:14 am:** Naturaldisaster. I agree with what you say. it's true that u r u. nobody can change who u are and if they do then they are not worth being around. u shouldn't alter ur personality just to suit others.

***020207 Sagittarius September 08, 2003 - 09:19 am:** You don't have to blindly follow the pack but you are a stronger person if you are aware of other people, understand how they can affect you and takes this into account. We do not live in isolation and it is nearly impossible in this world not to come into contact with others. We need to know who we are and what we believe in though this can change with time and that's as it should be.

***020208 Wehaveaproblem September 08, 2003 - 02:01 pm:** I agree. However i still feel Darkside is being stupid in their veiws!

***020209 Sagittarius September 08, 2003 - 02:33 pm:** Actually, I think Darkside is right about adapting and changing the personality that you show to suit whatever occasion or people you are with.

***020210 Nebula September 09, 2003 - 08:23 am:** Darkside has a point in saying that we change over time. However, we make our choices about jobs, relationships, life in

general according to the person we are at the time. The point is that as we change, so we can change what we do, where we live, etc.

***020211 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 08:58 am: i dnt think darkside is i think darkside is very rightli agree!!!**

***020212 Darkside September 09, 2003 - 08:59 am: ERM EXCUSE ME WEHAVEAPROBLEM i was jus saying that it cud b a phase im not saying tht it is. Tht was jus ma opinion and u shud respect it. i kno tht personalities change all the time so how can u match a job up 2 it. eh tell me tht**

***020213 Extraterrestrial September 09, 2003 - 09:00 am: Darkside has a very gd point and i agree totally with wot she is sayin. U may not thnk ur personality changes but it does!!!!**

***020214 Darkside September 09, 2003 - 09:01 am: WOT IM SAYING IS NOT STUPID ITS JUS MY OPINION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

***020215 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 09:02 am: i am afraid i dnt agree with the last bit u said darkside lol(still love ya) Everyone changes with wat mood they r in. Jobs could be matched but your personality wont change due to wat phase ur going through.at least i dnt think so !**

***020216 Spacemonkey September 10, 2003 - 02:35 pm: sometimes i think your personality don't change as much as you would like - you are stuck with it but did not get to choose it. Have to learn to live with it praps**

***020217 Sagittarius September 10, 2003 - 02:55 pm: Maybe it is less 'change' that's needed and more 'developing'. I know someone, my mother, who was excruciatingly shy as a young person but nowadays you would be hard-pressed to meet a more outgoing personality. She still feels shy inside sometimes but she learned to cope with it when she realised others felt the same and gradually developed into the friendly, chatty person she is today.**

***020218 Wehaveaproblem September 12, 2003 - 11:42 am: I apologise for my comment earlier in the week. It was fairly out of order. If DARKSIDE is reading this then hopefully u will accept it. I was tired and bored. Sorry!**

***020219 Borealis September 23, 2003 - 08:10 am: Temperament, personality and mood all seem to fluctuate at different rates, with temperament being the most stable. I'm just as shy as I was five years ago, but my opinions have changed over the last few months and my mood can fluctuate from hour to hour. The job I would have chosen years ago is different form the job I'd like to do now. I agree that the thought of committing yourself to one path forever is scary - enough to make anyone feel trapped(a term which seems to be used quite often when people talk about their jobs). Maybe it's best to change script and remind ourselves that, in most cases, whatever job we do now is adding to our experience, empowering us to make informed choices about what we really want from a career and helping us to move in whatever direction we chose. We are the ones in control.**

*020220 Darkside September 29, 2003 - 01:11 pm: its kl wehaveaproblem it dnt bother me if u dnt agree wit ma views. i was jus shocked at how u were jus pickin on my views n no1 elses

***0203 Personalities: Stable or unstable?**

*020301 Themaster September 02, 2003 - 07:24 am: i think that the mainstream of our personallities are the stable part but there are aspects of it that change like a tree how the roots and trunk never change but the leaves are forever changing

*020302 Cosmicray September 02, 2003 - 07:29 am: well done my son quite a speach, i have 2 say i think the same

*020303 Aurora September 02, 2003 - 07:29 am: i have to agree. we may keep some of the same characteristics but with change and progress we learn to adapt and to add to our personalities. we also lose some of our character but we quickly add new ones

*020304 Sunshine September 02, 2003 - 08:36 am: well to sound just like every1 your right the master. Who is it to tell us that we have 2 do one thing. Do you even know you? and if we were to be told what to do haves anyone thought that every mood we have we change wether we are happy, sad, emotional or even dealing with a fight with a frien we are always changing. but who am i to judge its everyones lives. bu bye xxxxxxxxxxxx

*020305 Northernlight September 08, 2003 - 07:13 am: personality everyones personality can cahange from minute to minute it depends entirely on the way you feal! sunshine i agree wuit wot ure sayin!

***0204 I already am perfect**

*020401 Constellation September 02, 2003 - 07:24 am: I know what I am doing, where I want to go, what I want to do next. Why should a careers website of this type interest me ?

*020402 Extraterrestrial September 02, 2003 - 07:26 am: jus bcoz u o what u wnt to do dodesnt mean u cant explore new thngs u can always go bk 2 what u had planned b4 hand!!!!

*020403 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 07:27 am: DIS WEBSITE IS ONLY ERE 2 HELP U. SO WOT IF U KNO WOT UR DOIN ITS INTERESTING 2 HEAR WOT OTHER PPLS VIEWS N OPINIONS ARE. U DNT HAV 2 B LIKE DAT

*020404 Fazer September 02, 2003 - 07:27 am: xcuse me!u aint all that!im sure there r plenty of things u need 2 work on!every1 does 2 get where they want and 2 get as high as they can!

*020405 Beyonddreams September 02, 2003 - 07:29 am: u may think u like that now because u r in ur comfort zone a safety barrier but will u be brave enough to leave it one day and grow up and explre?????

***020406 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 07:33 am: CONSTELLATION DUDE Y HAVE U GONE QUIET EXACTLY U GOT NUTHING 2 SAY NO MORE DIS WEBSITE IS ERE 2 HELP U N IF U DNT LIKE IT U KNO WERE U CAN GO CYA**

***020407 Crazydiamond September 02, 2003 - 07:33 am: y do u need to go exploe? if ur happy where u r y change?**

***020408 Constellation September 02, 2003 - 07:33 am: You are all very right. Good answers. Well done. What about the changing / fixed personality thing ?**

***020409 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 07:04 am: we r constantly changin!but i think its our hobbies and stuff that makes us do wot we want and b happy!but again our hobbies r based on our personality**

***0205 Fazer**

***020501 Fazer September 02, 2003 - 07:25 am: i dnt know wot 2 think!i do think everry1 is unique but i also think there is personality types!like i think its more 2 do wi ur hobbie types wot kind of job ur best suited 4!like i love danin so i would love 2 b a dancer but thats nowt 2 do wi my personality really!so i kinda have my own opion about this!**

***020502 Extraterrestrial September 02, 2003 - 07:29 am: I dnt kno what to thnk as well i thnk mayb sum ppl cld put in to a job by there personality but on the other hand evry1 is different so hw can ppl b put in to a job tht they mite no nuthin about and hv no intrest in!**

***020503 Fazer September 02, 2003 - 07:32 am: yeh!thats y i think it's about hobbies cos then its an intrest and u will know wot ur doin!**

***0202 Buzz**

***020601 Buzz September 02, 2003 - 07:27 am: i'm with kelly every1 is unique**

***020602 Sunshine September 02, 2003 - 07:31 am: we are still developin into ourselves and for someone to turn rounde to us in the prime of our lives that we have 2 do one thing for the rest of our lives is stupid. Its like yeh we are unique and for our lives to be maped out makes us miss out on learning wo we are. bu bye xxxxxxxxxxxx**

***020603 Aurora September 02, 2003 - 07:32 am: how do we really know that we are unique. do we not all shop at the same stores and do we always have the same clothes and shoes. to be unique we need to get away from the norm and truly find us before we can truly be unique.**

***020604 Sagittarius September 02, 2003 - 07:56 am: We are still developing and changing - it never stops and that's important. However there comes a time when you have to make a decision to take a chance - take a job, go to college or university, whatever. How do we know it is the right decision? We don't - but if we give it a fair go then we might find it is, or that it leads on to something that we like better. At**

worst we will find out that it wasn't the right thing for us - and that helps make the next choice a better one because we know ourselves a little better.

***020605 Spacemonkey September 03, 2003 - 02:43 pm:** so whatever happen I develop and get better and better - i will surely be perfekt soon

***020606 Sagittarius September 03, 2003 - 03:34 pm:** Every experience in life adds something to your character and that is how we all develop. It is up to you to get the most out of each experience. Even if it is something you have no wish to repeat it can be worthwhile if you make something positive out of it. Have you ever done something you wouldn't do again but you are glad you did it once?

***020607 Nebula September 05, 2003 - 06:34 am:** I can see what Aurora means about us maybe not seeming unique if we all wear the same clothes, all shop at tescos, all listen to the same music...but that's on the outside. It's what's inside that makes us truly unique. It's sometimes hard to dress differently or behave differently, but that shouldn't stop us trying or finding other ways to express our uniqueness.

***020608 Sunshine September 06, 2003 - 08:57 pm:** c i have to agree with Nebula its not what we wear or what music we listen to that makes us us. Its what we look like, what we are like on the inside and one way tht we are all unique is ur DNA. nobody has the same DNA as us so we are unique form every1 even is we like the same stuff

***020609 Motherearth September 08, 2003 - 07:13 am:** well i have to say what u looks like makes u part of who u r but its not everything. our personality and views are the most important. u can be good at ur job but have a bad personality for the job! u have to know who u r urself before u can judge other people. and know ur personality will help with ur job choice. other people will help u in finding who u r because they will probably tell u on different occassions.

***020610 Milkyway September 08, 2003 - 07:19 am:** yeah ppl may all look the same but their views and attitudes could all be diffeent thats what makes ppl unique.

***0207 6???????? personalities!!?**

***020701 Warpspeed September 08, 2003 - 09:11 am:** If Holland thinks there are just 6 personalities and each one is suited to different types of jobs the thatdoesn't realy narrow down what we can be! If all the jobs in the world were divided in 6 groups thats still plenty of choice!

***020702 Wehaveaproblem September 08, 2003 - 09:16 am:** NAH!!!

***020703 Darkside September 09, 2003 - 09:11 am:** WEHAVEAPROBLEM warpspeed has a very good opinion and ur reaction 2 it isnt very mature. grow up!!!

***020704 Spacemonkey September 10, 2003 - 03:49 pm:** i got more than six personalities how many have you got ?

***0208 Does your personality change?**

***020801 Milkyway September 08, 2003 - 07:16 am:** i think your personality has to change as you start to deal with different things. For example, you might have been a "live for the moment" person before you had to start thinking about jobs and stuff. Thinking about stuff like that can make you more focussed on what you have to do to get to where you want to be.(or it could give you a breakdown.) Changing personality isn't a bad thing it makes you realise the type of person you are.

***020802 Extraterrestrial September 09, 2003 - 06:54 am:** Yeh i agree with wot u r sayin!!

***020803 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 06:55 am:** u r nt a type of of person we r nt jut 1 person as we will change from the day we r born till the day we die!we r constantly changin so the things we want 2 do etc will change!

***020804 Sunshine September 09, 2003 - 07:00 am:** Your personality will change with everyf eeling that you have. When your happy you will be bubble,bouncey and loud but when your annoyed you will be snappy and annoying to people. With ever mood there will be a different reaction, you just neet to know how to handel your emotions.

***020805 Booster September 09, 2003 - 07:17 am:** You are constantly changing in your personality, but in the main you just change between a few personalities, thus you can predict when or how people will react to you, as you tend to react the same way to the same or similar things that are happening to you. Of course different people who are contrasting will react to thing in a contrasting way, but both people will react in there own peculiar way.

***0209 John Holland Test**

***020901 Booster September 08, 2003 - 07:29 am:** The link to the John Holland test <http://www.self-directed-search.com/> gives you the test you are then asked for some money which I find ashame. However if it were give you the a brief overview then it would be better, you could then pay to get the detailed report.

***0210 I am so perfect**

***021001 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 09:12 am:** I am perfect in every little way possible!!!! Who can say i am not perfect! u dnt knwo me? so how do u know!!! There is a point to be proven here!!

***021002 Booster September 09, 2003 - 09:26 am:** No one is perfect! No one can be perfect! The only way you can be perfect is if everyone were to be exact duplicates of each other, AND perfect, but that as I have already said is impossible, and it would be very boring. I am sure that there is someone who you do NOT get on with Beyonddreams! so the just proves that you are not perfect!

***021003 Borealis September 09, 2003 - 06:43 pm:** I agree with Beyonddreams. I think she/he is perfect exactly as she/he is, and I think Booster is perfect, and I'm perfect too !!! Maybe everyone is perfect in their own way? What is perfect? Are you perfect when you are happy with yourself? Does it matter if you don't get on with someone else?

***021004 Spacemonkey September 10, 2003 - 02:39 pm:** maybe beyonddreams is a perfect beyonddreams today but will need to change to stay perfect being imperfekt can be fun too ;-)

***021005 Nebula September 16, 2003 - 08:08 pm:** I think Spacemonkey has made a good point...being imperfekt is fun, otherwise you've nothing to aspire to or to challenge you. Having a perfekt moment is worth so much more than thinking things should all be perfekt all the time...otherwise how do we know when something is really really special?

***021006 Wehaveaproblem September 19, 2003 - 11:23 am:** imperfections are what define us as humans. without them we'd all just be robots.

***021007 Wehaveaproblem September 19, 2003 - 11:25 am:** Preach on Nebula+Spacemonkey!

***021008 Booster September 19, 2003 - 11:25 am:** I have to agree with Borealis, as everyone is perfekt in there own way, and if we were all the same again that would just be boring! It is extremely hard to define what perfect is, because we have all had different upbringing, and therefore different opinions and we are happy with different things, BUT that causes a problems, with all these different world conflicts!

***021009 Borealis September 22, 2003 - 09:04 pm:** Way to go Booster :-). I think it's about quality of life. We can either make life miserable by dwelling on everything we don't like about ourselves, or we can accept/like who we are and encourage ourselves as we grow and develope - instead of supressing ourselves, putting ourselves down, and judging ourselves with this black and white thinking. It's great to be human!!! Party on !!! To me, self discovery is the best motivation for aspiring to new things, and self acceptance frees us so that we can truly appreciate how special life is. We should all care about ourselves whether we are having a bad day or not (in fact, especially if we are having a bad day because that's when we need it most). I think you are all perfect!!! and beyond.

***0301 Fazer**

***030101 Fazer August 26, 2003 - 07:35 am:** the puppy pic is so cute!

***030102 Beyonddreams September 02, 2003 - 07:04 am:** hi hws u? they always say the dogs lok like there oners i would like to see the owner of that dog lol !!!!!

