A Pedagogical Approach for Accessing Disciplinary Knowledge through Multiple Literacies: A Case Study in Tertiary Education

Angela Audrey Daddow BA, BSW, MSW, Grad Dip Secondary Ed.

College of Education, Victoria University

Abstract

Policies of widening participation and internationalisation in Australian universities have escalated student numbers and increased the proportion of diverse and 'non-traditional' students. Newer students and their educators are challenged by aspects of this new diversity, particularly the divide between the literacy practices of 'non-traditional' students entering tertiary education and those required for success in academic and professional worlds. This challenge is compounded by diversification of textual resources in institutional and life-world contexts through global and digital connectivity. In spite of these momentous trends, traditional university curricula and pedagogies retain literacies based in elite social-structural positions, which exclude the literacy practices and life-worlds of 'non-traditional' students, potentially disadvantaging them in their learning.

In a case study using practitioner Action Research, this thesis examines the possibilities and constraints that emerge when students' literacy practices are utilised as assets for learning, and elite academic codes are made explicit, in university curriculum and pedagogy. These asset-oriented pedagogic approaches were enacted over two cycles of research in a Bachelor of Social Work undergraduate program in an Australian University, providing basic research to illuminate wider consideration in other disciplinary areas of the contemporary university. Participating students responded to questionnaires and focus groups, educators were interviewed and the researcher maintained a field journal throughout to examine the possibilities and constraints that emerged from the curriculum and pedagogies that were introduced.

It is argued that these curricular and pedagogic practices offer possibilities to amplify learning for all students, and bridge socio-cultural divides that tend to disadvantage 'non-traditional' students. The research confirmed the potential of such practices to create effective bridges between the literacies of 'non-traditional' students and the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge, facilitating the successful participation of all students. At the same time, institutional arrangements - governed by economic, cultural and socio-political conditions besetting tertiary education - constrained these potentials. It is argued that these constraints need to be negotiated and challenged to enable broader application that might contribute to a more equitable tertiary education system.

Student Declaration

"I, Angela Daddow declare that the Doctor of Education (EdD) thesis entitled, *A Pedagogical Approach for Accessing Disciplinary Knowledge through Multiple Literacies: A Case Study in Tertiary Education* is no more than 60,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Signature   Date

Acknowledgements

List of Publications and Awards

Publications:

Daddow, A 2014, 'Scaffolding Diverse Learners in Tertiary Education: Educators' Experience of Inclusive Curriculum Design in Community Services', *Advances in Social Work & Welfare Education,* vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 36-51.

Daddow, A., Moraitis, P & Carr, A 2013, 'Non-traditional students in tertiary education: inter-disciplinary collaboration in curriculum and pedagogy in community services education in Australia', *International Journal of Social Inclusion in Education,* vol.17, no. 5, pp. 480-489.

Grace, M., Townsend, R., Testa, D., Fox, J., O'Maley, P., Cunstance, J & Daddow, A 2013, 'Student Diversity as Grass Roots Internationalisation in Social Work Education', *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education,* vol. 15, no.1, pp. 120-134.

Moraitis, P., Carr, A & Daddow, A 2012, 'Developing and sustaining new pedagogies: a case for embedding language, literacy and academic skills in vocational education curriculum', *International Journal of Training Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp.58-72.

Awards:

Outstanding Research Student - Faculty Arts, Education and Human Development 2012

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Overview

Students who have followed routes to university other than the 'traditional' one - that is, an uninterrupted, linear path from school to university (David 2010) - face greater challenges to their democratic participation in tertiary education than their 'traditional' counterparts. Many are from socio-structurally disadvantaged or minority groups with diverse literacy practices unacknowledged by university systems. Their access to tertiary education has not been met with commensurate pedagogies[1] to support their successful participation in an education system built on long established, mono-cultural and elite practices, and now increasingly beset by stringent resource restraints. Put simply, we have higher student numbers with more linguistic, cultural and educational diversity in an unsympathetic educational system, with less time and resources to address pedagogic challenges. This constitutes inherent systemic disadvantage, requiring redress in tertiary education for more democratic participation of all students.

My professional encounter with the pedagogic realities of a massified and diverse student population in tertiary education has a varied history. Memorable in this history was meeting a tall, dignified, mature-age black African male student in my office, as an Anglo-Celtic, female education manager in vocational education. His teacher and I were delicately exploring the discrepancy between written work he spontaneously produced in class and essays he was submitting with almost daily assistance from Student Support Services, to which he had previously been referred. There was no obvious plagiarism, but this discrepancy was raising questions as to his independent writing skills. I was very aware of recurring themes inside and outside the university in which this cross-cultural encounter was taking place: the aspirations for seamless pathways to higher Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels

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[1] While the Greek root of 'pedagogy' refers to the teaching of children, it commonly refers to the method and practice of teaching in general. Its latter, more contemporary meaning is used in this thesis.

promoted by the Bradley (2008) Review; the diverse starting points of newer students entering universities through massification and internationalisation of tertiary education; the pedagogic complexities of educating diverse students in institutions prepared for more elite cohorts; and the contradictions of an expanded tertiary system operating within funding restraints.

This thesis has stemmed from personal and professional experience, and the stories and experiences of university students who might share the label 'non-traditional' student. The term 'non-traditional' is used in the literature to refer to students who have not traditionally been represented in universities; that is, students who are the first in the family to attend university, from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous, of mature age and/or with a disability (Funston 2012; O'Shea, Onsman & McKay 2011; Bowl, 2001, 2003; James 2000). The term has raised questions about the dominant groups who have constructed 'traditional' beliefs and practices in universities, potentially 'othering' students of difference, and reinforcing such constructions (Leathwood & O'Connell 2003; Bamber & Tett 2001). It is used in this study with the terms 'diverse' or 'new' students, as the pedagogic realities of a massified and internationalised tertiary education system in Australia are examined in relation to further enabling the democratic participation of students from socio-structurally disadvantaged or minority groups, and those who have followed routes to university other than the 'traditional' one.

The above local African student, a former refugee, had done what his educators had asked of him, and he was understandably angry that he was now in the position of being questioned about whether he was ready for placement, at the last stage of his diploma. I wondered how we as educators might have served him better. The response to that reflection is a complex one, which ultimately formed the beginnings of this research project. In the short term that encounter triggered funding for a project to embed academic and English language skills into the diploma curriculum, which continues today. This project provided explicit academic skills and expectations to

students who had not had prior exposure to these from their everyday lives and literacy practices, and it seemed to assist their educational outcomes (Daddow, Moraitis & Carr 2013; Daddow 2014). Similar pedagogies were subsequently incorporated in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program at the same university, in which I subsequently became an academic staff member. These interventions, while valuable, raised some questions. The BSW course in which the interventions were now situated had a philosophical tradition in critical or anti-oppressive social work (Fook 2012; Baines 2012; Mullaly 2010) which gave these questions greater import. The curricular interventions privileged university literacy practices over those of the students, which could be seen as assimilationist or 'colonising' (Delpit 1988, 1995; Zepke, Leach & Prebble 2006; Leathwood & O'Connell 2003; Armstrong & Cairnduff 2012). This privileging sat uneasily in light of both the social work discipline and critical pedagogy, each of which valorise less dominant and marginalised voices in the interests of social justice. Our questions centred around how well we were preparing students from diverse backgrounds for social work practice, when acculturating them into mainstream academic literacy practices. Might their 'vernacular literacies' serve them well when interacting with clients, many of whom are marginalised themselves? How do we encourage students to move between literacy practices, rather than 'discard' their own? What aspects of these students' life-worlds might be assets for their tertiary education and their professional lives? How do we enable 'non-traditional' students to acquire academic and discipline literacies to succeed in their studies and profession, without assimilating them into dominant cultural practices in universities with inherent socio-structural inequities (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977)? Can we pay curricular attention to the multiple literacies students need to participate successfully in their studies and the profession when 'content' is privileged in tertiary curricula? These questions were pertinent in the post-Bradley, Australian and global policy contexts in which diverse and 'non-traditional' students were actively encouraged to participate in tertiary education. Additionally, we were negotiating the pedagogic realities of teaching students from

diverse life-worlds, many of whom were 'non-traditional', in an urban Australian university. These pedagogic realities, and the questions stemming from them, formed the basis for this research project.

Statement of the Problem and Goals of the Study

Western governments' policies to open the doors of universities to students who have not traditionally been represented have gained significant momentum in recent decades (OECD 2008). However, opening the doors of universities has not necessarily enabled equitable and successful participation of 'non-traditional' students in tertiary education. Studies indicate that many 'non-traditional' students experience barriers and struggle with the cultural shifts and unfamiliar academic expectations required for their successful participation (Thomas 2014; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton 2010; Tinto 2008; Read, Archer & Leathwood 2003). This thesis argues that significant barriers are not inherent in 'non-traditional' students' basic abilities to undertake university courses, but in the disparities between their socio-structural positioning and the elite university systems they enter. A central aspect of the socio-structural positioning of 'non-traditional' students in universities is the linguistic and cultural unfamiliarity with the literacy practices of the university and its expectations (Devlin 2013; Ivanič, Edwards, Barton, Martin-Jones, Fowler, Buddug, Mannion, Miller, Satchwell & Smigh 2009; Northedge 2005). In this study, literacy is seen as social practice entwined in everyday life and forming the symbolic and communicative resources that underpin all the contexts of our socially connected and constructed lives (Ivanič *et al.* 2009 p30). Unfamiliarity with university literacy practices is made more complex as literacies evolve and change in global, professional and every-day contexts (Kalantzis & Cope 2012; Gee 2011; Lankshear & Knobel 2006). Research indicates that students in tertiary education are required to switch between many different types of written text and oral genres in disciplinary and workplace settings, juggling different department and academic staff expectations (Lea 2008). These 'multiple literacies' that university

students need to navigate are meaning-making systems (print and non-print) that are deeply enmeshed in culture and everyday lives of people (Gee 2007; Kist 2005, cited in Perry 2006 p329). They have differential power associated with them, which can reinforce disadvantage (Delpit 1988; Ivanič *et al.* 2009; Gee 2007).

Although there is considerable diversity among 'non-traditional' students, most do not come from backgrounds that carry the powerful cultural codes selected for and perpetuated in the university system and its disciplinary worlds (Delpit 1995). Many can be unfamiliar with the implicit codes, tacit understandings and assumed expectations which are embedded in university education (and in the education systems that precede them) (Devlin 2013; Delpit 1995; Northedge 2005; Williams 2006). This unfamiliarity has been perceived too often as inherent deficits in students (Reay *et al.* 2010) that lower their ability to meet academic standards and/or require enhanced learning and teaching (Haggis 2006), rather than as cultural differences in literacy practices with associated social status and power implications (Ivanič *et al.* 2009; Lillis 2003). The divide between the literacy practices of 'non-traditional' students entering tertiary education, and those required for success in academic and professional world contexts, challenges traditional university curricula and pedagogies, which retain a prevalence of literacies based in privileged social-structural positions and exclude the literacy practices based in life-worlds of 'non-traditional' students.

Research indicates that unreflective curricular and pedagogic practices in universities excludes some 'non-traditional' students and disadvantages them in their learning (Thomas 2014; Devlin 2013; Armstrong & Cairnduff 2011). This reality has been a focus of *Academic Literacies* research since the 1990s but has not been attended to in mainstream pedagogic practices in Australian universities (Lea 2008). This thesis proposes that explicit curricular and pedagogic connection between the different literacy practices required for success in tertiary education, and the vernacular literacies of 'non-traditional' students - a connection that includes drawing on students' vernacular literacies as assets for learning – can help to redress the differential power

associated with these multiple literacies and enable more effective learning for all tertiary students. The thesis research builds on prior research in the secondary education sector and the *Academic Literacies* tradition where success in bridging linguistic and cultural divides in education systems has been evident. The curricular and pedagogic possibilities from these findings are examined in an undergraduate program in an Australian university in this research project, to lend insight into how curricular and pedagogic approaches that better support the education of 'non-traditional' students might be employed more widely in Australian tertiary education.

Background to the Research Problem

Policy Context

Australian universities have undergone unparalleled changes in recent decades, reflecting global influences, national trends and pervasive ideologies in Australian social and education policy (Ball 2007; Marginson & Van der Wende 2007; Burton *et al.* 2013). Western economies, now characterised by globalised markets, contracting, privatisation and the enactment of market principles to public and private systems, have tightened the connection between education, employment and productivity, focusing student outcomes on employment-related skills and competencies, opening education up to market choice and reducing costs of education to the government (Carter & O'Neill 1995). This has resulted in Western countries expanding tertiary education with the policy idea that it is a major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy (OECD 2008). This expansion, sometimes known as 'widening participation', has involved policies to extend and enhance access to higher education for so-called under-represented groups from more diverse social backgrounds (David 2010).

Expansion has significant implications for pedagogies in universities. In Australia, university education has traditionally been built on an expert model, transferring academic expertise to students who have been selected for their

demonstrated ability to receive this expertise with relative ease, designed to reproduce a professional, intellectual class (Star & Hammer 2008). With widening participation, the enactment of this expert model can leave 'non-traditional' university students at a disadvantage, as they are required to navigate multiple transitions beyond those required of more culturally privileged students (Devlin 2013; Reay *et al.* 2010; Bamber & Tett 2001).