***030103 Fazer September 02, 2003 - 07:16 am:** yeh if its a guy i would!!lol!

***0302 Healer**

***030201 Healer August 26, 2003 - 07:35 am:** i like 2play

***030202 Fazer August 26, 2003 - 07:39 am:** every1 likes 2 play!!lol!

***030203 Wehaveaproblem September 01, 2003 - 07:20 am:** With who?

***030204 Moonbase September 01, 2003 - 07:27 am: with wot?**

***030205 Notasweknowit September 01, 2003 - 07:29 am: oh the possibilities**

***030206 Naturaldisaster September 01, 2003 - 12:17 pm: Even when we r on our own we can find sum workpr play ;) to do!!!! cheekycheeky!!**

***0303 Mornin**

***030301 Halebopp August 26, 2003 - 09:36 am: if u have a talent, use it. du wotever makes u happy, and dont du sumfin jus cuz other ppl tel u 2, du it cuz u want 2**

***030302 Infinity August 26, 2003 - 09:38 am: yes i agree**

***030303 Goodspirit August 26, 2003 - 09:38 am: but who will do the borin jobs?**

***030304 Distopia August 26, 2003 - 08:13 pm: Robots**

***030305 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 04:22 pm: the failures!**

***030306 Sagittarius August 28, 2003 - 09:55 pm: What makes someone a failure?**

***030307 Distopia August 30, 2003 - 01:51 pm: Fazer - No. Really. I meant Robbie the Robot style Robots - Even if someone is doing a job that you think is boring, how do you know their not totally enjoying themselves outside work doing something else. Also, all those city dealers who make loads of cash and drive porsches like to think their job is exciting and high powered, to me looking at computers 12hrs a day moving imaginary money about sounds pretty dull (especially coz they have to talk to people like themselves all day).**

***030308 Distopia August 30, 2003 - 01:58 pm: Is the city dealer a success coz she makes loads of money or a failure coz all her friends are the same as her and despite the cash she has to pretend the job is interesting and satisfying when really its not. PS I'm sure lots of money monkeys really do like their jobs :-)**

***030309 Sagittarius August 30, 2003 - 05:47 pm: Interesting points. 1.What seems boring to one person may not be to another. Even when a job is apparently boring maybe people enjoy the opportunity to let their minds wander to other things. 2.Do people like being with others with similar interests to theirs? Do we try to group together with people who are like us?**

***030310 Omega September 01, 2003 - 09:29 am: people will always have to do boring jobs. that is the point of education to get the qualifications to get an interesting and successful job!**

***030311 Notasweknowit September 01, 2003 - 02:02 pm: not everyone will have boring jobs.its all about individuality and how people interpret their job and the enthusiasm they put into their job.**

***030312 Extraterrestrial September 02, 2003 - 09:11 am: hey i agree wiv uz all evry1 is different so us coz sum ppl mite find sumit borin other ppl mite thnk its reli fun!**

***030313 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:01 pm: Extraterrestrial is right, loads of people find stuff that I think's boring really interesting. The jobs like "working with people" or caring (nurses, care-home, Drs etc.) I know I wouldn't like, but that's what some people live for!**

***030314 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:03 pm: Oh yes, I forgot to say, its a good thing too, coz we all really need these people :-)**

***0304 Do what you're good at not what you enjoy**

***030401 Goodspirit August 26, 2003 - 09:36 am: I think you should do what you're good at because if everybody did what they liked then we'd have a load of wasters.**

***030402 Distopia August 26, 2003 - 08:09 pm: What if you are good at enjoying yourself? (even better, what if you enjoy your job ?)**

***030403 Sagittarius August 27, 2003 - 07:18 pm: Is it possible to do what you enjoy and because of that become good at it? If you like something and feel you can do it you might want everyone to see you are good at it.**

***030404 Nebula September 01, 2003 - 08:45 am: Are you not more likely to become good at something you enjoy because there's more motivation to learn?**

***030405 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 09:07 am: If you are interested in something then I think that is always a motivation to learn more.**

***030406 Wehaveaproblem September 01, 2003 - 09:21 am: if you don't stick with the leader then the race is lost.**

***030407 Missioncontrol September 01, 2003 - 09:25 am: if you wake up with enthusiasm, you'll go to bed with satisfaction.**

***030408 Milkyway September 01, 2003 - 09:25 am: yeah i think thats true. if ur interested in something u definetly want to learn more about it. also if ur interested in something u enjoy it and become passionate about doing it.**

***030409 Wehaveaproblem September 01, 2003 - 09:26 am: Better to ask twice than to lose your way once**

***030410 Missioncontrol September 01, 2003 - 09:26 am: never let your memories be greater than your dreams.**

***030411 Millenium September 01, 2003 - 09:28 am: doesn't it lose all enjoyment when the business or whatever gets into trouble??**

***030412 Wehaveaproblem September 01, 2003 - 09:28 am: I HAVE A HUGE BRAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

***030413 Wehaveaproblem September 01, 2003 - 09:31 am: I KNOW GOD!!!!**

***030414 Milkyway September 01, 2003 - 09:33 am: if ur good at enjoying urself then u should be able to enjoy every situation-work or play.**

***030415 Missioncontrol September 01, 2003 - 09:34 am: thats very true wehaveaproblem, for i have a huge brain aswell. however, as the popular saying goes, as im sure you all know, "the pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change and the realist adjusts his sails".**

***030416 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 09:53 am: Going back to Wehaveaproblem's comment about 'if you don't stick with the leader then the race is lost' - why not be the leader? Missioncontrol - how often have you woken up with enthusiasm to do something, then never got around to it? Satisfaction escapes you unless you've done what you planned! I liked the quote above. So Millenium, if your business runs into trouble then 'adjust your sails'. The fun is in getting the right balance - like flying a kite - and soaring ever higher while avoiding a crash earthward!**

***030417 Wehaveaproblem September 01, 2003 - 02:19 pm: If ur the leader then there is no point in Racing!!!!**

***030418 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 02:44 pm: You think everyone will sit back and accept that you are the leader without challenging you? Being leader is about commanding respect for what you can do and how you do it. Think about the people you see as leaders - what makes you happy to give them the title? Who do you respect and why? (No names unless they are famous!)**

***030419 Millenium September 01, 2003 - 07:57 pm: But it can't fun having to get yourself out of a complete disaster? but if you think it is Sagittarius, can you give me an example?**

***030420 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 09:34 pm: Well, if we liken having a business to flying a kite, the trick is to try to avoid complete disaster - keep the 'kite' flying - it may dip and soar, go high and low, but if it crashes to the ground and breaks completely, you just have to start from scratch! If your kite breaks it doesn't stop you from ever trying it again provided you can get yourself a new one. It is the same with businesses.**

***030421 Fazer September 02, 2003 - 09:03 am: thats a very gd way 2 put it!i dnt understand y peeps go 4 jobs they dnt enjoy!every1 should do summit they enjoy and cn learn from!reach 4 ur goals dnt give up!if u want it u go 4 it!all it takes is a lil bit hard work and most of all motivation!**

***030422 Crazydiamond September 02, 2003 - 09:12 am: i agree u should go 4 ur dreams**

***030423 Moonbase September 02, 2003 - 11:53 am: wot if you have no dreams?then ur stuffed!wot if ur good at nothing?and enjoy nothing?**

***030424 Sagittarius September 02, 2003 - 10:05 pm:** I've met many people who say they are good at nothing and do you know what? they are always good at something. Sometimes it is listening ... or caring, sometimes they are good with children or animals, sometimes they are good at organising things like doing something in a group together or just being chatty, sometimes it is something completely different. Often they say 'I didn't know that counted.' But all these things do and many people can use these skills in their work Sometimes satisfaction doesn't come from a job title just in feeling you are useful.

***030425 Psychic September 03, 2003 - 11:40 am:** I agree with Sagittarius. I think everyone is good at something. Sometimes it is just hard to see. Have a close look at things you have done - you will certainly find things you are good at!

***030426 Theforce September 03, 2003 - 01:04 pm:** Stand back and look at what you are doing, If you think yeh thats cool then carry on. If you think it's a pile of poo go for what you want todo forget about the dollars lifes to short

***030427 Warpspeed September 08, 2003 - 08:56 am:** If u want 2 hav a good time wen ur older its worth working hard now to get what u want then!

***030428 Wehaveaproblem September 08, 2003 - 08:58 am:** This is in reply to "The Force's" comment about dollars. If you don't have money you can't enjoy all the luxuries that a satisfying job entitles you to. I plan on having a job that interests me and that i enjoy, but also one which will provide me with plenty money to live off and the ability to gain many "perks". What do you think?

***030429 Missioncontrol September 08, 2003 - 09:06 am:** I think you cant spell "plenty".

***030430 Psychic September 08, 2003 - 08:03 pm:** I think people get motivated in different ways and that there is no right or wrong way. Some people care more about interesting and satisfying jobs, some about earning a lot of money. And some people would like to have both. I think the important thing is to be aware of your personal interests and values.

***030431 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 01:55 pm:** I think its good to have a job thats "challenging", which I think means "hard to do" coz at least you always have to think, the kind of job that I would hate is one where its so easy that you are basically on autopilot all day..... but, if it paid well and it was really secure maybe I could do the challenging stuff outside work?

***030432 Sagittarius September 14, 2003 - 04:34 pm:** I suspect some people cope with boring jobs by going inside their heads - some to think, some in a mindless trance. Other people may enjoy the banter and comradeship of their colleagues and I guess some just think of the money, or have no alternative to doing that job. Has anyone done anything utterly boring? How did you cope?

***030433 Nebula September 16, 2003 - 08:03 pm:** I was once a swimming pool attendant and had to walk round the pool all day watching out for folk that were in trouble or being a danger to others. It was very dull, but the company of my

colleagues, who were a strange bunch of really different types, was a real bonus. It was also quite diverting working with folk coming swimming with their friends or families or on their own...getting to know the regulars and so on, made a dull job quite interesting at times.

***0305 Work or play?**

***030501 Halfmoon August 26, 2003 - 07:37 am:** u should do what u like and what makes u happy cause if ur work makes u unhappy then u wont even want ne play!!

***030502 Cosmicray August 26, 2003 - 07:39 am:** wot r u talking about?

***030503 Sagittarius August 28, 2003 - 08:00 pm:** I think I understand what Halfmoon is getting at - when you are really down and fed-up it is hard to do anything to make you feel better. It's sometimes hard even to make yourself do something you usually like.

***030504 Omega September 01, 2003 - 07:24 am:** work should be something you enjoy and are interested in. if you find your job tiring it is maybe time to find a new one as you will not be giving it your best effort.

***030505 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 07:55 am:** I guess then we should all be aware of what we are doing - not mindlessly following the same pattern day after day.

***030506 Motherearth September 08, 2003 - 06:55 am:** if u are happy following a pattern then follow it but u will realise that after a while that u have missed things out because it falls without ur ordinary pattern. dont b affraid of change.

***030507 Milkyway September 08, 2003 - 06:57 am:** if you do follow the same pattern day after day then you'll probably get pretty bored with it and stop enjoying it. You need to have variety and challenges in your life to make it interesting and fun- as they say "variety is the spice of life"!

***030508 Psychic September 08, 2003 - 05:51 pm:** I think sometimes we follow the same patterns day after day because we are too frightened to change. Even though we are bored.

***030509 Nebula September 09, 2003 - 06:26 am:** Motherearth makes a good point. Sometimes we just go on doing what we're doing because change is scary...it can be frightening to change where we live or where we work, but often when we finally make that change we wonder "why didn't I do that ages ago?".

***0306 Darkside**

***030601 Darkside August 26, 2003 - 07:37 am:** hey mannnnnnnnn

***020602 Notasweknowit September 01, 2003 - 07:26 am:** how do you know im a man.

*030603 Northernlight September 01, 2003 - 07:26 am: very fluent vocabulary!
English could help u in the future!

*030604 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 07:08 am: WOT SKL U AT
NORTHENLIGHT U DO KNO DAT DIS IS JUS A MESS BOUT

*0307 Fazer

*030701 Fazer August 26, 2003 - 07:37 am: i dnt quite know wot this means but i
think if ur gd at summit u should use it 2 ur advantage and if u can make a living out
of it!great!

*030702 Sagittarius August 27, 2003 - 05:20 pm: Sounds good to me!

*030703 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 02:16 pm: does eh!so wot do u want 2 do 4 a
living?

*030704 Sagittarius August 28, 2003 - 06:58 pm: Something varied, something with
people.

*030705 Notasweknowit September 01, 2003 - 07:32 am: oh yeh ;-)

*030706 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 12:50 pm: When I get a job those are some
of the things that will be important to me. What will you look for?

*030707 Fazer September 01, 2003 - 05:29 pm: i love workin wi peeps so i wanna b a
day care officer!i like helpin peeps!

***0308 Is any1 else called brian???**

*030801 Cosmicray August 26, 2003 - 07:37 am: hello my name is brian

*030802 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 02:15 pm: hi brian!lol!

*030803 Omega September 01, 2003 - 07:31 am: NO NO NO NO NO NO NO
NO!!
!!
!!

*030804 northernlight September 01, 2003 - 07:32 am: no no no no no what a stupid
name!!
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! northernlight is much
better!!

***0309 But.....**

*030901 Gemini August 26, 2003 - 07:38 am: ppl should do what they like otherwise
how can u enjoy life if u dont enjoy ur livlihood???????

***030902 Distopia August 30, 2003 - 12:59 pm: Gemini - "how can u enjoy life if u dont enjoy ur livelihood???????" - Too true :-)**

***0310 Buzz**

***031001 Buzz August 26, 2003 - 07:38 am: play play play play**

***031002 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 02:19 pm: and have fun ;)**

***031003 Omega September 01, 2003 - 07:20 am: you have to think about the future also!**

***031004 Northernlight September 01, 2003 - 07:23 am: TO TRUE OMEGA THE FUTURE HOLDS THE KEY TO HAPPINESS! BALANCE THE FUN WITH THE WORK!**

***031005 Buzz September 02, 2003 - 07:07 am: u need a job so u can get money to have fun**

***0311 Sunshine**

***031101 Sunshine August 26, 2003 - 07:39 am: well..... what do u think LIVE 4 FUN!!!!!!!!!!!!!! whats da point otherwise bu bye xxxxxxxxxxxx**

***031102 Distopia August 30, 2003 - 12:25 pm: Sunshine - what job do u do to get money to have fun - or do u do a job thats fun like.....err...what job would you really enjoy dong - countryside ranger?, lifeguard?, teacher? or soemthing like DJ or work in a club or be an artist? Sagittarius says on some other page that having no money is no fun. I know I need at least some cash and I do pretty much live 4 fun ;-)**

***031103 Aurora September 02, 2003 - 07:04 am: you don't always need money to have fun. there is lots of things you can do without money. money is just an object in life we could live without it. all we really need is family,friends and our health.**

***031104 Sunshine September 02, 2003 - 07:09 am: well..... you dont always need money to have fun. You did say tht u live for fun 2 but do u need money to have a laugh with ur mates. I do agree tht its gd 2 have money but its not the most important thing.What are the important things, Family friends and a life, or money? you diside bu bye xxxxxxxxxxxx**

***031105 Sagittarius September 02, 2003 - 08:12 am: Money is not the important thing in life.... but it is hard to do without it. It is said 'the best things in life are free' and that is true - a kind word from someone who loves you; having a good time messing about with your mates; a rainbow breaking up a slate grey sky. These things are different for each of us. But we still need to eat and live.**

***031106 Nebula September 02, 2003 - 11:48 am: We're all agreed that we need money to live, the question is how much? Do we choose our job based on how much we can earn or how fulfilling it is?**

***031107 Sagittarius September 02, 2003 - 08:12 pm:** You have to decide which is the most important to you personally - nobody can do that for you. Maybe it doesn't matter what job you do so long as you earn money from it, maybe you find a job you likedoing so much that you are willing to put up with less money than you could get elsewhere. Most people have to start by earning less than they would like anyway so the big decisions about money or fulfillment often come later. If you are really lucky you mightget both!

***0312 Play at work?**

***031201 Distopia August 26, 2003 - 06:20 pm:** Who gets paid to have fun?

***031202 Sagittarius August 27, 2003 - 05:24 pm:** If you enjoy what you are doing and someone pays you then you are being paid to have fun! Dream jobs do exist but remember you wouldn't think it was fun unless you had less fun bits to compare it to! How would you know you were happy unless you were sometimes sad?

***031203 Fazer August 28, 2003 - 02:18 pm:** very well said!

***031204 Cosmicray August 28, 2003 - 04:31 pm:** all work sucks really

***031205 Sagittarius August 28, 2003 - 07:02 pm:** Doing nothing all day and every day sucks too! And having no money sucks! Great choice eh?

***031206 Distopia August 30, 2003 - 11:42 am:** I think I might tend to agree with Cosmicray. Its like being asked to read a book for coursework, even if it is a book you might enjoy reading if it was your own choice, being asked (ie being made) to read it takes the edge off. Might be the same with jobs. Off course, if you are the boss - self-employed say - it might be different. But I'm sure there's lots of extra stress if you are self-employed?

***031207 Nebula September 01, 2003 - 06:42 am:** Being a boss can be stressful too because then you have other people's welfare to think about as well as your own.

***031208 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 07:23 am:** Is alot of it not just what you make of it?

***021209 Warpspeed September 01, 2003 - 07:25 am:** EH?!

***031210 Moonbase September 01, 2003 - 07:27 am:** nobodys paid to have fun. No matter what anybody says, even though they think they enjoy there job and have fun, there will allways b moments that they are stressed and want to quite. "Perfect, Well not intirely perfect."

***031211 Sagittarius September 01, 2003 - 08:00 am:** Well said, Moonbase. Guess that's life! Nothing is perfect, but if everything was then we'd grumble 'cos nothing was MORE than perfect!

***031212 Psychic September 03, 2003 - 09:58 am:** I think the social relationships at work can at their best help you have fun at work. A good team may allow 'playing'and

having fun. A relaxed coffee break chatting and joking with others may give you a chance to let go for a while and get new energy for your work.

***031213 Aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:07 am:** i have to agree with psychc. a good team of people can help you to have fun at work instead of dreading going into work already cranky. b nice to other and they will return it. it's all a balance of karma

***0313 Busy doesn't mean no fun!**

***031301 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 09:20 am:** Just because you're busy it doesn't mean you don't have fun and you don't have time for the important things in life. You know the saying 'want something done-give it to a busy person'?

***031302 Warpspeed September 01, 2003 - 09:22 am:** Good theory!

***031303 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 09:23 am:** Here Here

***031304 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 09:25 am:** Thank you W. It's true though. I am a busy person but it doesn't mean I'm too busy to talk to people or things like that! (as you can see!)

***031305 Motherearth September 01, 2003 - 09:25 am:** well it has to b said some people get addicted to busyness coz they dont know what to do when they arent busy

***031306 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 09:26 am:** Sorry S. Didn't see you there!

***031307 Motherearth September 01, 2003 - 09:27 am:** u can b busy but never b too busy 4 ur friends

***031308 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 09:27 am:** That may be true but at least then they're going to find something constructive to fill that time with.

***031309 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 09:29 am:** Agree TOTALLY about the friends thing!

***031310 Aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:18 am:** when we work you have to be completely focused on your task but after is the time that you have to cut lose and just have a laugh. to have our mind completely focised on work would result in a lose of friends and relationships. so i say after the 9-5 you go out and forget about the next day. live in the now not for tomorrow

***031311 Sagittarius September 05, 2003 - 11:34 am:** I totally agree! Though sometimes it is very hard to avoid. Important thing is being aware that there is a balance that must be kept.

***031312 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:21 pm:** I also totally agree about the friends thing, but people have really good friends where they work as well as outside. I'd like working in places where there are lots of people about, to meet them and to make new/more friends.

***031313 Nebula September 16, 2003 - 07:58 pm:** I think Distopia's got a point...at work you meet people you might never otherwise come across and so can become friends with people that are quite different from your other friends. Makes life more interesting.

***031314 Aurora September 23, 2003 - 09:12 am:** making new friends is always good but in doing so u have to make sure that you are always in touch with your old friends. just because something is new and exciting doesn't always mean that its good. new friends or a new job can lead you into more trouble, u have to stay aware of everything or you will go down with everyone else.

***031315 Theberries September 23, 2003 - 08:24 pm:** I have known some of my closest friends since primary school. Like you, I really value my friends. However, I wonder whether all friendships should be permanent, or whether they could naturally change and end in the same way that jobs do. What do you think?

***031316 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 08:50 pm:** I've met so many people over the years from all over the world. They have been good friends for a period of time, then when circumstances changed we kept in touch through Christmas cards and letters. The friendship might lie 'dormant' for years but whenever we have managed to meet up it is just amazing how the time between disappears and you feel as though you had just met with them the week before! I have found that the people I liked instantly I always like. However I have also found that I have grown to like people that on first acquaintance I wasn't particularly attracted to. And that's a rather odd thing to happen as I tend to follow my instincts. It just shows you that you should never write off anyone, making an effort to know them can bring rewards. People are very often not quite as they appear and a bit of effort spent getting to know them can be worthwhile.

***0314 Does anyone know what to say**

***031401 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 07:26 am:** Im really stuck for something to say so someone start a little forum ands i'll join in..... as they say 'give it to a busy person'

***031402 Mercury September 01, 2003 - 07:31 am:** was that a direct hit at me and my quote?!?!?!?

***031403 Shootingstar September 01, 2003 - 07:33 am:** no at all mercury, i just wanted to test out my theory!

***0315 You should have a job you enjoy**

***031501 Themaster September 02, 2003 - 09:06 am:** your job in life i think shouldnt take up all your time and you should have a job you enjoy doing theres no point being stuck in a job you dont enjoy but you should still take time to enjoy yourself

***031502 Cosmicray September 02, 2003 - 09:08 am:** alrite rogger hows it going down thier, u left me all alone. ya skunk!!

***031503 Aurora September 02, 2003 - 09:10 am:** that is so true but in life you sometimes need to be stuck in a job you hate to get along in life. but always enjoy life to the max outside of your job

***031504 Themaster September 02, 2003 - 09:17 am:** this is also true sometimes you do need to be stuck in a dead end job i guess thats life

***031505 Naturaldisaster September 08, 2003 - 08:59 am:** If u like work 2 much u will spend too much time there. If u dont like it mayB u will spend more time wil your family.....if u hav a family that is!!! if u h8 work u will want 2 leave at 5pm!!

***031506 Nebula September 09, 2003 - 08:16 am:** I think it comes back to what The Master said...it's all about balance. YOu can love your job but still want to leave at 5pm because you have other things you love doing outside of work. There's a lot of pressure in some workplaces to be seen to be working long hours, but we can't be productive 12 hours a day - we need to recharge our batteries.

***031507 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:12 pm:** Totally agree with Nebula - you can love your work and still leave at 5pm (or earlier). If jobs are hard to come by employers can take the mickey out their staff by creating a competitive, long hours atmosphere. Work is an exchange of labour for money, why should we be put in a position where we have to constantly discount the value of our work?

***0316 Any1 play guitat?**

***031601 Cosmicray September 02, 2003 - 07:07 am:** hey does any1 out their play guitar?? or bass??

***0317 Broken Hearts**

***031701 Beyonddreams September 02, 2003 - 09:08 am:** only person that can mend a broken heart is the person who broke it tin the first place!!!!

***031702 Borealis September 09, 2003 - 06:12 pm:** I've mended my own heart loads of times, by caring about myself too :-)

***0318 Broken Hearts**

***031801 Beyonddream September 02, 2003 - 07:10 am:** a broken heart can only be mended by the person who broke it in the first place!!

***031802 Northernlight September 03, 2003 - 08:26 am:** very true in sum cases! however it can break your heart waiting! so move on and find a new world of happiness! feel free to reply

***031803 Aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:13 am:** well i feel that the only way to mend a brocken heart is to find the exact opposite of your ex and see if you can enjoy yourself, but if you can't then try someone like your ex and see if that works. remember that you will only be brought togehter and stay together if it is your destiny.

***031804 Omega September 08, 2003 - 06:55 am:** i think northernlight has had a nasty experience where a girl/boy has broken their heart but well done for getting over it i hope you find that world of happiness!

***031805 Northernlight September 08, 2003 - 06:57 am:** well thankyou omega i feal you cud be on the correct strain GIRL NOT BOY!

***031806 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 07:27 am:** but surely if u see the person who broke ur heart everyday u cnt get over it as they keep reminding of them and how u used to be!!!

***0319 Orite**

***031901 Darkside September 02, 2003 - 07:10 am:** wot skls every1 at?????????????????

***031902 Naturaldisaster September 02, 2003 - 04:37 pm:** Not all of us are at school remember!!! Some of us asr on this from the comfart of out own homes!

***031903 Futurist September 03, 2003 - 06:58 am:** Do you prefer to visit from the comfort of your own home Naturaldisaster?

***031904 Naturaldisaster September 03, 2003 - 03:39 pm:** haha - im not saying im at home at the moment either! But yes that last message was typed in the comfart of my home!!

***0320 Do what you are good at, not what you enjoy....2**

***032001 Darkside September 18, 2003 - 12:25 pm:** In reply to Distopia, Sagittarius and Nebula: i agree with all ur points of view... A challenging job is always good as ur excersising ur brain all the time but it is also important 2 get on with ur colleagues as u need 2 be in that friendly atmosphere 2 really enjoy ur job. If you are in a job that u despise then u need 2 focus on things which will get u through the day and this will also help u geton with ur job.

***0401 The point**

***040101 Moonbase September 01, 2003 - 09:34 am:** Is this not the basis of telling tales? Nobody knows who anybody is. We all will tell stories about ourselves. Some of which aren't true...

***040102 Naturaldisaster September 03, 2003 - 05:47 pm:** l tell a story about myself.....jst after other ppl hav told sume - then i can get a picture of how strange and dodgy ppl who use this site r!!! tht way i can decide wot story 2 tell!!!

***040103 Sagittarius September 03, 2003 - 07:19 pm:** So would you change your 'story' to suit the type of people you think are writing on this discussion? What if we weren't 'strange and dodgy'? It is interesting to think how our friends might describe us and if that is different to what our family might say.

***040104 Aurora September 04, 2003 - 12:46 pm:** inside everyone is strange but we keep it under lock and key when we are round people who we are trying to impress or we have respect for, if everyone was always strange then there would be no room left for doing things spontaneously.

***040105 Sagittarius September 04, 2003 - 01:11 pm:** But are we strange? We have our own thoughts and feelings and as we grow from childhood we learn how much of those thoughts we can share with others. We make judgements about which individuals will be good listeners; which people can help us and who will be able to listen without judging us. Sometimes we share our thoughts and feelings to deliberately shock or challenge another person. Every time we talk with others we adapt what we say therefore changing our 'story'. Our innermost feelings are usually only shared with people we think we can trust - because they are close to us - or maybe because they are strangers and we feel that what we tell them is safe. If we knew the deepest thoughts of other people I wonder how alike we would all be then? I suspect that what we think might be shocking would actually not as different as we imagine to lots of other people's innermost thoughts. So are we 'strange'?

***040106 Moonbase September 04, 2003 - 06:40 pm:** No. Strange is the oppisite of what you as an individual perceive to be normal. Its the indiviual that makes themself strange. Is it not funny though how out of a large group of friends there is allways one person you are happy to tell everthing to when you know that you can't really trust them. Is this why you tell them everything, so they tell other people?

***040107 Sunshine September 04, 2003 - 10:37 pm:** but to be honest what is 'strange' and whats 'normal'.is there such a thing? or ae we just going on what someone else says in normal

***040108 Millenium September 09, 2003 - 08:33 pm:** yeah , who decides wots wot? we may all b "strange" and those who we think r "strange" are "normal".....oh the possibilities

***0501 Society**

***050101 Sunshine September 05, 2003 - 10:19 am:** Society. What do they know. Its like we are told do this do that before they even know who they are talking to. They dont know me and they dont know you. Its like im a go with the flow kinda girl and its like they tell me what to do and it might just be me but when they tell me to do sometign i normaly do the complete oppisite. But hey thats just me bu bye xxxxxxxxxx

***050102 aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:22 am:** what do they know!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
sunshine is right on the pool table society can be changed but it takes time and percistence and will not be done over night. power to the people who want to be free

***050103 Sunshine September 06, 2003 - 09:01 pm:** on ya go aroura but one question whats up with the pool table???????????????? is it just me who has no i idea what ur on about. lol

***050104 Aurora September 07, 2003 - 11:13 am:** oh please u so know and if you don't want everyone else to no u will just shut up pool table girl!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

***050105 Sunshine September 07, 2003 - 07:35 pm:** i was just thinkin what makes society say what it says. Its what us teens say and do. Society coments on the music we listen to, it comments on what music vids we watch e.g how much was said about the vid for Dirrty, society canges with everything we do. dose that meen we have stop bein ourselves? no it just means that we live our lives not paying attention to what everyon else says about u. and aurora one little thing, at least never followed u now who home so dont get wide to me hun!!! bu Bye xxxxxxxxxx

***0502 Politics**

***050201 Themaster September 09, 2003 - 09:12 am:** i dont like tony blair

***050202 Cosmicray September 09, 2003 - 09:14 am:** hey master, i second that motion tony blair is not a nice man1

***050203 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 09:14 am:** ok!!!many peeps dnt!me included!

***050204 Blueplanet September 09, 2003 - 09:24 am:** tony looks like the f.a. cup

***050205 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:29 pm:** Lol blueplanet. Wouldn't want his job though would ya !