Widening Participation in Australia

Australian universities received some minor attention about widening participation in their colonial beginnings in the 1850s.The establishment of universities in Australian cities from the 1850s was meant to avoid sending sons of elite colonialists 'back home' to English universities. Occasional offers were made to poor but promising students 'to rise professionally and socially' (University of Melbourne, 2007, cited in Gale & Tranter 2011 p30). Women were admitted to Australian universities from 1881, well before the United Kingdom, although demographics on gender proportions were not available until after WW2 (Gale & Tranter 2011 p30). Australian higher education expanded in the post-WW2 reconstruction years, and later again in the Whitlam expansions of the mid-1970s, followed by the Dawkins reforms of the 1980s/1990s. These were significant policy efforts toward both widening participation and improving proportionate representation in Australian universities (Gale & Parker 2013).

Abolishing university fees by the Whitlam Labour government in 1974 meant that enrolments at universities grew substantially in the 1970s and 1980s. However the socio-economic composition of the student population remained largely unchanged during this time. This was partly because the credential from higher education was not as essential for access to decent work as it became in the next decade (Gale & Tranter 2011; Carson 2009). The Dawkins reforms in the 1990s restructured the sector, merging many smaller institutions and creating a Unified National System of around 37 mostly large and diverse universities, resulting in a significant gain in university places

(Gale & Tranter 2011 p36). It also introduced the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), on the principle that students should contribute to the costs of their university education because of its life-long individual benefits (Chapman 2004; Dawkins 1988). The option of deferring fee payment meant that participation in higher education did not depend on students' capacity to pay fees at the time of study. The introduction of HECS, which is still in place today, did see some increase in the participation of low socio economic status (SES) students, although they remained proportionately under-represented (Carson 2009 p7). The 1990 government equity review of higher education (DEET1990) acknowledged the very poor progress of both low-SES and isolated student target groups in relation to access and participation rates, and recognised that the education system itself - academic and administrative cultures of universities - added to their disadvantage (Gale & Tranter 2011 p38). This did not directly translate into higher education policy, but it has been suggested that its findings and recommendations have influenced equity policy and planning at institutional and broader policy levels, including the regulatory requirement to report on equity performance indicators within the national policy framework today (Gale & Tranter 2011 p40). Commonwealth funding to higher education was reduced under the Howard government, and students increasingly bore the cost of higher education. Commonwealth Learning Scholarships for those in financial need were introduced. Another review of equity groups in higher education at this time indicated that participation of people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and people with disabilities had improved significantly, while there had been little, if any, progress for people from low-SES, rural, isolated and Indigenous backgrounds (Coates & Krause 2005; James *et al.* 2004 cited in Gale & Tranter 2011 p40).

The Bradley Review

The recurring theme of the disparity of socio-economic background and university participation was echoed in Bradley's (2008) government supported Review of Higher

Education. The Review recommended an injection of funding to encourage enrolments in higher level qualifications and retention initiatives to ensure the success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a particular focus on students from low SES backgrounds and Indigenous students (Gale & Parker 2013). In response, the Australian Government articulated its social inclusion policy to increase participation of less represented students in in higher education, in *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (DEEWR 2009). This document set targets to increase the proportion of undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds from 16% (in 2009) to 20% by 2020. Individual universities have had targets built into funding 'compacts' negotiated with the government, to ensure a commensurate proportion of young people from disadvantaged communities were enrolled into their undergraduate courses from 2011 (Armstrong & Cairnduff 2011). Since the Bradley Review, significant government-sponsored initiatives in universities have been generated to increase access to and participation in higher education. Examples include: the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP), which funds university partnership initiatives to influence key points in the student life-cycle, so as to encourage equity target group students to consider higher education; and the Performance Measurement Framework for Equity in Higher Education (AIHW 2013, cited in Wierenga, Landstedt & Wyn 2013 p4). Naylor, Baik & James (2013 p7) point out that there is little publically available peer-reviewed data on the effects of these equity initiatives at this stage.

Partly to redress the persistent lack of proportionate representation, as well as responding to the perceived urgency of impending skills deficits, the Australian government in 2009 announced the removal of the 'cap' or limit on the number of undergraduates that universities could enrol into their programs. Prior to this, each university was allocated a student quota with guaranteed funding, which had produced a higher demand from eligible students than the supply of university places. The staged removal of the cap was intended to increase university enrolments. This appears to

have triggered an influx in enrolments of students from low SES backgrounds. Between 2009 and 2012, offers to low SES applicants recorded the largest increase (19.5%) compared with medium SES (17.6%) and high SES applicants (12.5%) (DIISRTE 2012 cited in Gale & Parker 2013 p12). Naylor *et al.* (2013 p5) agree that uncapping may have been the most significant factor in the rising numbers of students from equity target groups; but they caution that uncapping has lifted access to tertiary education across the board, and so gains in the participation share for low SES and other equity groups have been modest, even if in the right direction.

Changing Demographics of Australian Tertiary Students

The cumulative effect of massification, equity strategies and the internationalisation of higher education have meant that, between 2005 and 2010, the number of students in higher education rose by approximately 25%, from 957,000 to 1.2 million, with international student numbers growing at a faster rate than domestic student numbers until 2009. In 2011, 33% of higher education students were born overseas, increasing by 3% from 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). Low SES commencing students in 2012 increased by 9.1% compared to the same period in 2011, while all low SES students increased by 6.8% (Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education 2013). In 2012, higher education students who self-identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comprised 1.0% of all enrolments (up 7%) and 1.1% of commencements (up 8.2%). The participation of students with disabilities has risen over time, although 8% of Australians have a disability whereas university students with disabilities only constitute 4% of higher education students (Gale 2009).

This research project is situated in a university that embodies these trends, having among the highest representation of 'non-traditional' students in Australian universities. Its 'Equity Profile' in the University's *Institutional Performance Portfolio* (Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary

Education 2012) indicates that around 22% of students come from families in the bottom SES quartile, compared to a national average of 16%. Its data indicates that many are either immigrants to Australia or the children of immigrants, and around 40% come from households where languages other than or as well as English are spoken. At the time of writing, humanities students were generally accepted into the university with relatively low Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) scores, suggesting lower levels of preparedness for university entrance.