***050206 Blueplanet September 18, 2003 - 12:20 pm:** i wid it wid be a responseability a wid like 2 hav

***050207 Sagittarius September 18, 2003 - 01:26 pm:** I'm interested what do you think is good about being the Prime Minister? Why would you like the responsibility, Blueplanet? And what would make it a job you wouldn't want, Distopia? Personally, it would be too much responsibility for me.

***0503 Fazer**

***050301 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 09:13 am:** i think that thru ur life u have diff things that r important 2 u!and i think always thru ur life ur job will b one that is there 4ever!so u can earn money 2 support urself mayb support a partner and kids or peeps close 2 u wen they need ur help!and also wen ur old u might need 2 job so it makes u feel betta about urself and work can sumtimes b a place 2 escape thru out urlife!!

***050302 Extraterrestrial September 09, 2003 - 09:20 am:** I dnt thnk i agree with wot u r sayin about a job bein there 4eva bcoz it wont always b there u dnt kno wot will happenin in the future, u may b sacked or give up work to start a family! This is jus my veiw I AM NOT DISMISSING WOT U ARE SAYIN! XXX

***050303 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 09:29 am:** yeh bu if u give up ur job how will u feed the family ur givin up the job 4!

***050304 Sagittarius September 09, 2003 - 09:39 am:** Most of us will have to earn money to support ourselves or others. I think Fazer has some good points - I believe a lot of people 'escape' to work - but maybe this means they should be looking at their

life outside of work to improve it. Many people do feel good about themselves in work maybe because they have a 'label' and respect from colleagues or some control that they lack in their personal life. And I think that older people have a lot to offer in the way of experience that we should not dismiss - we'll all get old some day and I hope I will feel fulfilled and maybe useful rather than stagnate. Balance between work and personal life is a hard thing to achieve but getting that right must help make you a happier person.

***0504 Carrers**

*050401 Themaster September 09, 2003 - 09:16 am: me personally i just want to get a steady job and raise a family but at this moment i cant really say if that would be a suitable choice or not

*050402 Sunshine September 09, 2003 - 09:22 am: exactly. we are only about 16 and still trying to study at skool and live our teen lives cos we only have a few years left to do this. And you cant say that in ten yrs you are going to have the same hopes and dreams. Anything could happen by the time you are ready to start a family

*050403 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 09:23 am: yeh!so that means u would have more than 1 important thing u job ur kids and ur partner!but no1 can say which 1 is gna b most important 2 u in the furture!!

*050404 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:33 am: yeah i agree with sunshine: ther eis so much pressure from ppl to get the perpect life but why dnt they let us liveout teen lives 2 the full and let us decide!

***0505 Most important thing!!!!**

*050501 Extraterrestrial September 09, 2003 - 07:17 am: i thnk in life we will always hv sumthng different tht is more inportant like sum of us mite hv a child and tht wld b the ost inportant thng or mayb sum ppls job will always b more important to thm! I dont thnk my job will eva b the most inportant thng sum ppl take there jobs to seriously and dnt thnk about hw important family is!!!!

*050502 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 07:19 am: i think u can have more thn 1 important thing in ur life!

*050503 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 07:21 am: yes but maybe someone ppl dnt wnt a family and there4 there job is the only important thing unless they are attached to another person in someway but if they arent then in that case there job is the most important thing!!1

*050504 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 07:22 am: yeah but everyone should get there priorities right in life and c wat is important like family be4 friends and friends be4 lovers lol !!!

***0506 What is my view going to be like**

***050601 Sunshine September 09, 2003 - 09:18 am:** At this point in your life can you say that what is important to you now will be as it will be in the next ten yrs. Now i think about shoppin, school and havin a laugh with my mates but i dont think that i will be in ten yrs. Im still developing into myself and i want to change my live in different ways and by the time i do i may have other things that rule my life like a family but i dont no and i dont even know is i will be here tomoro.

***050602 Blueplanet September 09, 2003 - 09:39 am:** wht u would rather hav a laugh wi ur mates than get a job

***050603 Sunshine September 12, 2003 - 07:22 pm:** right now i would. im only 15 and im not saying that in the next few years im not going to want to get a job but for now i want to be a teenager and have a laugh with mates but maby you want a job and maby you dont its just depends on who you are

***050604 Cosmicray September 18, 2003 - 12:12 pm:** its ok doing wot u want now, but wot u do after will change the rest of ur life, so i think its worth thinking about.

***050605 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:17 pm:** i don't want a family in 10 years.i'll only be 26 and want to have some fun and do what i want to do befor starting a family

***050606 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:20 pm:** i'm only 16 i don't want to grow up yet but i do think a career that i would like much later

***0507 Role Models**

***050701 Beyonddream September 09, 2003 - 09:18 am:** We are influenced by many people in the society but we are influenced by the media and there is a severe pressure to look like ppl in hollywood to be skinny and pretty but at the end of the day do these famouse ppl look happy with what they are doing and if they saw the huge impact they have on young girls would there image change!!!!!!!

***050702 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:34 pm:** Do we blame them totally or do we have to take some responsibility for letting ourselves be so easily influenced? We don't have to watch the flicks, read the mags, we are actually paying them, by choice, to promote the nasty bland hollywood image. Grrr....

***0508 Darkside**

***050801 Darkside September 09, 2003 - 09:21 am:** As you age ur views on ur job will begin 2 change. Certain things cud happen in ur life i.e you could have a baby and suddenly ur career doesnt feel tht important anymore. Your priorities will begin 2 change. so jobs shudnt b based on being the most important thing going on in ur life, bcoz life is full of surprises and u never kno wot 2 expect.

***050802 Sagittarius September 12, 2003 - 10:42 am:** Your job may not be the most important thing in your life and I believe, Darkside, that you are right - priorities change with your circumstances - however if you are spending many hours each week in a job then I think you need to be happy there!

***050803 Wehaveaproblem September 22, 2003 - 08:58 am:** I agree with sagittarius. if a job is all you want to be involved with then fine, nobody will stop you, but its senseless to slave day in day out over a job that doesn't interest you.

***050804 Millenium September 22, 2003 - 09:12 am:** a job is important, as you need it to have any sort of money to have a living. however when it comes down to it i think that it is not really the most important thing, your friends and family are wot keep you going, thru bad and gd

***050805 Sagittarius September 22, 2003 - 09:23 am:** The importance of a job is down to each person as an individual. For some it is a way of earning money. For others it may be fulfilling in different ways. And for some people it is the basis of their whole social life. Most people have things in common with people they work with - they share experiences - which means they always have things to talk about with workmates. On the whole, I believe people choose to be friends with those who can relate to them through shared experiences, shared interests or being on the 'same wavelength'. What is it about your friends that makes you want to spend time with them?

***0509 Carrer or family**

***050901 Themaster September 09, 2003 - 09:25 am:** well you see im stuck in a very bad problem on one hand i want to hame a family but on the other hand i want to become a musician but that takes alot of time to be with both and both are important to me do i follow my dream or go for the other dream of a family

***050902 Cosmicray September 09, 2003 - 09:31 am:** well, why cant u do both, u wont exactly b letting ur familly down if u decided to become a musician.

***050903 Blueplanet September 09, 2003 - 09:33 am:** i think family comes 1st

***050904 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 09:33 am:** u nd to get ur priorities straight and sort out ur life wat u wnt and if i was u stuff music and have babies!!

***050905 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 09:34 am:** well i now the most important thing 2 me will 2 have a partner and have kids!i want a job but i want it 2 b a job i like and with the job i want once my kids r at skool i can fit everything in!mayb u should take that career once u have had ur family and they have gorwn up and they wont depend on u as much!but watch u wont get a divorce cos if u make no time 4 ur partner that is wot till happen!

***050906 Sunshine September 09, 2003 - 09:34 am:** i can see what you meen about being stuck between 2 things but can you not devide time and try to have the life you dream of. but i cant tell you what to do only time will tell you what to do and you will no when the time is right.

***050907 Darkside September 09, 2003 - 09:36 am:** well u cud do both. even if it does mean becoming a part-time parent or musician. this isnt really a problem u jus need 2 kno how 2 handle the both. u'll always have the help of ur family 2 help u out, so tht shudnt b a problem.

***050908 Cosmicray September 09, 2003 - 09:36 am: u dont make any sense 'beyonddreams'??**

***050909 Fazer September 09, 2003 - 09:37 am: well i now the most important thing 2 me will 2 have a partner and have kids!i want a job but i want it 2 b a job i like and with the job i want once my kids r at skool i can fit everything in!mayb u should take that career once u have had ur family and they have gorwn up and they wont depend on u as much!but watch u wont get a divorce cos if u make no time 4 ur partner that is wot till happen!**

***050910 Beyonddreams September 09, 2003 - 09:37 am: u nd to get ur priorities straight and sort out ur life wat u wnt and if i was u stuff music and have babies!!**

***050911 Cosmicray September 09, 2003 - 09:39 am: i agree with 'darksides' comment, u could do both, at least u no that u will b able to support a familly if u did becmeoe a musician**

***050912 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:27 pm: I agree with comicray and darksides, do both. I don't believe that musicians don't procreate as a rule - lots seem to get inspiration from their kids. Maybe it just needs a bit of planning and management to do both? Easy way out to say it has to be one or the other?**

***050913 Blueplanet September 18, 2003 - 12:15 pm: the master i think u should do wht u want an what u feel most comfortable wi**

***0510 Carrer or family**

***051001 Themaster September 09, 2003 - 09:29 am: well you see im stuck in a very bad problem on one hand i want to have a family but on the other hand i want to become a musician but that takes alot of time to be with both and both are important to me do i follow my dream or go for the other dream of a family**

***051002 Cosmicray September 18, 2003 - 12:07 pm: why not do both, you can be a musician and have a familly. because u still have 2 earn money to bring them up, and why not earn money doing something u want to do.**

***051003 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:10 pm: your job is all about getting money 2 start a family**

***051004 Darkside September 18, 2003 - 12:18 pm: Family life would have 2 cum first 2 me as i see that as being very important but then again u need a career 2 support ur family, so both are a bit of a problem. i think if u are wanting the both then u need 2 plan it out as it is more appropriate 2 have a bit of money before u have a family.**

***051005 Blueplanet September 18, 2003 - 12:22 pm: if uv got the money y not**

***051006 Cosmicray September 18, 2003 - 12:23 pm: yeah i agree, but does the type of job u have, have any difference or does it not mater**

***051007 Interstellar September 18, 2003 - 12:25 pm: I would say that my career would be more important. you do not have to have a family straight away you should live a little then think about settling down and have a family.**

***051008 Blueplanet September 18, 2003 - 12:26 pm: have fun while u still can an gd luck 2 u**

***051009 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:27 pm: i think a jobs a job as long as it pays well and u can keep at it**

***051010 Nebula September 18, 2003 - 12:56 pm: Not sure i agree with Buzz...would you really be as happy being, say a chef as you would being a plumber or a nurse**

***0511 What if my view going to be like**

***051101 Darkside September 18, 2003 - 12:12 pm: well in the next 5 yrs i hope to b studying in university so i think my main role would be studying hard and foccusig on gettin my degree. In the next 4 or 5 yrs anything could happen maybe i wnt be at uni and i mite have a job. so i guess u could say things mite not turn out but thats my view.**

***051102 Theberries September 18, 2003 - 08:47 pm: Yeah, life doesn't always turn out as you plan. Butyou have a plan - and people who have goals are far more likely to achieve what they want. Go for it!**

***051103 Naturaldisaster September 22, 2003 - 09:01 am: or joust take every chance you get!! I do! I dont have a lpan 2 my life - just a goal at the end....thats to own a Range Rover! who knows if i ever will and if i do how i will have got it but it i keep trying hard and take chances then maybe i might get there**

***051104 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:03 am: if u have goals ur always looking foward-aiming for something.u might occasionally miss the target but still u learn something from it. like in a game of football or hockey or something ull sometimes miss a shot but ull know that next time ull have to do it differently.**

***051105 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:08 am: Naturaldisaster, What kind of a goal is just getting a Range Rover? I would have thought it would be something a bit more interesting, or bigger, like getting a degree, or a big money making job!**

***051106 Wehaveaproblem September 22, 2003 - 09:11 am: DARKSIDE. You can't hope to achieve anything unless you are 100% confident that you will succeed then you WILL fail!!! If you keep at it, study hard then you will go far. Stay The Path, do not stray! But by the sounds of things then your going to end up poor+lonely living in some hovel!!!**

***051107 Naturaldisaster September 22, 2003 - 09:12 am: Money isnt evrything!!! yeh bing rich would b great - but prob not so realistic!!! i duno y i want 1!!! its just**

something iv always wanted! but id rather be happy with my job and family than b rich!

***051108 Sunshine** September 23, 2003 - 09:08 am: well..... as long as you no what you want you want out of life and you no how and when you want to get it then you can do it, You just have to think about what is important to you, even if it is to get money, a job or even if you are just wanting to be a bum all your life you have to do what you want and not what other ppl want you to do.

***051109 Blueplanet** September 23, 2003 - 09:11 am: i wid rather hav a family than b rich thats my opion

***0512 Balancing Family Life with a Job.....**

***051201 Futurist**September 22, 2003 - 08:39 am:Follow on from Career and Family threads above: Do some jobs force you to sacrifice family life? What kind of tensions do you anticipate between family life and your other career plans? Does family life still hold women back in their jobs?

***051202 Wehaveaproblem** September 22, 2003 - 08:53 am: some jobs do force you to sacrifice family, but it is up to the family to decide wheather or not they will be affected by it.

***051203 Naturaldisaster** September 22, 2003 - 08:56 am: you cant decide 2 b affected by something! - it will happen or not happen. You have very little control!

***051204 Milkyway** September 22, 2003 - 09:00 am: yeah id defenitely say its up to the family whether or not they are affected by the type of job the parents do or whatever. for example if u work shifts or something and then have kids they'll grow up withu working like that and it'll become normal for them. in this sense u personally are not sacrificing family life, it may just be different to the type of family life others have, for example full time parents.

***051205 Booster** September 22, 2003 - 09:01 am: I have think that family life does not hold women back as much as it did previouslly. The government is actively encouraging men to look after children instead of leaving women at home all the time. You are regularlyseeing men looking after children at home, to allow their wife, or partner, to go out and earn some money, and this also means that the female will not have been out of work for as long, thus will have better career prospects. Finally it also means that the father of the child will get to know their child a bit better. There are also so called time share oportunities, so that the parents can share the job, and still earn, whilst being with their children some of the time.

***051206 Wehaveaproblem** September 22, 2003 - 09:01 am: nothing is out of your control. anything you choose to do, no matter how large, as long as you know what it is you want to do you can control it. Fair enough, some jobs have circumstances which are outwith your control, a fireman say, as you could be killed at any time. but on the whole it depends on your decisions.

***051207 Naturaldisaster September 22, 2003 - 09:09 am: BUT - u catn choose if you are affected by sumthing - it either affects you or it dont!!! you cant choose - life would b so simple if we could!**

***051208 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:33 am: What your parents do (work and their opinions), definately does affect you. It can affect whether or not you go to university, how well off you are, and which people you socialise with.**

***051209 Aurora September 23, 2003 - 09:05 am: i think that it has nothing to do with your parents the people you hang around with or the job you get. you can't always blame your parents for your problems. you decide the places you go and the things you do. your parents aren't always there to hold your hand and keep you safe.**

***051210 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 09:19 am: I agree to some extent with both Booster and Aurora. The expectations of the people who surround you can influence your decisions. I believe that your life at home certainly affects you though it can affect you by making you want to fit in or to rebel against it in some way. However as Aurora points out the decision is yours, you make the choices about who your friends are, how hard you will try to reach your personal goals, however big or small they are. So yes, we are influenced by all sorts of things but how we deal with those influences is up to us.**

***0513 Who Thinks DARKSIDE takes things a bit far?**

***051301 Wehaveaproblem September 22, 2003 - 01:31 pm: Anyone? Anyone at all? Post your views here on why DARKSIDE takes things too seriously. I feel she/he needs to relax. Take a "CHILL PILL" DARKSIDE. Take up Bob Marley's view, and just Relax!**

***051302 Sagittarius September 22, 2003 - 03:05 pm: I actually enjoy everyone's points of view. They are all different and worth reading. I have my opinions on things but I like hearing everyone else's. Sometimes it makes me see things from a different angle - and I like that - it's good to be challenged. It's also good if people agree with you, it makes you feel you are not alone. I don't mind standing alone but it's a nice feeling to think that others feel the same way. Does anyone else enjoy this site for this reason?**

***051303 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 08:55 am: wehaveaproblem: OH YES WE DO HAVE A PROBLEM WITH UR ATTITUDE TO PPL U CHILL OUT AND LEARN TO RESPECT PPLS VIEWS!!!!**

***051304 Extraterrestrial September 23, 2003 - 08:57 am: I think evry1 has a right to say wot they feel so jus let DARKSIDE say wot she wants! after all evry1 has there own opinion! Its a free world man!!!**

***051305 Cosmicray September 23, 2003 - 08:57 am: ye u tell him/her! ppl can say wotever they want!**

***051306 Themaster September 23, 2003 - 08:58 am: look this website is about freedom of speech darkside is only stating there point of view like everyone else**

***051307 Darkside September 23, 2003 - 08:58 am: Wehaveaproblem ... i am chillin lol @ bob marley. but thats jus ma opinion. i liked ur posting. it was class!**

***051308 Sunshine September 23, 2003 - 09:00 am: well.....i am begining to think that you must be intimidated be strong willed females. Darkside can say what she likes and you cant tell ppl to stop feeling the way they feel. Is it not the point of this website tosay how you feel.**

***051309 Aurora September 23, 2003 - 09:01 am: ppl have no right to tell other ppl what to say or wot to do. if they feel strongly about something then it's up to them to show how strongly they want it and how hard you will work for it.**

***051310 Darkside September 23, 2003 - 09:03 am: but bk 2 the point! wehaveaproblem u shudnt b on dis site if u arent up 4 a debate and if ur not gunna lisen 2 ppls views then dnt diss dem. it seems to me tht ur da 1 with da problem, think bout it.**

***051311 Blueplanet September 23, 2003 - 09:03 am: everyone has there own opion the free will 2 speech cosmicary shut it**

***051312 Cosmicray September 23, 2003 - 09:09 am: blueplanet why r u telling me 2 shut up, u just agreed with wot i said**

***051313 Blueplanet September 23, 2003 - 09:14 am: soz cosimicary**

***051314 Blueplanet September 23, 2003 - 09:16 am: do u 4give me cosmicray**

***051315 Cosmicray September 23, 2003 - 09:17 am: yes**

***051316 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 09:23 am: I am glad to see how important it is for everyone that the opinions of other people should be respected even if you don't agree with them. If everyone in the world could live this way then maybe we wouldn't have some of the problems we do!**

***051317 Wehaveaproblem September 24, 2003 - 10:24 am: Oi! BLUEPLANET+COSMICRAY. Kiss and make up later. this site is about expressing opinions. it's not a dating service.(haha)**

***051318 Wehaveaproblem September 24, 2003 - 10:27 am: SAGITTARIUS: you make sense. i've only said wot i have in order to spark resentment amongst some of the others. it was very interesting to see how you all reacted. i'm glad you guy's all feel that opinions should be respected. thats the way it should be. well done!!! (Soz if anybody was offended)**

***051319 Wehaveaproblem September 24, 2003 - 10:28 am: by the way DARKSIDE. wot is it you want to do at uni? just out of curiosity?**

***051320 Fazer September 28, 2003 - 05:47 pm:** dark side can say woteva they wont sum peeps do take things more serious than others this site is all about opinions and obviously thiers is 2 take it seriously!

***051321 Darkside September 29, 2003 - 01:16 pm:** ermhhh i dnt kno jus yet, need to think about it. watever i choose 2 do it will b something to do with nursing coz dats wot im interested in. wot about u wehaveaproblem?

***0601 Uncertain about positive**

***060101 Spacemonkey September 03, 2003 - 04:50 pm:** If u r uncertain i guess its good to be positive about about it, but i like to be certain best 'cos its less scary

***060102 Aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:21 am:** the only positive is a negative

***060103 Sagittarius September 05, 2003 - 11:37 am:** Not sure I follow - can you explain what you mean?

***060104 Sunshine September 06, 2003 - 10:49 pm:** well i think that what aroua means is tht the only way to have a positive feeling is to live throught a negative feeling but hey maybe thats just me

***060105 Aurora September 07, 2003 - 01:17 pm:** the only real positive we can have in negative. to elimtate the negative is to do soemthing positive. all positive things start by something negative.

***060106 Spacemonkey September 10, 2003 - 02:30 pm:** aha so if i am uncertain and it gets a bit freaky then at least i might then do something about it to get certain again. What if i never reach a point when I am sure about things ?

***060107 Nebula September 11, 2003 - 08:15 am:** Perhaps the point is that we have to live with a certain amount of uncertainty, and even if we are sure about how we feel abot something right now, in six months or six years or maybe six weeks we'll feel differently and be less sure. I think it's quite healthy to question our beliefs from time to time.

***060108 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:22 am:** i think its good to be uncertain about stuff. that way u cant set ur mind about it. u dont have a fixed view on it. therefore ull be open to different ppls opinions etc and in the end if u want to be certain about it u can make an educated decision.

***060109 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:26 am:** The only reason that we think things are positive or negative, is because we are able to compare the things that we think are positive or negative. Also whether or not something is +ive or -ive is due to our opinions, which we have recieved through our upbringing.

***060110 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:36 am:** yeah i agree with booster. something one person regards as a positive thing could be thought by another person to be a negative thing. it totally depends on how u think about things. i believe that out of every negative thing you can get a positive one. this is becace if uve recognised

the situation as being negative ull know not to do it again and therefore u have learned something, and learning stuff throughout ur life is a positive thing.

***060111 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:55 am: Thank you Milkyway, the aditional comments are perfektly true**

***0602 Luck**

***060201 Blueplanet September 18, 2003 - 12:36 pm: i think its all about luck some people r born lucky**

***060202 Darkside September 18, 2003 - 12:39 pm: can u pls elaborate on ur opinion???**

***060203 Cosmicray September 18, 2003 - 12:48 pm: if u have had a lucky life then i think it would have been a happy life because u would have got everything u wanted, if u understand**

***060204 Sagittarius September 18, 2003 - 01:43 pm: I think there is an element of luck - but thinking you are lucky is a frame of mind - and seeing opportunities and making the most of them has a lot to do with being thought 'lucky'. After all they say that people who win competitions are the ones who enter thousands of them! You don't win if you don't enter and you are not lucky, in most cases, if you don't make some form of effort that makes things possible.**

***060205 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:10 am: i agree with sagittarius. if you are trying to do something and then it happens you may just put it down to luck, but surely it would never have happened if you hadnt even started out trying to do it?**

***060206 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:29 am: I think I am lucky from time to time, but why? I think it is just many coincidences coming together and happening at the same time.**

***060207 Millenium September 22, 2003 - 09:38 am: for some reason wen u feel u r on a roll, since you have had a lot of luck, you feel you are able to achieve a lot more, i totally agree with sagittarius, luck is a frame of mind, just like if you feel unlucky, you are less likely to succeed because you feel that it will never go your way again. So if we strive to achieve a whole load of things, if one pulls off, we can build on that to further our career for example!**

***060208 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:49 am: i think lucky ppl are the ones who make the best of every situation so that they always get something good from it.**

***060209 Extraterrestrial September 23, 2003 - 09:15 am: Havin a lucky life doesnt necessarily mean tht u hv got evrythng u wants tht called being SPOILED! in my opinion.**

***060210 Extraterrestrial September 23, 2003 - 09:18 am: i agree with Milkyway aswell if try hard to achieve sumthing thn it will happenin and sum ppl will put tht dwn to bein lucky!**

***060211 Blueplanet September 23, 2003 - 09:23 am: so wid u rather b rich by luck or by hard work**

***060212 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 09:29 am: If you become rich by hard work and then something happens to make you poor again - you will always know that you can do it again. If you win the lottery and then blow the lot - what are your chances of winning it again? On balance maybe it is better to be rich by hard work!**

***060213 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 09:33 am: I guess that means that you have the skills there to make it happen. So skills are there for life to be used when we need them. Who knows when we will need them, sometimes it surprises you when some almost forgotten ability comes in handy again!**

***060214 Millenium September 26, 2003 - 10:55 pm: i think it's much more rewarding to get somewhere with hard work and skill than just gettin there with a "stab in the dark"**

***0603 Lifes about taking risks!**

***060301 Darkside September 18, 2003 - 12:36 pm: Life is about taking risks, without this there would be no meaning to life. U need that bit of excitement in ur life so that it doesnt become 2 dull. Then again some people are happy with life without taking risks, maybe they like that feeling of being stable so that things dnt go wrong. I guess its just the sort of person u r.**

***060302 Themaster September 18, 2003 - 12:42 pm: i agree life is mainly about taking risks but at the same time you do need to remember people who spend there entire life safe or there is people who took risks it screwed them up and now they live safe my oppinion is take a risk in life when the odds are good for you not stacked against you**

***060303 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:47 pm: i think u should take things as they come 'relax don't do it'**

***060304 Nebula September 18, 2003 - 01:30 pm: But if the odds are so good for you, is that really a risk or is it just a choice. It's when the odds are against you that the decision becomes risky and that's when you need to decide whether to choose safety and certainty or to make the jump. Maybe that's easier to do when you don't have to worry about anyone else though.**

***060305 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:15 am: take a few risks and see what happens. u never know it might turn out really well for you. on the other hand it might turn out badly but what have you lost? maybe a bit of money etc but you have gained a whole load of experience you'll never have got before. i agree with nebula though it is maybe easier if you dont have to worry about anyone else.**

***060306 Wehaveaproblem September 22, 2003 - 09:22 am: I think that if you take too many risks in life then its a sign that you are unsure of yourself, Still "in the closet" as it were. Sorry guys, but i'm afraid you all seem to be a bit misguided. Risks**

are fine but its up to you to deal with the consequences. you should be more careful
DARKSIDE.

*060307 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:46 am: yeah too many risks is defenitely a sign that ur unsure of urself. im just saying a few risks might be a good thing to gain experience of life outside ur comfort zone. i think in the end thats what it all comes down to...whether or not ur willing to (or want to) break out of ur comfort zone and try new things, take a few risks etc. ppl are always saying u should just take that little step and push urself but if ur happy doing what ur doing then why should you?

*060308 Sagittarius September 22, 2003 - 03:16 pm: I think as long as you are perfectly content then you may not want to move on. But then many people get a little niggling thought - that they could do their job as well as their manager; that if they moved to a new job they might earn more money or be less bored with routine. All these things can be just what it takes to spur you on to leave the comfort zone. It can make you feel good about yourself. Even if stretching yourself to do a new job is just a tiny bit uncomfortable, we always know that people make allowances for newcomers to a job. Most people WANT you to succeed in the job and will do everything they can to help you get going in it.

*060309 Darkside September 23, 2003 - 09:16 am: WEHAVEAPROBLEM..... do u have a problem with my views coz it looks like ur jus dissin mine. der is no right or wrong answer 2 this thread. so dnt b goin round sayin mine is bull. lets see u start a thread!!!!!!

*060310 Sunshine September 23, 2003 - 09:24 am: WEHAVEAPROBLEM i think that you just need to bk off Darkside. Are you trying to stop darkside havin an opinion that even if you dont agree with dont mean that nobody else can see were they are comin from? What is wrong with someone having an oppinion they want to share? i no that im going bk on hat i just said about ppls having oppinions but you just keep starting with Darkside and that is just bitchy. Let ppl say how they feel cos even if u dont agree with Darkside other ppl do.

*060311 Sagittarius September 26, 2003 - 07:37 pm: Talking about taking risks. Here is an inspiration for all of you out there no matter how old! I took my 94 1/2 year old Grandfather to a safari park. He has sciatica (difficulty walking) and emphysema (difficulties with breathing). He also has cataracts but despite that enjoyed seeing the animals at close quarters. As we waited for the boat to chimpanzee island, he watched people go on the 'Flying Fox' - an army assault, hang-on-with-two-hands pulley over the lake. Well to cut a long story short - before we knew it, he was up those stairs and across it, leaving my mother and I in shock at the top of the starting tower! We could see his legs were giving way under him as he got off, so my 70 yr old mother followed to help him. It took a little while for him to get his breath but he survived! What's more he got a round of applause from all the spectators and the people in pedaloos on the lake. He now holds the record for being the oldest person to go on it. Th life to the full and if I live to a ripe old age then I hope I will still be up for doing things like that.