University education in Australia is now at a tipping point. As Marginson (2007 p5) expresses it, 'higher education is more open than at any time in history'. Unprecedented mass global migration, the proliferation of information and communications technology, cross-border flows of ideas and policy models, and the internationalisation of education have combined significantly to alter higher education, bringing with it substantial diversity in the cultural and linguistic resources of tertiary students in Australia. Previous massification strategies in Australian policy succeeded in addressing gender inequities, but struggled with representation of students from low SES backgrounds. More recent policy tilts have to real degrees opened up a long-established system geared toward privileged entry, preserved by selective pedagogic and institutional practices. The changing landscape of newer students, policies that promote consumer-driven funding, managerialist accountabilities, increased competition and tightened resources in tertiary education (under threat of even greater tightening as I write) generate new pedagogic challenges for university educators, and raise questions about genuine equity of participation by newer students.

Access and Participation in Tertiary Education

Bassit and Tomlinson (2012 p4) caution that even with widening participation in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia, the higher social classes continue to benefit most from university expansion. Previously excluded groups now apply and enter, but they largely attend the newer and less prestigious institutions, rather than the

traditional ones, and the complex barriers facing students from working class and minority ethnic group backgrounds remain and expand (Gorard, Smith, May, Thomas, Adnett & Slack 2006; Rios-Aguilar & Marquez Kiyama 2012). Previously excluded students are also represented in the lower prestige courses, such as education and business, while students from higher SES backgrounds still dominate the higher prestige courses, such as medicine and law (Gale & Tranter 2011).

When 'non-traditional' students have entered university, research indicates that the likelihood of them completing their course of study is broadly similar to that of the general higher education population, *if* they have additional supports in the form of financial assistance, academic support, mentoring and counselling services (DEEWR 2009 p14). This indicates that they do not lack innate abilities for successful participation; however, their socio-structural positioning entails some precariousness. Marks' (2007) report on demographic characteristics of completing and non-completing young Australian university students notes that 'a student's regional and socioeconomic background has little influence on their likelihood of completing university' (pviii). Naylor *et al.* (2013 p23), in their post-Bradley research on equity groups in higher education, have found similar patterns: for students in most equity target groups, the percentages completing undergraduate studies is not significantly lower than the average across individuals, with the exceptions of Indigenous and rural remote students.

Notably, however, completion rates for Indigenous students are significantly low (by 2004, only 33% of students had completed any course, although the study had only a small sample). Completion rates are also low for students whose parents had not completed secondary school (72%). The 2010 national federal government funded study of the first-year experience of university students, *The First Year Experience in Australian Universities*: *Findings from 1994 to 2009,* found that first-year students from low SES were more likely than their higher socio-economic peers to say they had difficulty comprehending material and adjusting to teaching styles within the university

environment. The study also reported that students from rural and low SES backgrounds 'are far less inclined to say that their final year (at school) was good preparation for university'; and they also say they feel some pressure because 'their parents have little understanding of what university is all about' (James, Krause, & Jenkins 2010 p27).

Recent research by Naylor *et al.* (2013), and others, has indicated that patterns of non-completion are complex, and require a more nuanced approach to understanding disadvantage in tertiary education (Meuleman, Garrett, Wrench & King 2014; Wierenga *et al.* 2013). Research reveals complexities for participation among students grappling with financial hardship and related pressures that impact on their mental health, particularly if their employment patterns or social circumstances increase isolation (Wierenga *et al.* 2013). This research suggests that students from low SES backgrounds may struggle to find the necessary practical, economic and social support to complete their studies in contrast to their more economically and culturally resourced counterparts. A range of studies on the qualitative experience of 'non-traditional' students in tertiary education highlight the struggles many experience and their vulnerability in terms of mental health, well-being and ultimate successful participation (Wierenga *et al.* 2013; Funston 2012; Read *et al.* 2003)

In this post-Bradley era of increased student numbers and diversity, there are both opportunities and complexities for tertiary students and their educators, with additional vulnerabilities for 'non-traditional' students. Paradoxically, the expansions of widening participation have taken place in a policy environment of fiscal constraints. Public funding has become characterised by a greater targeting of resources, performance-based funding and competitive procedures, while increased market pressures have fostered a growing focus on accountability (OECD 2008). As universities compete for international and domestic students and their attached funding, orientation to students has been transformed by the ideology of students as 'paying customers' (Star & Hammer 2008). This has brought associated student

expectations of teaching quality and learning support (OECD 2008), putting pressures on university educators. New globalised technologies have 'democratised' knowledge and diversified textual resources in institutional and life-world contexts (David 2010; Ivanić *et al.* 2009 p31). This has meant that, in a more precarious social and economic context, universities are required to continuously adapt while upholding 'quality' standards (OECD 2008). University educators – typically experts in their disciplines, but not always in pedagogy – now encounter significant new demands on them and on time-honoured education practices. Australian universities are faced with larger and more diverse classrooms, in a diminished fiscal environment, with greater expectations on them in a consumer-driven learning and teaching environment (Hénard & Roseveare 2012).

Pedagogies in Widening Participation

Research emerging from the post-Bradley experience of 'non-traditional' students recommends a number of 'critical interventions' to encourage more equitable access, effective participation and completion of 'non-traditional' students (Naylor *et al.* 2013). Among these critical interventions is the 'consideration of student disadvantage in course structure and curriculum design' (p 35). Gale & Tranter (2011 p43) argue that simply creating more places is insufficient for social justice in tertiary education. They recommend the creation of curricular and pedagogic spaces for 'epistemological equity'. This means deeper university understanding and inclusion of the knowledges, values and understandings that diverse students bring to university, enabling what Gale & Tranter (2011) call 'recognitive' justice, i.e. recognition of students' cultural knowledge and identities in curriculum and pedagogy, which is typically missing in the tertiary education policy landscape. Such epistemologies do not fit an 'expert' model of education, which privileges selectively the elite forms and sources of knowledge, thus reproducing the socio-structural power relations that underpin them. This thesis argues that curricular and pedagogic approaches which enable 'deeper understanding of the

knowledges, values and understandings' of diverse students have pedagogic merit for all tertiary students, and are significantly more inclusive and socially just for 'non-traditional' students in universities. It joins scholarship which argues that, despite the economic and socio-political agendas besetting contemporary universities, the educational needs and aspirations of 'non-traditional' students require alternatives to simply applying traditional curricular and pedagogic practices that select for structurally privileged learners to succeed.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Among the conceptual approaches informing this study, *Academic Literacies* and *Funds of Knowledge* (stemming from socio-cultural theories of learning) are central. *Academic literacies* is used as both a theoretical frame and an object/phenomena being observed in the tertiary context in this study. In terms of a theoretical frame, *Academic Literacies* scholars maintain that communication, including literacy, is integral to the learning and teaching of all subjects, rather than a discrete set of skills to be learnt alone. In their view, it is the responsibility of all educators to consider the communicative aspects of pedagogic practice (Ivanič *et al.* 2009 p36). Literacy is considered central to learning and teaching:

> Language is at the heart of teaching and learning. It is the medium through which concepts and skills are learned and assessed, social relationships and identities are formed, and increasingly deeper and more complex disciplinary understandings are constructed over time (DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker & Revera 2014 p446).