***0604 The role of luck**

***060401 Buzz September 18, 2003 - 12:40 pm: do u think people get in to big, well paid job because they haave had a good education or because they come from rich family**

***060402 Cosmicray September 18, 2003 - 12:45 pm: i think education is the most imortant thing , but its probably easier if u come from a rich familly, because u might get into a better school, than say a poor person would**

***060403 Themaster September 18, 2003 - 12:46 pm: i think it depends my opinion i would prefere to get it through education so that if you get a good job you now that you deserve it and earned it**

***060404 Blueplanet September 18, 2003 - 12:50 pm: i think some people get into jobs by luck say there in the a rich family.**

***060405 Theberries September 18, 2003 - 09:00 pm: Job Advert: Journalist wanted. Must be born to an Earl and possess at least £100,000. ???**

***060406 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:20 am: just going back to what cosmicray said...better schools dont always cost money to get in2. a really good school is made by the teachers and the pupils not the amount of money thats floating around in it. and i believe you can do equally as well in a "good" school as you can in a "bad" school. as they say "u get as much out as u put in".**

***060407 Millenium September 22, 2003 - 09:24 am: Milkyway, if u r in a "bad" school, with people who don't want to learn everywhere, and who can't be bothered, surely u r more likely to follow suit than in a "good" school, where the majority do want to learn?**

***060408 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:30 am: i dont think u can define good or bad schools by the number of ppl who want to learn or not. i was thinking more about the reputation of the school. a school with a good reputation may have just got that reputation coz of the area its in. a whole load of ppl who dont want to learn anything might go there though. whereas a school with a bad reputation ie one in a bad area might have loads of ppl who are really motivated to learn stuff but are held back by the stigma directed towards the school.**

***060409 Millenium September 22, 2003 - 09:33 am: ahhh o.k. im gettin wot your sayin now! have to agree with wot you sed, but on another note, do you think that a "good" school, with the 1st class reputation is always likely to deliver top class grades? my opinion is that a school is made by those who put things in , rather than those who wait for it to come to them, not by a reputation.**

***060410 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:40 am: I have to totally agree with Milkyway, from past experience this is the case, as one school on one side of the city can have one reputation, but go a few miles down the road, and you come to a school which is quite the opposite. Usually you do get some negative pupils in the good schools, but it is only a tiny minority. The bad schools however have a larger more prodominant minority of bad, underachieving pupils.**

***060411 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:41 am: yep i totally agree. and going back to what u said..whether or not a school with a 1st class reputation gets top grades depends entirely upon the pupils there. in the end its them who sit the exams not the schools good reputation.**

***060412 Millenium September 22, 2003 - 09:43 am: yep nice one! all the reputations will change over time in my opinion, as new generations emerge with different attitudes to work/school/life.**

***060413 Millenium September 22, 2003 - 09:49 am: just as a matter of interest did u learn about busing at school? in america where they took white pupils and put them in with other races in inner city schools, and african americans and hispanics in the suburban ones,with the so- called "good" reputations. thats a way of getting rid of all the stigmas surrounding the schools regarded as poorer ones.(altho many were totally against it!!!) wot do you think of the idea?**

***060414 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:19 am: cosmicray: a poorer person could still go to a state school and get better education than a private school just cos ppl that go to a privtae school think they r better and wnt to waste money on the same education as u would get in a public school wear shocking uniforms dnt mean that a poorer person dosent stand the same chances as a person that wastes time on pointless schools.when facts have proven that state school have got better grades than any posh private schools which teach kids to be judging and generally a SNOB!!!!**

***060415 Darkside September 23, 2003 - 09:24 am: ere WEHAVEAPROBLEM wot skl u @ n wot yr u in ?**

***060416 Aurora September 23, 2003 - 09:26 am: i think that it really doesn't matter what school you go to. the same things happen at all schools but with the so called good skools the bad stuff is all covered up and you are only told the good but at a so called bad skool the good stuff is less shown and the bad is more cast up. we need to show ppl that skools are all the same but we need to look more at the education than the reputation of it. give everyone a fair chance because if we don't we are all jsut going round in one big circle of hate and class. can anyone really tell me why we put ppl into different class because we are all the same on the inside so what really counts. is is skin deep or is it truly deep inside us?**

***060417 Extraterrestrial September 23, 2003 - 09:27 am: ppl from state skls hv bn proven 2 do better in life thn ppl from private skls! so i ask... wotsd the point in watstin money wen it cld b spent on better thngs!**

***060418 Sunshine September 23, 2003 - 09:33 am: yes but.... u just have to remember that sometimes you get ppl who think that the privet skool system makes you better for a job. Im a public skool and i think that everyone deserves to have the same oppertunites like a job or a place at uni. im soz but i dont agree with what u say about ppl being the same on the inside, we may have the same functions but emotions and oppintion are different. Even your best m8 is different to you.**

***060419 Buzz September 23, 2003 - 09:33 am:** i think u will mostly get a job coz ur da rite person 4 that job but on da other hand my m8 never got da job he went 4 coz they didn't like were he lived so having money is a big part of live

***060420 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 09:45 am:** It is really important that all young people get the same standard of education to give them equal opportunities once they leave school. But we all know how one disruptive person can stop a whole class learning - and that ruins everyone's chance of a fair standard of education. School is what you make it, but unfortunately it is what your class make it too. Don't know how you get around that. Pupil Power - don't accept the interruptions? Trouble is that it can be entertaining, and fun at the time not to be getting on with work. It's only when you leave school that you realise you've missed out! It's hard to know how to ensure everyone gets a fair education. Any ideas?

***060421 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:11 am:** DARKSIDE. The skool i'm at isn't important. Neither is the year i'm in. Lets just say i'm in Scotland.

***0605 Safety and security or...**

***060501 Interstellar September 18, 2003 - 12:46 pm:** Some people would rather be safe than sorry and the rest would rather go out take risks and live life to the full. Those who take the risk i think usually get something out of it. The people who would rather have security and safety end up wishing they were the ones taking the risk.

***060502 Themaster September 18, 2003 - 12:50 pm:** sometimes you can be right taking risks can be benitful but other times you can endup regreting it those people that play it safe because they could have played with fire before and been burned

***060503 Nebula September 18, 2003 - 01:24 pm:** What the Master is saying is true...but that's what taking risks means..sometimes it works out well and at others it doesn't. But, the fact that it does work out beautifully sometimes means that we should keep taking risks and not confine ourselves to the 'safe' option all the time.

***060504 Sagittarius September 18, 2003 - 01:52 pm:** I think it is a case of weighing up the benefits and looking at what you would lose if things go wrong. Sometimes it is a case of 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' and you will be no worse off. Other times, you might take a risk that could end up with you losing something that's important to you. Then you have to seriously think about whether you could live without it; how much of a risk it actually is; and whether the benefits outweigh the risks. I think the important thing is to think about it;feel brave enough to take a decision, no matter what it is; and then live with that decision without spending hours of regret over it.

***060505 Milkyway September 22, 2003 - 09:26 am:** yeah if u do something u have to make sure that its not going to be somethig u regret. but if u spend so much time thinking about it-weighing it up etc-by the time uve decided to do it or not surely its not a risk anymore coz uve thought about it so much and presumably if uve done it uve decided its the best thing to do?

***060506 Booster September 22, 2003 - 09:49 am:** Sometimes you will sit around thinking about whether or not something is the best thing to do. Quite often you spend too much time on it, and may just decide it is a waste of time after all, thus you could say that you have wasted your time, when you could have done something much more useful.

***060507 Sagittarius September 22, 2003 - 03:24 pm:** As I said, it IS important to think about things - but **TAKING A DECISION, ACTING** upon it and living with the consequences of that decision without regret are necessary too. The amount of time you spend deciding should be in direct relation to how much you gain against how much you lose. If you gain a lot and lose little - grab the opportunity before somebody else does!! Help Lady Luck along the way!

***060508 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:14 am:** lol! ppl can take risks and live life to the full BUT they have got to know where to stop in the end and get there priorities straight and go bk to there safety nets!!

***0606 Magic!!!!**

***060601 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:26 am:** everyone has a bit of magic in them u only have 2 look inside to let it go!

***060602 Blueplanet September 23, 2003 - 09:34 am:** so how do u no evry1s got this magic did u create life an do u have this magic

***060603 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 09:51 am:** I think Beyonddreams is right. Magic is there. When we were little most of us had no problems with magic - we knew Santa came and the tooth fairy visited. As you get older you forget about magic - too many everyday things leave little time to let it happen. But every now and again in our lives there will be a Magic Moment that will stay with us forever. All you have to do is see the magic when it happens and make the most of it!

***0606 Practical magic in life**

***060701 Themaster September 23, 2003 - 09:27 am:** i think what gelatte says about practical magic in life is true i think you should be able to use some practical magic in you life other than just making the same decision day after day i think you should allow alot of experimentation in your life other than feeling like your living your life on one path that could be going somewhere or nowhere my opiion is to never go the same path when theres a fork in the road in your life i would say dont be too scared to try the left or right in stead of going straight on

***060702 Blueplanet September 23, 2003 - 09:30 am:** i agree wi the master u hav a gd point

***0608 Life after death!!!!**

***060801 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:29 am:** is there life after death?

***060802 Darkside September 23, 2003 - 09:32 am: hmmm mmmmm i dnt kno where did tht come from? it was a bit random!**

***060803 Cosmicray September 23, 2003 - 09:33 am: i thnk that their is life after death, because wot would their b if there was'nt?**

***060804 Extraterrestrial September 23, 2003 - 09:35 am: I think alot of ppl believe there is life after death to make death itself not seem so scary.**

***060805 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:35 am: i like to be random thats the person i am lol :S:P personall i think there is u just have to believe in it and ther perosn that has died will watch over u but u have 2 believe in it!**

***060806 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:39 am: i like to be random thats the person i am. personally i think there is, u just have to believe in it and that person that has died will watch over u but u have 2 believe in it!**

***060807 Cosmicray September 23, 2003 - 09:39 am: do u beleive in fate?**

***060808 Sunshine September 23, 2003 - 09:25 pm: no single person in this world can tell u if there is life after death. it is something that either you belive in or not. i personaly feel that there is something that we do when this world is dont with us. when it comes to fate i do belive that every1 has fate. Was it fate that brought a couple who had not seen eachother for 50 yrs back together? personaly i say it was. I feel we all have a destiny and everything we do is our destiny. be it to fall in love, to get a job or even go up town. its just our destiny i cant tell you to feel the way i do and i cant tell you that what you feel is wrong. nobody can.**

***060809 Millenium September 26, 2003 - 11:13 pm: yeah i agree with wot u r sayin sunshine, but i dont like to think everything we do is to do with fate, although i have to say i believe that it is all to do with fate/destiny. If it is true i feel it means we are all living lives on rails and whatever we do is restricted to an extent. But life after death....who is to say that we are all not dead now? and that this (life) is all just in our minds?**

***060810 Sagittarius September 27, 2003 - 12:37 pm: I think everything in life that happens holds some meaning for us. Things have happened in my life that on reflection seemed to be a preparation for things to come. Can that be classed as fate or destiny? Despite everything I believe we can influence and control our future to a certain extent - by taking a certain path and discarding another. By ensuring we gain the expertise and experience we need to go in a certain direction. As for life after death - I cannot believe that we are only flesh and blood and that the death of our bodies is the end of us. It seems too much of a waste. I also believe that if people progressed from cave men days to modern man simply by passing on knowledge from one generation to another we wouldn't have achieved what we have achieved today. Occasionally there are leaps in science or knowledge that I don't believe could happen if every individual had to start from scratch in the learning process. Don't know if this expresses clearlwthat I'm trying to say, but anyhow that's how I see it.**

***060811 Psychic September 28, 2003 - 04:08 pm:** I find it hard to believe in fate, I don't like the thought of our lives being predetermined... But I think nobody knows for sure. About life after death: I think we cannot know really. But thinking of death is one of the most important questions in life. You understand you will not be here forever and it makes a difference on how we live our lives.

***060812 Sunshine September 28, 2003 - 09:12 pm:** 'Life after death' is another one of those questions that you can never answer just like how was the world formed! If you spend your life always trying to find an answer you will drive yourself insane. Either you believe in 'life after death' or you don't. Millennium is right about saying that we don't know if this is what they call 'life after death' and that we are just living out another lifetime. Or is this as we all thought 'real life'? I personally think that this is our 'real life' and I will move on to another plane when this world is done with me. But that's just me.

***060813 Missioncontrol September 29, 2003 - 09:51 am:** Some might say you're a fool for believing in life after death, but I don't see what's wrong with the idea. Even if it turns out to be untrue, if it helps you live your life while you're here, what's wrong with that!? I mean anything that makes life less hard to deal with!

***0609 Rational**

***060901 Aurora September 23, 2003 - 09:32 am:** do we really always think rationally? to make a decision of the top of our heads can be more productive than thinking about it for days on end and never getting anywhere. we need to make fast decisions on all sorts of daily life or we would become controlled without any emotion or any feelings. without feelings we would become hollow empty rooms dark and dark, without emotions we would be truly dead

***060902 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 10:00 am:** I know I follow my intuition often and it doesn't often let me down. But I wonder if intuition is partly the 'Broadband' of thinking? The facts are all there, but you don't laboriously go over them, they are simply computed at high speed in your head so the answer is seen as 'intuition'. It's just a thought. (Oops, no pun intended!)

***0610 Change your life**

***061001 Aurora September 23, 2003 - 09:39 am:** bottom line is even if you see them coming no, one is ready for the big moments. no one asked for their life to change but it does. so what are we helpless? no the big moments are going to come we can't help that but it's what we do after that shows us how we really are. please respond and tell me what you think of this quote

***061002 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 10:05 am:** Sometimes you do see the big moments coming and you can prepare for them. Sometimes you see them but no preparation is enough. Then other times they come out of the blue and you have no choice but to deal with them as best you can. Aurora has a point, in every case the aftermath is as important as the Big Moment. It is accepting the change and making the most of the new hand we have been dealt that counts.

***061003 Tranquility September 23, 2003 - 10:07 am:** I like that quote. Big moments will happen whether we know abt them in advance or not. We have to learn to cope with them & that only comes with living and learning through the smaller things that happen. The small things help us shape our minds and reactions to help deal with the big moments.

***0701 Date and Time**

***070101 Booster September 09, 2003 - 09:37 am:** Why is the time wrong on the dates that are shown for the posted threads?

***070102 Futurist September 09, 2003 - 10:01 am:** This is the fault of Futurist who has made some errors in the coding for the website - I will have a go at fixing it!

***070103 Futurist September 09, 2003 - 05:56 pm:** Think I might have fixed the time problem Booster.

***070104 Futurist September 09, 2003 - 05:57 pm:** Not that time -what about this time? Hooray - the correct time at last!

***070105 Booster September 13, 2003 - 12:59 pm:** Thank you!

***070106 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:09 am:** lol!! wat a pathetic reason to start a new thread lol! think bout more important thigs

***070107 Fazer September 28, 2003 - 06:25 pm:** yeh i agree!lol!

***070108 Naturaldisaster September 29, 2003 - 09:13 am:** You may think it is a pathetic reason to start a new thread but i think it is important to see when things were posted - especially when your in a class.....it lets you see if the porson responding is in the class or outside - this gives you an idea of the kind of person you are talking to. Also it allows you to see when people were last on and posted.

***0702 Darkside**

***070201 Darkside September 18, 2003 - 12:49 pm:** this website is a very good way 2 tlk 2 ppl that u dnt kno, so that u can get opinions from ppl that cnt judge u. this helps a lot for ur future and it gives u a chance2 reply 2 other ppls opinions

***070202 Booster September 18, 2003 - 03:25 pm:** -I agree.

***070203 Sunshine September 22, 2003 - 07:23 pm:** and also you could be talking to ppl u would never of tought u would think u would like and actuly like them from what they say

***070204 Beyonddreams September 23, 2003 - 09:08 am:** this website is a great laugh to get to know pplz opinions and wat they think bout life and its silent so noone knows who eachother is so no one can be sngled out the only way ppl can judge u is by ur opinion and not by the stereotypical way of by the way u look!

***070205 Sunshine September 23, 2003 - 09:30 pm: so true**

***070206 Fazer September 28, 2003 - 06:28 pm: beyonddreams i totally agree!u should only judge peeps on there personality and stuff but on this i dnt think u can judge peeps t all cos its only 1 opinion about a certain subjects really so u cant judge peeps on that!plus i like how everything is secret cos then there is the added mystery and fun 2 this website!this website is very gd and i enjoy readin diff peeps views!**

***070207 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:07 am: The best thing is that you canny tell whethter or not it is an adult or a pupil that is posting, though it may be possible to tell from the language used**

***0801 1 How is this defferent**

***080101 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 07:44 am: From discussing things in class with a teacher?**

***080102 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:09 am: you can say wotever u want to in this form. if u have to discuss things with a teacher then u usually have to be polite, wellspoken and actually have a point. This way u can say wotever u want to, in wotever way u want. If u make a pointless statement then people simply don't reply to u. It's really good!**

***08103 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:15 am: yeah i think its better than discussing things with a teacher. you dont feel that you HAVE to say anything. its good just to see what the other people are saying. You can discuss things anonymously which i liked coz people cant have any preconcieved ideas about you.**

***080104 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:16 am: It is more open you can say what you think without worry if it sounds stupid or pointless. You can follow up points, disagree and challenge other peoples views.**

***080105 Naturaldisaster September 29, 2003 - 09:20 am: the only thing which is better about discussing things face to face is that you get (even from most teachers!!!) an ansr streight away. But then the whole 'respect' thing means pepole would not say weot they relay think. If we can say what we thing 2 adults and teachers online, why can we not have the freedom to do so - in a nice way - face to face? This is a country where we have freedom of speach. This has highlighted the fact thatwe still hav sum kind of tradition to treat teenagers like children!!! who knows!**

***080106 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:27 am: yep, you can't say what you think about certain things to there face, but you would say it to them, when you don't even know who it is that you are actually posting to.**

***080107 Aurora October 03, 2003 - 11:10 am: you can really get anything that you are thinking off your chest without fear that someone will judge you in class. i found that it really helped to listen to other people and to find out what they thought.**

***080108 Anonymous October 03, 2003 - 11:11 am: its diffrent because it gives us privacy to discuss things when we want to not in front of the class**

***080109 Extraterrestrial October 03, 2003 - 11:18 am:** I like this site coz no1 knows who u r or where u r from and yeh u cant reli talk to ppl face to face like u can on this coz i thnk if u were to thn sum ppl wld take it personally instead of it jus bein u giving ur opinion!!!!

***080110 Sunshine October 03, 2003 - 11:42 am:** well i htink this is a good way to communicat to people in classes because people talk to everyone. they dont know who you are so your are not just talking to your friends and are talking to everyone nomatter who you think they are and even if youdont talk to people in the class you get to know the person behind the mask. Eveyone behind behind a persona that people know you as. The person known as 'the class geek' (soz if i splt it wrong) to 'the brain' to 'the slut' everyone is different around people amd when you read what they say you are reading about the real them, about there veiws that you would never have knows about befor this site. I think that this would be a good thing to keep going on in certen classes. i think that it would be a good thing to have this going on to have a wider out look on your peers. I know that i would like to get to hear the views of some of the guys in my year who hide behind there masks. and also i would like to hear the views of some of the guys in my class who hide behind their masks and also i would like to get to know the views of some of my mates to get to know the person behind the group and see if they are the person i thought i knew. I have enjoyed my time using this site beacuse it has made me think hard about some thing i have never payed much attention to. i am still the same person i have always been but know i have a better understaning of who i really am and i like to think that i take into account the views of ohers better

***080111 Sagittarius October 07, 2003 - 04:20 pm:** From a pupil's point of view, I would think posting in privacy under a pseudonym removes or certainly reduces the fear of commenting in front of fellow pupils. As some others have said there is no visual judgement of individuals. There is also the possibility of taking the time to compose postings so that comments are understood in the way you mean them - a boon for shyer individuals. I wonder if anyone took an active part who finds it hard to speak out in class?

***080112 Borealis October 13, 2003 - 06:01 pm:** I really like being able to communicate with people whenever I want to. The discussion is accessible at any time of day or night which is great when you don't have a lot of time available or when you feel like having a discussion at an inhospitable time of day.

***0802 Has discussion changed your opinion**

***080201 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 07:45 am:** about any career planning issues?

***080202 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:08 am:** yea, especially when u go in blind 2 sum discussions, and you don't realy have an opinion, it helps to kind of mould what you think is the best thing. Especially on the post about luck, where the discussion was about the quality of the schools, and if it mattered to ur prospects of going to uni or not. It helped 2 broaden your horizons.

***080203 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:09 am:** i wouldn't say that it has completely changed my opinions about my future career but it has made me take into account other issues linked with it such as doing what you enjoy but not getting loads of money. it has also made me focus more on what i want my life to be like in the future which is closely linked to my choice of career.

***080204 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:15 am:** Yep, I agree Milkyway, i haven't changed my opinions much, but have learnt a few things and been able to look at things from a different perspective.

***080205 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:22 am:** I also agree. I am still thinking of the same career but the forum has helped re-inforce my view that money isn't the most important thing in a career, hapiness and job satisfaction are, which often derive from careers where you 'make a difference' to someone.

***080206 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:32 am:** Yeh, I agree, Redshift, but, in some ways money does have some importance, since if you don't earn enough you cannot get some thing that you may want in life, or in extreme cases, you may end up shrivelling up and becomeing deceased, since you are not able to buy yourself the bare essentials to life, such as food, and shelter.

***080207 Naturaldisaster September 29, 2003 - 09:44 am:** What you've never had you'll never miss - but you will ALWAYS want more - ALWAYS want what you cant afford and ALWAYS have what you cant getthts life and who ever sed it ws fair!

***080208 Naturaldisaster September 29, 2003 - 09:46 am:** that last 'have was ment to be a 'want!!!

***080209 Extraterrestrial October 03, 2003 - 11:29 am:** I thnk mayb it has changed my views slightly like im not in such a rush to go 2 college ne more and i hv learned tht money isnt evrythng but at the end of the day we will always need money!!!

***080210 Theberries October 11, 2003 - 08:39 am:** This site has changed my views about career planning issues, which is important to me as I work as a Careers Adviser! In one thread of conversation the pupils talked about the pressure they were under to make decisions. In my job it's easy to forget how difficult it can be to start exploring career issues before you are ready. In group work, and when interviewing students I have been more aware of their 'readiness' and their styles of decision making. (oh and I also borrowed Gelatt for a module I wrote on decision making - thank you!)

***080211 Distopia November 02, 2003 - 04:50 pm:** I wish this site had been available when I was at school. I remember it being very difficult to discuss serious issues about the future without sounding over worried or 'uncool'. It seems to me that this type of anonymous chat has allowed some serious issues to be discussed informally, I have been quite surprised at the thoughtfulness of some contributors

***0803 What kind of things have you learned**

***080301 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 07:46 am:** during the Futurperfekt project?

***080302 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am:** I have learned from the futureperfekt course that people can be sensitive to your criticism, if you are "attacking" their opinions and beliefs. I thought it was great to see the way the others reacted when i "slagged off" what they thought. but in saying that they all took it pretty light heartedly, Especially the ones i was aiming at directly. It shows that they know that what other people think doesn't matter. It's good to see that people are being themselves. This website has been a great way to learn these sort of things. WELL DONE FUTURIST!!!!!!!

***080303 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:25 am:** yeah totally agree with wehaveaproblem, its been gd to see what other views are like, it helps you to take in a lot more views. It would be great if it could go on the same way as it has begun. (also it is good to see how others react to your opinions from different places)

***080304 Buzz October 03, 2003 - 11:16 am:** I have learnt everyone has totally different views some i will a agree with and others not

***0804 Are there any benefits to having**

***080401 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 07:48 am:** 'adult' participants in the discussion?

***080402 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:19 am:** not sure of this one. u can't really tell who's who, so it doesn't make any difference to me.

***080403 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:20 am:** although sumtimes its near impossible to tell the difference between teenagers and adults, they often can redirect the thread well if it gets away from the point, Sagittarius often has gd points to make along with others, that really make you think. Don't know how but it makes it a lot easier to get into a thread if one good one is posted that really makes u think about it/or makes u disagree!

***080404 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:24 am:** I think it must be worthwhile to have input from adults who have had much more life experience than students, this could help us make better, more informed choices about life.

***080405 Sagittarius September 29, 2003 - 09:36 am:** I liked the variety of ages. Sometimes you think long and hard about things, form an opinion in your head and then you let it rest there, stagnating. Expressing some of those opinions opens them up to challenge and sometimes you find you haven't thought through everything as much as you believed you had. It's a good thing to be challenged and it is a good thing to see life as other people see it - helps you be more understanding and hopefully more tolerant.

***080406 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:36 am:** yeah i agree with millenium. its easier to make a good posting if there are already some good/thought-provoking ones there. but also i can never tell who's who. however it does help to have adult input even if you dont know its from an adult!

***080407 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:42 am: True Redshift, and Millenium if you have a good point that you can agree or disagree to then you are more likely to relpy/post**

***080408 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:49 am: sorry but wots with the colours? i think someone is trying to show off! (another good thing about being anonymous- you dont have any prejudices about people so you can form opinions based on wot they actually SAY-unless they decide to jazz things up a bit and you can base your opinions on wot they DO and wot they say!)**

***080409 Distopia November 02, 2003 - 04:55 pm: I would say so. I don't think the site would desecnd into idle chatter if there was no adult input, but I think it has helped to keep some of the threads focused on career issues. Also it has been of benefit to me (adult) to here the opinions of the younger contributors. As far as I can tell none of the adult input ws heavy handed or didactic, but it was questioning the other contributors on their opinions more than offering their own (at least I was).**

***0805 What are the pros and cons of**

***080501 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 07:49 am: using an pseudonym instead of your real name?**

***080502 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:12 am: i think its a better way of doing it since you can really say what you want to say without anyone else knowing who u r or or u knowing anybody else. Since you don't know anyone else you can really express ur views without having to hold back or be polite! if u did that then the discussions wouldn't be nearly as heated/interesting/funny!**

***080503 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am: Pros: easier to say what you really think, no-one knows who anyone else is, more secure. Cons: Maybee people would take some topics more seriously if they new who they were talking too, maybee they would be more carefull in what they say. (don't know if this is necessarily a good thing).**

***080504 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:19 am: i agree with millenium. its better having pseudonyms than using your real name. it gives you a chance to say what you really think without feeling you HAVE to say certain things coz its what people expect of you.**

***080505 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:22 am: i don't really care what others think of me, so i wasn't too bothered, but i agree with MILKYWAY, it was a bit easier not using your real name.**

***080506 Blueplanet October 03, 2003 - 11:41 am: i think the pseudonym is better than using ur real name**

***080507 Sagittarius October 07, 2003 - 04:29 pm: Personally, I think it is important to choose your own pseudonym. If you are happy with the image that the name conjures up in your mind then you will be more comfortable making postings. Having a name given to you is like having to wear borrowed clothes. The site is about**

freedom in many ways - freedom to be who you really are - and choosing your own pseudonym is the beginning of expressing the real you.

***080508 Psychic October 09, 2003 - 03:10 pm:** I think it is better to have pseudonyms, it is easier to say what you really think. Also you don't need to have the role(s) you usually have but you can express yourself more openly. started to think about what Sagittarius said about choosing your own pseudonym. I had not thought of this so much before, but I think it is an important issue. Given a name, even if only a pseudonym, can make you feel you are given a role as well.

***080509 Sagittarius October 09, 2003 - 05:20 pm:** Interesting way of putting it, Psychic.

***080510 Distopia November 02, 2003 - 05:04 pm:** Apart from mitigating against unconscious gender bias, I am not sure what the benefit of this was. If there is more than one school involved then the contributors would be anonymous across schools - possibly anonymity amongst pupils at the same school would be a benefit, but I got the impression that some contributors definitely knew who each other were. I don't know whether particular names have a class bias? Even the pseudonyms have baggage - some were jokey, some were sinister, some were geeky. I suppose that this is better than the complete anonymity of numbers or codes. Ultimately if pseudonyms allowed for a more free and frank discussion then they are a good thing. It would be interesting to compare the results of this experiment with one that used real names !

***080511 Sagittarius November 02, 2003 - 06:01 pm:** I believe the pseudonyms were not always chosen by the person. However, I think you're right, Distopia, it is possible that certain names could conjure up ideas of personality or gender.

***0806 Can you think of other ways**

***080601 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 07:55 am:** we could use this kind of Internet discussion to improve your learning in school? What can it add?

***080602 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:24 am:** In social Education, in the younger years, it could prove useful, because you can set it up so that you can post things as "Anonymous" so you can say what you like. Particularly useful in things such as sex education.

***080603 Millennium September 29, 2003 - 09:29 am:** or could be used as a sort of bullying thing where you can get advice from people higher up in the school or from teachers, again keeping it anonymous or with pseudonyms....but there may be some sort of law against that??

***080604 Aurora October 03, 2003 - 11:23 am:** i think that this site would be good to help in the fight against bullying or problems at home because you don't have to even use your real name. this kind of service would be extremely beneficial.

***080605 Sagittarius October 07, 2003 - 04:40 pm:** I read today about an Edinburgh school that offered counselling to pupils - in a sense this type of site has the

possibility of being used to discuss worries - large or small. Just airing worries by verbalising them often helps. It would allow people to see things from other points of view and to make suggestions about dealing with problems. I think though that both anonymity and access to the site would need careful consideration.

***0807 Improvements**

***080701 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 07:56 am:** suggest ways Futurist could improve the web site.

***080702 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:05 am:** would it be possible to have a thing where it tells you where your most recent posts hav been? just sumtimes u forget whre u hav been!

***080703 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:11 am:** Could possibly have an 'interactive chat' section which you could organise on a regular basis i.e. once a week at a certain time. However this could prove hard to implament.