More recent conceptions of literacy have moved beyond simply emphasising technical skills of reading, writing and calculating, towards a multi-literacy concept which recognises that literacy practices are embedded in different cultural processes, personal circumstances and collective structures (UNESCO 2004 p6). Literacies are therefore considered as far more complex and intertwined than singular skills which are easily transferred from context to context. This new thinking has influenced

understanding about academic literacies as cultural and social practices, dependent on contexts (Wingate 2006). *Academic Literacies* scholars have questioned the prevalent practice of removing 'struggling students' from the discipline to undertake generic 'study skills' in centralised university support services in universities. This is partly because such practices separate literacy development from the contexts of literacy practices, which is not as conducive to effective learning and assumes that students' problems with writing are predominantly textual and language based (Lea & Street 1998; Lillis 2003). The removal of struggling students has a 'remedial' dimension, supporting the notion of students being 'in deficit'. As Haggis (2006 p4) states, the 'ubiquitous presence of the word "support" suggests the existence of a superior group who function [without it], thus pathologising any student' who may not be clear about the assumptions in a new literacy and discoursal environment. *Academic Literacies* scholars recommend making academic and discipline knowledge explicit in discipline curricula, to ensure that such knowledge does not remain tacit and exclusionary to 'non-traditional' students. Whilst such scholarship has had some influence in tertiary education, Lea (2008 p235) maintains that the major challenge now is 'how to make these research findings more relevant and central in pedagogic contexts'. In other words, knowledge that has developed about how to redress the educational limits of literacies based in privileged social-structural positions has not infiltrated mainstream pedagogic practice in universities.

Another body of work that has explored the linguistic and cultural divide between more resourced and selectively privileged students, and those marginalised within education systems, comes from Moll, Gonzalez and associates (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez 1992; Gonzalez & Moll 2002; Gonzalez 2005; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti 2005; Moll 2014). Building on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of expanding the 'zone of proximal development', they argue for drawing on marginalised students' *funds of knowledge* to inform curricula and pedagogy. *Funds of knowledge* refer to the knowledge and skills that have gained useful meaning over generations, in support

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family and community well-being and identities, which tend to be ignored in the education of power-marginalised students. Traditional university curricula and pedagogies do not tend to recognise the asset value, for learning, of these 'hidden literacies', based in students' values, interests, cultural backgrounds and world views, that students from diverse and less privileged life-worlds bring with them. Scaffolding these familiar life-world literacies of 'non-traditional' students into learning connection with academic and disciplinary knowledge, in which they are emerging participants, suggests possibilities to address the collision between socioeconomically and culturally diverse realities of many students' lives and the mono-cultural and class-based institutional structure of the university. In spite of its curricular and pedagogic potential, this multiple-literacy conception has attracted minimal enactment in mainstream pedagogic practices and little scholarship in tertiary education, including social work education (Van Niel 2010; Lea 2008).

The Action Research

This research project used an Action Research methodology to explore pedagogic practices and curricula that might access less privileged literacies of 'non-traditional' students and, in doing so, scaffold a bridge to the more dominant literacies required to succeed in tertiary education and related professional worlds. It used a case study strategy to answer the major research question: *What possibilities and constraints emerge when enacting pedagogic approaches to social work undergraduate programs that acknowledge and build on the literacies of 'non-traditional' students in an Australian University?* Related sub-questions were:

- What pedagogic possibilities are opened up when explicit attention to multiple literacies, and raising consciousness to their differences and their codes, are introduced to the curriculum?

- How might this approach help prepare 'non-traditional' students to succeed in their academic, professional and personal life-world contexts?

- How do dual classroom focuses – on literacy, and on discipline content – interact in designing and implementing the curriculum? How do a literacy 'outsider' to the unit, and a teaching 'insider', work together?

- When putting such an approach into practice, what constraints do we come up against? How are the approach's potentials blocked by systemic-institutional practices and conditions? How are the latter experienced by students and staff?

- What aspects of the pedagogic approach need refinement for ongoing enactment?

This Chapter One of the thesis provides an overview, briefly introducing the socio-historical-political context and related scholarship to the problem under study. Chapter Two explores the theoretical frameworks and prior research informing the study in more detail. Chapter Three outlines the research design - an Action Research methodology and a case study research strategy of teaching within an Australian university undergraduate program where 'non-traditional' students are significantly represented. Chapters Four and Five report on the findings of the research, analysing these in relation to the literature. Areas for further investigation and new learning are discussed in the concluding Chapter Six.

Preview of Findings

Consideration of Funds of Knowledge (henceforth FoK) research, and conceptual frameworks highlighting the relationship of language and literacy to learning, has informed this project as it re-designed, enacted and reviewed curricular and pedagogic practices in the case-study classroom units. These re-designed practices sought to give dual attention to literacy and discipline knowledge, making elite codes explicit and inviting students' FoK to be used as assets to their learning. As the research progressed, students' FoK, as relevant for this study, became re-conceived as students' Funds of Literacy (FoL). This seemed more amply to signify the

renegotiations of identity undertaken by 'non-traditional' students, and the multiple literacies in which they are required to participate, as they enter an education system that does not privilege their familiar literacy practices – their life-based ways of knowing, valuing and communicating. Inviting these 'border literacies' (Ivanič *et al.* 2009 p40) of diverse students into tertiary education, used as assets for learning the complex range of literacy and content knowledge needed, created rich pedagogic opportunities for all students in the project, and also exposed systemic challenges. Findings from the research suggest that policies of massification, while welcome, operate in a depleted funding context that, among other things, makes learning challenging for both students and their educators.

The design and enactment of curricula and pedagogies in the project were facilitated by substantial collaboration with the University's Academic Language and Learning (ALL) Development colleagues in both cycles of the project. This was a valuable resource, further buttressed by scholarship in the ALLfield, into which scholarship from the Academic Literacies tradition has been integrated. Other facilitators were the openness of the University and the Social Work unit to explore such pedagogies, and the students themselves, some of whom responded in remarkable ways. Constraints included administrative demands of the broader regulatory environment; tensions that stem from needing to privilege content over literacies in limited time frames; instability and fluidity of the broader university in a corporatised system; and the power of institutional norms and 'practice architectures' (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2014), which have evolved over time in a resource-stretched system.

It is argued that the pedagogic approaches in this case-study have relevance to Australian universities more widely, in their current globalised, corporatised and diverse textual contexts (digital, linguistic) and associated material realities. Re-thinking curricular and pedagogic practices toward more equitable and effective teaching and learning becomes imperative as Australian universities educate in more complex

literacy environments, in which they compete to attract students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds in order to obtain full fees in a climate of reduced government funding; and as they strive to meet government imposed targets for the enrolment of low SES students. In a competitive education market, lower status universities can experience a further erosion of resources as some eligible students choose higher status universities in the complexities of consumer choices (Naidoo & Williams 2014). Pedagogies that make elite codes explicit, acknowledge the life-worlds of diverse students, and draw on these as assets for learning become even more imperative in such contexts, and at the same time more challenging. The next chapter explores the theoretical and literature groundings for such an approach.

Chapter Two - Theoretical Groundings for Inclusive Curricula and Pedagogies

Research indicates that curricular and pedagogic practices in the context of widening participation have changed minimally in tertiary education. This chapter examines this research, providing an overview of curricular and pedagogic responses to widening participation in Australia and Western countries sharing this policy trend. The theoretical concepts underpinning more inclusive curricular and pedagogic practices are articulated, identifying those drawn on and enacted in the thesis project. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of *cultural capital* and the contributions of *critical pedagogy* highlight curricular and pedagogic practices that tend to exclude 'non-traditional' learners and impede their successful participation. Drawing on New Literacies Studies and Academic Literacies scholarship, the chapter discusses how diverse literacies are needed not just for academic success but for professional practice, and the implications for pedagogy. Attributions of literacy 'deficits' to 'non-traditional' or marginalised students' are challenged with reference to *Funds of Knowledge* research, and the curricular and pedagogic value of drawing on students' life-world literacies as assets for acquiring new disciplinary knowledge is discussed.

Pedagogies in Widening Participation and Student Diversity

Universities in the United Kingdom have been forerunners in more recent widening participation strategies through policies since the 1960s. The Dearing Report (Dearing 1997) recommended new approaches to learning and teaching in response to increased diversity of student populations; however, Marr, Curry & Rose-Adams (2014 p146) maintain

> …an increasingly diverse student body continues to pose significant challenges to higher education institutions seeking to maximise retention of, and outcomes, for their students.

Gorard *et al.* (2006) found little evidence that teaching methods had been adapted to meet changes in student profiles. Scholars at the Teaching and Learning Research Program (UK) suggest that policy contexts and competitive institutional practices have not been conducive to equitable environments for the present broad range of students in United Kingdom universities (David *et al.* 2009 p7). They argue that growth in student numbers has not been accompanied by increases and diversifications in institutional and teaching resources, affecting student-teacher relationships and forms of learning and teaching in all subjects. Literature in relation to international students in the UK and beyond draws similar conclusions. Ryan and Carroll (2005) find that teaching staff in Western universities are predominantly catering for local needs and are unsure about how to incorporate principles of equivalence and inclusion in their curricular and pedagogic practices. Arkoudis and Tran (2010) refer to Australian research indicating that university educators are unsure how to address the pedagogic issues arising from teaching international students. Their own research reports that, according to international students, educators vary greatly in the level and ways of support they provide. Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) argue that the notion of the 'independent learner' underpinning current pedagogical discourse is based on a specific white, Western, masculinised model and find that it excludes the majority of the 'non-traditional' students in their study.

Research has been focused on the retention of 'non-traditional' students and transition pedagogies, particularly in the first year, in America (Tinto 1993, 1997; Cuseo 2010) and the United Kingdom (Reay 2001; Thomas 2002). Building on this scholarship, Australian research highlights institutional strategies and curriculum shifts, specifically promoting the embedding of scaffolded 'transition pedagogy' into university curricula (Kift 2009; Nelson, Clarke, Kift & Creagh 2011, cited in Funston 2012 p5). The focus on institution-wide curricular responses to support the transitions of diverse students is an important aspect of supporting 'non-traditional' students, particularly in the vulnerable first year. However, 'assimilationist' approaches to student diversity

seem to predominate in tertiary education, where students are encouraged to fit into the existing codes, values and practices of universities, rather than contribute their own knowledge and experience (Armstrong & Cairnduff 2012; Zepke *et al.* 2006; Leathwood & O'Connell 2003). Writing from the American experience, bell hooks (1994) argues that a mono-centric curriculum indirectly socialises students into existing hierarchical relations. Students' diverse cultural histories and experiences are subordinated to the dominant cultural norms that have been instituted as 'mainstream' through the power of privileged minorities (hooks 1994; Delpit 1995).

'Non-traditional' Students at University

Students entering a university system that subordinates their values, cultures and literacy practices to dominant and elite cultural norms face additional transition challenges in their university education, which can put them at a disadvantage (Devlin 2013; White & Lowenthal 2011; Williams 2006; Delpit 1995). They need to make class-based, linguistic and cultural transitions that those from more privileged backgrounds do not face in adapting to academic and social expectations of university participation. As David (2010 p6) articulates,

> poverty, war, violence and diaspora can affect opportunities for and attitudes toward learning in fundamental ways, while cultural attitudes and practices at school can also create or reinforce disadvantage even in developed...systems and practices of higher education.

The complex intersections of class, gender and equity that impact on 'non-traditional' students' transitions can be compounded by the realities of their everyday lives. This has been evident in Australian studies of the experience of 'non-traditional' students (Meuleman *et al.* 2014; Naylor *et al.* 2013; Armstrong & Cardiff 2012; Funston 2012; Devlin & O'Shea 2012; Bunda, Zipin & Brennan 2011; James 2000) as well as numerous international studies (for example, Measor, Wilcox & Frame 2012; Reay *et al.* 2010;Tinto 2007; Oduaran & Bhola 2006; Boughey 2005; Leathwood & O'Connell 2003). A British study exploring the experience of 'non-traditional' students' university education in this new environment, depicts them as 'frustrated participant(s) in an

unresponsive institutional context' (Bowl 2001 p141). Major sources of struggle identified across the literature were financial pressures, feelings of a lack of confidence in abilities or performance (especially for women), and the lack of support from universities themselves. Thomas and Quinn (2007) highlight difficulties with social and academic integration for first generation students. The majority of students felt that they had too little contact with teaching staff, had 'been expected to be "independent" too early in their studies…and that they had been left to sink or swim' in the first year (p 610). Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) point to an

> underfunded and 'mass' system of higher education, where academic staff are under tremendous pressure to support more and more students (p 610).

Bamber and Tett (2001) suggest that it is unfair to expect the burden of change to fall solely on diverse students coming to grips with unfamiliar university systems, and recommend that institutions should make changes to support their education. They and other scholars have urged universities to consider the extent to which their organisational arrangements and academic cultures result in exclusionary practices, and to consider alternative ways to meet the needs of a diverse student body.