***080704 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:20 am:** Depends on how you do it, Redshift! There will propaply be a open source bit of code out there that could be used, to create the interactive chat system, it would propably just need a little bit of tweaking to get it running how you want it and of course it would be therefore easy to implement

***080705 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:33 am:** also could there be a thing which shows who is online now , so you could look out for an immediate reply, that is if the chat thing didn't go ahead!

***080706 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:44 am:** It could be as part of the chat thing, Millenium

***080707 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:46 am:** indeed-e-o, thats me back in my place then..!

***080708 Buzz October 03, 2003 - 11:36 am:** i think we should have made up our own name and password

***080709 Borealis October 13, 2003 - 05:50 pm:** Maybe it would be helpful to include links to relevant sites, asking people to comment on how useful/informative they are and why. This might encourage self-guided research re particular topics whilst keeping conversation in the forum topical and up to date re careers information, courses, vacancies or anything and everything.

***080710 Distipia November 02, 2003 - 05:20 pm:** Web site was excellent in design terms, it looked good, the design was cohesive and followed good pratice. The futuristic and forward looking style of the content was well refelected in the visual design. Also, unlike many temporary or experimental web sites this one looked professional and permanent and clearly involved significant development effort. In terms of constructive critisism I though that the discussion splintered into too many threads to be easily followed. The discussion list s/w made extensive use of cookies,

which could have done with a warning or a non-cookies option, apart from that it was a good choice. For future development the site may want to explore special needs options for the visually impaired, and longer term even Collaborative Virtual Environments. (On a personal note I don't like daughter windows, they're better than pop-ups, but should carry a forewarning, most people don't seem to mind).

***0808 Did you ever read messages**

***080801 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 08:00 am:** or post messages outside of our class time? What encouraged you to do this?

***080802 Anonymous September 29, 2003 - 09:09 am:** Yes, out of curiosity as to whether or not someone has replied to mine.

***080803 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:18 am:** was definitely interested to see if anyone had replied to what i had said, but also to see if any other interesting posts had been put on that u could add to.

***080804 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:24 am:** i didnt post/read messages outside of class but that isnt because i wasnt interested in what replies i was getting! ideally i would have liked to coz i did enjoy seeing what other people had to say but sometimes there just isnt enough time in the day to do all the things you want to do! where as in class time you actually have time set aside to do it which is good coz you dont have to make time.

***080805 Naturaldisaster September 29, 2003 - 09:26 am:** i did - both read and post - at home and from work!!!

***080806 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:27 am:** yeah. i thought it was a good way to post certain things. If you don't feel comfortable posting serious things in front of your friends then doing it at home is much easier. I also wanted to see what others had said about some of my own postings as they were a bit mocking of others, so it was interesting to see how they reacted.

***080807 Buzz October 03, 2003 - 11:30 am:** i look at most peoples posting but it they had 2 much 2 say i would miss it out

***080808 Aurora October 03, 2003 - 11:31 am:** yeah if i had time i would check the web. it was really interesting to see what other people had said and what you could reply.

***080809 Sunshine October 04, 2003 - 10:28 pm:** I did look at the site out of school and at the moment im at home and i thought i would say something. I dont know what to say but i liked to post messages on this to help me deal with things in my life and as you can tell from other comments i have ALOT to say sometimes and this has helped me get people to listen to me when i start to spraff on but i think i should stop this postin before i get carred away

***080810 Sagittarius October 07, 2003 - 04:51 pm:** I simply checked the site any time I logged on to the computer. It was always good to see new comments.

***080811 Psychic October 09, 2003 - 03:14 pm:** I read or posted messages when I had time: both at work and at home.

***080812 Theberries October 11, 2003 - 08:24 am:** I too read messages whenever I logged on - at home and at work. Using the site was actually quite addictive so it wasn't difficult to find time.

***0809 Parents...would it be**

***080901 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 08:38 am:** better or worse if they were involved (with their own pseudonyms of course!)? What could be done to encourage parents to participate in the discussion.

***080902 Booster September 29, 2003 - 09:12 am:** I'm not sure what could be done to encourage parents to do it on the site, particularly as they are so busy.

***080903 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:16 am:** ..and most hav little or no knowledge on how 2 use them! but it may b an idea if a class outside of school hours 2 b run, if there were enough adult volunteers, then it mite b possible to teach them on the basics.

***080904 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:29 am:** i think it would be kinda wierd to talk to your parents without knowing it was them. but i think it would be a good kind of wierd coz you'll get to know what they really think about stuff...but then you wouldn't know if it was them or not, would you? it would be good to have the input of parents though as it would be interesting to see how they feel about the issues but again i was never sure who were adults and who werent; still what they have to say is more important (to me anyway) than who they are.

***080905 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:40 am:** i think parents may feel a bit frightened by the prospect of having a younger person making a better point about their views?? It seems strange but it may be a reason why not many adults use this site?

***080906 Themaster October 03, 2003 - 11:33 am:** i dont think that it woud be good for instance your mum or dad might find out

***080907 Extraterrestrial October 03, 2003 - 11:38 am:** It wldnt reli bother me if there was parents on the site coz there has bn adults on the site alreid n we hvnt even noticed there age and it mite b gd 2 get a parents point of veiw and for thm to see wot the younger generation r sayin after all they rasied us!!!!

***080908 Psychic October 09, 2003 - 03:31 pm:** I think it might be interesting if parents would join a web discussion like this. With pseudonyms, not knowing who is who. I wonder if it would help parents and the younger generation to talk more freely with each other, without the roles there are usually present and difficulties in listening to each others opinions?

***0810 Was this site GOOD or BAD (Be honest guys!!!)**

***081001 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:33 am:** I personally feel this site was pretty damn good!!! it allowed me to explore topics i would not normally think about in my own time. From posting opinions on this site i now have a curiosity to post more at home. The things people say and how they react to different things was really interesting and i feel that this site has been a huge success!! I think FUTURIST deserves some recognition for his efforts!!! Who agrees?

***081002 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:38 am:** yep spot on! it was a great idea , and really did develop my opinions on things and also shaped several of my opinions , befor i did not hav one on sum subjects. FUTURIST - a job well done!

***081003 Redshift September 29, 2003 - 09:40 am:** Yeah i agree. The site has been very thought provoking, and peoples responses to postings, and how they react with one-another, are very interesting

***081004 Milkyway September 29, 2003 - 09:41 am:** i agree! i really enjoyed having the oppurtunity to discuss things like this (however informal or formal the discussion was). it just allowed me to think more about them and possibly change how i thought about things. i also agree that it was interesting to see wot other people had to say. thanks FUTURIST!

***081005 Naturaldisaster September 29, 2003 - 09:41 am:** Yup - well dun FUTURIST!

***081006 Millenium September 29, 2003 - 09:43 am:** also the notes at the beginning were a really good way of easing you into a topic, it got ur brain ticking over before you got into the posts, so you came in witha bit of background. One of them that really was good was the one on the different personalities, like having only so many groups defining people or having everyone as unique ... that one really did get me thinkin.

***081007 Wehaveaproblem September 29, 2003 - 09:46 am:** Yeah. i loved the notes. they were a big help in giving me inspiration for my postings. alot of effort must have gone into them, Cheers FUTURIST.

***081008 Aurora October 03, 2003 - 11:16 am:** i think that this site has to be one of the best i have ever gone in. they must have put a lot of time and effort intocreating this and that makes me really thankful. i think that this should be available to other kids because they could benefit from it just as we all have. this site is fab so thanks futurist

***081009 Themaster October 03, 2003 - 11:22 am:** i think this site was good in the case as it lets us descirbe how we feel towards carrers and the life thats before us

***081010 Buzz October 03, 2003 - 11:24 am:** I think this was good i hadn't done anything like this and i would do it again

***081011 Cosmicray October 03, 2003 - 11:29 am:** This site was good in teaching us to express ourselves. well done!

*081012 Blueplanet October 03, 2003 - 11:33 am: I think the web site was a great success, and good luck. The best thing was debating - I like hearing other peoples opinions.

*081013 Anonymous October 04, 2003 - 10:23 pm: I like this site because it has made me think about the sort of thing i would have never payed as much attention to. like i have never thought about what life would be like i nten years at the thought has always scared me but now i have faced the fear about were am i going to be and how am i going to get there and yeh im still scared but everyone i talked to about things like that have helped me deal with the thought of it. And everyone here has had the same oppertunity to get there point accross and get to have people give them a fair go. I still think that this site is one of the best things brought to my school and i really hope that they keep it going on in other school and collages and i hope that other people think that it helps just as much as i have. I am still going to use this site as everyone has helped me think about things and i enjoyed reading things even if i dont agree with what you are saying i still thought about where everyone is coming from. Ithink i should say thank you to Futurist and i hope that our comments help you with your work

*081014 Psychic October 09, 2003 - 03:19 pm: I think this site is great. For me it has been a wonderful chance to share thoughts with people I would never have met otherwise. It is always good to hear different opinions and views, it helps you getting a wider perspective.

*081015 Theberries October 11, 2003 - 08:47 am: The site was excellent. The fact that it was so easy to use made the conversation flow! The 'last day' 'last week' functions and table of last posted messages made it easy to catch up with new conversation.

*081016 Distopia November 02, 2003 - 05:37 pm: I thought the site was outsatnding. I thouroughly enjoyed contributing to it and I even learned something about how young people think about the future. Also there was the occasional funny joke. If I was asked to contibute again (as an adult)I would, on a a reasonable net connection, the site was user-friendly and simple to follow (except maybe too many threads) as well as being attractively designed. If aked to contribute again I would however like clarification on acouple of points. Was I required to remain completely anonymous i.e. I felt a little disingenuous by not letting the students know I was an adult, I wasn't pretending to be a student I just became very aware that my posting would make it obvious and wasn't sure whether I should hide that fact. I enjoyed the use of txt language and am sure it should not be discouraged (it seemed to me to work pretty well) but I do not naturally use it, marking me out as an adult again. I have an open mind about whether txt can fully cope with the complexity and depth of some issues. One way or another, it was the first time in a long time that I felt marginalised in conversation because my (txt) vocabulary wasn't up to the job :-). The fact that I was unclear as to whether I was supposed to reveal my status also meant that I didn't regale the other contributors with lots of tales of personal experience in the work environment.... probably a good thing. I was more inclined to ask questions of the other contributors, and found it gratifying to have thoughtful responses posted back.

***0901 Relationships**

***090101 Aurora September 05, 2003 - 10:29 am:** what can we really class as a relationship. is it when you love someone completely that you are willing to do anything to make sure that they are never harmed. or is it all candy and chocloates and two weeks flings.

***090102 Sagittarius September 05, 2003 - 11:45 am:** A relationship is any continued interaction between two people - you have a relationship with members of your family; with your friends; with your teachers, colleagues, employers. But I guess here you are talking about a love relationship and when does it mean something? I wouldn't say a two week fling is much of a relationship, but that's my opinion, - if you remain friends afterwards then that's a relationship. And as for love that's something only you could know.

***090103 Blueplanet September 09, 2003 - 09:22 am:** a relationship is when 2 people love each 4 who they are

***090104 Borealis September 09, 2003 - 05:36 pm:** Do we ever get to know who someone else is? I think relationships are whatever we make of them. They can be fun or formal etc... and even the very briefest of interactions can be meaningful (maybe remembered for a life time). I suppose it all depends on our interpretation. But, most importantly, I think all relationships are unique because of the fascinating little foibles we all have.

***090105 Distopia September 14, 2003 - 02:49 pm:** Oh no ! I don't have any foibles I only have flaws apparently :-O

***090106 Borealis September 23, 2003 - 09:15 am:** Poor old Distopia, I get the feeling that someone else thinks you're flawed and imposes their opinion on you. Maybe it's about compromise, give and take, tolerance and understanding ;-). The nature of relationships seems to have changed dramatically with the introduction of the internet and text messaging etc... Also, communication within our working environment seems more instantaneous and less formal due to I.T. We can send fairly casual emails to people who are at the top of the hierarchy (I sent one right up the hierarchy the other day :-)). Does this change the dynamics of working relationships, impacting upon subsequent face to face interactions? Hey Sagittarius, if a relationship is a continued interaction between two people, are you and I in a relationship just now ? Or is this just a conversation? What would make it a relationship? What if you continuously interact with people in a group setting? So many questions! Here's another one. Does txt messaging help us improve relationships or/and increase our isolation?

***090107 Sunshine September 23, 2003 - 09:40 am:** Passion. It lives in all of us sleeping, waitin, and thought unwanted unbidden is stirs opens its jaws and howles. Its speaks to us guides us and we obey what other choice do we have? Passion is the source of our finest moments the joy of love the clarity of hatred and the extecy of grief. Without passion maybe we would no some peace but we would be hollow rooms dark and dank without passion we would be truly dead.

***090108 Tranquility September 23, 2003 - 10:11 am:** You got it right Sunshine! Life is dead boring without passion. Sometimes passionate thoughts and the way you do things too quickly gets you into trouble but at least you know you are alive and not boring.

***090109 Sagittarius September 23, 2003 - 10:13 am:** I was going to acknowledge that Borealis' challenge of my definition of a relationship was maybe right - I need to do a bit more work on that one. But Sunshine - you have made my day with that poetic description of passion! Stunning!

***0902 Bee Gees**

***090201 Northernlight September 08, 2003 - 09:10 am:** who likes the bee gees or any seventies music?

***090202 Aurora September 08, 2003 - 09:34 am:** i love them party on saturday night fever

***090203 Borealis September 09, 2003 - 06:21 pm:** They looked a bit silly when Clive James interviewed them. Brilliant song writers though! Nice teeth :-)

***090204 Northernlight September 11, 2003 - 08:25 am:** best disco traks eva shame about moris though

***090205 Omega September 22, 2003 - 09:11 am:** yeh the bee gees are the bomb! Northernlight do you have over large teeth?

***090206 Northernlight September 23, 2003 - 08:37 am:** no omega i do not over large teeth infact they r a perfekt size! r u asking me bout sizes bkoz ur conscios of a size of a part of ur body? an the beegees r wiked

***0903 Computer Wizardry**

***090301 Sagittarius September 29, 2003 - 09:53 am:** Booster - I'm so impressed that you manage to change colours and font. If it doesn't take too long to explain - how do you manage to do it? Can't find a way on this site.

***090302 Futurist September 29, 2003 - 10:31 am:** It is possible that after today Booster will have signed off forever as today was the last class at that school. Some pupils have been posting HTML code into their messages - very clever indeed. There are some basic instuctions at the link [HELP/Instructions](http://www.futureperfekt.net/cgi-bin/discus/discus.cgi?pg=formatting) on the bottom of the page - (or click here <http://www.futureperfekt.net/cgi-bin/discus/discus.cgi?pg=formatting>).

***090303 Sagittarius September 30, 2003 - 09:52 am:** So - a test! Can I make it more blue?