The Contemporary Tertiary Student

Wierenga *et al.* (2013) highlight that, in a user-pays tertiary education system, the need to work for an income while studying impacts on middle SES range students as well as lower SES, affecting students' general mental health. They maintain that the student landscape in tertiary education is very different from previous generations, creating the need to re-consider traditional pedagogic approaches. Unlike with previous student cohorts who often studied full-time and sustained much of their social life in the university they attended, universities have had to adjust to students combining study with work and family commitments (James, Krause & Jennings 2010). Whereas in the past it was assumed that traditional university cohorts would be reasonably well-prepared for tertiary studies, it has been suggested that the broadening of the enrolment base has meant that some students entering universities, even through

traditional pathways, lack the necessary linguistic and/or academic literacy skills to complete their studies successfully (Gorard *et al.* 2006). Research undertaken at Deakin University found that key elements of effective teaching of low SES students aligned with research on effective university teaching generally; for example, approachable and available educators with good rapport who use accessible language and examples and provide clear expectations about assessments (Devlin & O'Shea 2011 p5). The implication is that pedagogies that benefit 'non-traditional' students will benefit all tertiary students in the current tertiary environment, particularly when underpinned by educationally sound theoretical foundations, as discussed below.

Pedagogies that Exclude

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) cogently analysed how institutionalised education standardises cultural selection processes based in power relations that determine differential distribution of academic attention and success to different social groups (Basit & Tomlinson 2012 p4). Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977,1984) concept of *cultural capital* – defined as 'proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices' (Aschaffenburg & Mass 1997 p573, cited in Devlin 2013) - Devlin (2013 p2) argues that 'non-traditional' university students are educated and assessed on a set of assumptions, values and expectations that are not always made explicit, which selectively advantages students from higher SES backgrounds who acquire implicit familiarity with these privileged assumptions, values and expectations over a lifetime. Bourdieu (1977, 1984) argued that education is a vehicle for selection to succeed or fail based on inheritance (or not) of such tacit familiarity with dominant cultural codes. Margolis *et al.* (2001 p8) refer to this familiarity as the inheritance of a reservoir of cultural and social resources, comprising 'particular types of knowledge, ways of speaking, styles, meanings, dispositions and world views'.

Wheelahan (2010) refers to the socially differentiated access to knowledge and education that arises when some students have the privilege of congruence between

their middle class home and education environments and others do not. Delpit (1993 p122) argues that the codes inherent in predominant linguistic forms – ways of talking, writing and interacting – are supported by a 'culture of power' in learning environments, and 'success in institutions is predicated upon acquiring the culture of those who are in power'. Zipin, Sellar and Hattam (2012 p180) write that cultural capital is 'coded in the educational "message systems" (Bernstein 1975) of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment'. 'Non-traditional' students do not come from backgrounds that carry the cultural codes selected for and perpetuated in the university system and its disciplinary worlds. Collier and Morgan (2008) report that many students from low SES backgrounds do not know that the unspoken requirements of these codes even exist, l*et al.*one how to understand and respond appropriately to them. This lack of tacit knowledge can hinder success and achievement at university. Delpit (1988 p283) is clear that 'if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier'.

Institutional selection for unequal inheritances of cultural capital brings with it internalised power relationships that can impact on students' senses of identity and 'belonging' in an education system, contributing to alienation and attrition (Hattam, Brennan, Zipin & Comber 2009; Thomas 2002). Williams (2005) explores the challenges of 'non-traditional' students, using Bourdieu's (1984) concept of 'habitus' – the ways that people internalise and embody the beliefs, values and dispositions of the community conditions and social positions in which their lives are based. Habitus for the 'non-traditional' student means that movement from one familiar social-institutional context (family) to another that is less familiar (e.g. schooling) requires the learning of new social practices and discourses, entailing new values and dispositions that often conflict with the more primary habitus. For 'non-traditional' students, habitus may respond with too much dissonance to be able to incorporate the new values and dispositions into those that are more deeply established. Writing about the experience

of international students, Sheridan (2011 p130) points out habitus implies individual change is not easy:

> International students, arriving with their own particular cultural capital gained and ingrained over time, thus engage with their new higher level institution which has its own practices and expectations around teaching and learning. Where these fit into the existing institutional and disciplinary culture, a student achieves personal goals. Clearly, increased levels of student diversity imply a lack of such comfortable fit for some students, leading to a gap in the relationship between parts of the student body and academics' expectations in the context of their higher level institution.

Devlin (2013) uses the term 'socio-cultural incongruity' when the habitus and life-worlds of diverse students, and that of the university, meet in ways that are potentially problematic for 'non-traditional' students. Lillis (2001 p36) writes that 'non-traditional' students 'often most strongly experience a sense of dissonance with prevailing practices' and can struggle with and expose 'both the nature of such discourse practices and their ideological force'.

Further complicating change in universities is the notion that, usually, codes and practices (with their underlying values) operate at a subconscious level within habitus, and so are normally beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny (Bamber & Tett 2001 p10). This is supported, with further nuances, by Delpit's (1988 p283) observation that those in power are often least aware of power's operative existence; whereas those with less power tend to be more aware of its existence – because they encounter power more directly – but less comprehending (at subtle levels) of the codes by which power operates. When talking about the perpetuation of inequities for minority groups in American higher education, Bensimon (2007 p446) writes that educators' 'lack of specialized knowledge about the conditions that structure the collegiate experience of minority students' makes it difficult for them to consider that 'their everyday actions and responses could be implicated in producing inequalities'. Her research indicates that educators can play a significant role in the success stories of minority groups in higher education. She describes educators who are 'equity-minded' 'more cognizant that

exclusionary practices, institutional racism, and power asymmetries impact opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latina/o students', and she argues for the cultivation of this attitude more widely among teaching staff.

Non-elite cultural inheritances, often misrecognised by educators as 'genetic inability' or 'inadequate upbringing', perpetuate deficit views of 'non-traditional' students. Deficit conceptions often explain the learning struggles of 'underachieving' students in terms of inadequacies in their English language and literacy practices from their cultural and/or home lives (Gonzalez 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez 1992). Such deficit thinking implies that responsibility for underachievement resides in students and families and is unrelated to the learning environment, leading to expectation and acceptance of low academic achievement (Hogg 2011). Educators may be unaware of this deficit mindset and the obstacles that it can create, as it is related to unreflectively assumed attitudes and beliefs (Agilar & Pohan 1996, cited in Hogg 2011 p666). Pedagogic practices in universities can unwittingly reinforce this deficit perspective. For example, removing university students identified as having a 'lack of study skills' or English language proficiency into generalised academic skills programs can be been seen as 'remedial', with a focus on 'mistakes' and the need to 'fix' these, reinforcing deficit discourses about students' literacy and language (Comber & Kamler 2004; Haggis 2006), and failing to see assets for learning within their cultural inheritances. When deficit discourses prevail, 'non-traditional' students in universities can feel alienated or blamed. As well, their educational goals may be compromised in an unfamiliar discoursal environment wherein universities perpetuate social inequity by continuing to privilege cultural codes that they do not make explicitly accessible.

Pedagogies Inclusive of Diverse and 'Non-traditional' Students

When considering curriculum and pedagogies which marginalise students who are unfamiliar with the literacy practices of mainstream education, Zipin (2009 p318) argues that social-educational justice presents the need to *both* 'redistribute codes of

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elite cultural embodiment' to those who have not previously inherited them, by making them explicit and practicable, *and* scaffolding such learning of elite codes to curriculum 'that recognises, valorises and makes use of knowledge from students' home and community lifeworlds'. He further argues that the latter are not only vital as assets for effectively engaging students in learning; they are also ethically crucial for valuing and perpetuating learners' cultural traditions. In tertiary education, the first aspect of this both/and - the explicit redistribution of elite codes that are usually tacit and inaccessible - has been constructively activated in the *Academic Literacies* research. However, both Lea (2008 p235) and Lillis (2003 p192) express concern that academic literacies 'has yet to be developed as a design frame' in mainstream tertiary pedagogic practices. The second both/and aspect – valorising home and community cultural knowledge - has had much less attention in tertiary education, but has been conceptualised helpfully by those who take a Funds of Knowledge approach, originally in Arizona in the United States, with take up more recently in Australia. Both will be explored in some detail below, along with other socio-cultural theories of learning, for their contributions to pedagogy that might traverse the hazardous disconnect of the values, codes and practices of the institution and the habitus of the 'non-traditional' student.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy - with its early foundations in the work of Freire – sees the task of education and literacy to understand and challenge unequal power relations: 'literacy only empowers people when it renders them active questioners of the social reality around them' (Freire 1970, 1973, 1985, in Gee 2007 p62). Freire emphasised the dynamic relationship between awareness of the social world ('reading the world') and literacy ('reading the word'), which implies 'continually reading the world' (Freire & Macedo 1987 p35). He challenged hierarchical relationships between educators and students, as mirroring and perpetuating broader hierarchical social arrangements. From his critique of the 'banking' approach to traditional education - that is, the 'act of

depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor' - Freire (1970) advocated a dialogic approach to teaching. A dialogic approach encourages students' contributions to classroom discourse, in order to counter hierarchy:

> Through dialogue…the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn, while being taught, also teach (Friere 1970 p61).

Writing more recently about pedagogies for diverse students in universities, Haggis (2006 p53) recommends 'collective enquiry' or *dialogue* (Freire 1970) that sees students' positions and perspectives to be just as integral to the educational process as the discipline content itself. hooks (1994) encourages universities to provide learning spaces where differences can be acknowledged and integrated in mainstream norms through discursive and 'engaged pedagogy' and critical consciousness (Florence 1998 p85).

Giroux (2011 p3) more recently writes that critical pedagogy draws attention to the ways in which education incorporates modes of social, political and cultural reproduction, particularly in today's policy context when the goals of education are defined though economic growth and vocational outcomes. He argues that the current policy context encourages instrumental teaching practices, limited to transmission and the passive absorption of knowledge; and he advocates for pedagogic approaches that that enable students to read texts as objects of interrogation rather than 'unquestioning reverence'. This can be challenging in university contexts where diverse students seeking to acquire unfamiliar and intimidating literacy practices required for academic success. However, for critical pedagogues such critical appraisal is the very liberating mechanism by which education can challenge prevailing social norms and unmask elite literacy practices that exclude the full participation of less powerfully positioned students. Such rigorous critical capacity is also central to the social justice orientation that social work education seeks to cultivate in students as part of preparing them for

social work practice (Garran, Kang & Fraser 2014; Fook & Askeland 2007; Saleebey & Scanlon 2005). Theoretical concepts that have enabled such critical development, as students and their educators encounter increasingly complex spaces for teaching and learning, are outlined below.

Literacy as Social Practice and Integrated with Disciplinary Learning

Analysis of how literacy practices serve to maintain unequal power relationships builds on scholarship developed in the 1980s, labelled the 'new Literacy studies'. These scholars questioned traditional views of literacy as internal 'cognitive' or 'psychological' processes, instead highlighting the integral role of social, interactional, cultural, political, institutional, economic, moral and historical contexts in literacy (Gee, 2011).They reconceptualised literacy as consisting of a set of practices arising from value-driven social contexts, rather than as a set of asocial, acultural, apolitical 'skills' (Boughey 2007 p140). This has led to the conception that people are constituted by multiple literacies: that is, many diverse modes of literacy intersect in the cognitive formation of all social actors as they inhabit multiple settings of life. The multiple literacies that specifically constitute given actors, and groups, also differ depending on social-cultural positions, locations, institutions and roles. Gee (2011 p9, 10) describes multiple literacy contexts, roles and associated identities more broadly as '*Discourses*', which he defines as

> ...ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking and often
> reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular
> identities...by specific groups.

Gee maintains that 'many literacies ... [are] connected in complex ways with different Discourses', and that we are all members of 'many Discourses....representing our ever multiple identities' (2007 p4).

'Multi-literacies'

The *New London Group* (1996 p60) used the term 'multi-literacies' rather than 'Discourses' when they urged appropriate educational responses to the rapid changes in global movements and technologies, which introduce (or should introduce) new kinds of literacies into education. They argued that

> negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in society is central to the pragmatics of the civic, working and private lives of students…and creates access to the evolving language of work, power and community.

These scholars proposed a pedagogy to include multimodal textual practices and literacies that were culturally inclusive (Cope & Kalantzis 2000), but argued that the selection of texts for multi-literacies needs to be reflective and critical in order to avoid the reproduction of dominant cultural values in compliance with the 'literary tastes of the most powerful' (Muspratt, Luke & Freebody 1997 p297). Mills (2009 p108) outlines the four related strategies of the New London Group multi-literacies pedagogy: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice (New London Group 2000, cited in Mills 2009 p108). Situated practice involves building on the life-world experiences of students, to situate meaning making in real-world contexts. Overt instruction guides students through an explicit metalanguage of design. These two strategies resonate with Zipin's (2009) dual focus on making elite codes explicit, and connecting with students' life-worlds, as pedagogic strategies to engage power-marginalised students. Critical framing encourages students to question underlying assumptions and intent in texts and discourses. Transformed practice occurs when students transform or go beyond existing meanings, become themselves the designers of new meanings (New London Group 1996, cited in Mills 2009 p108), which is when learning has taken root and been incorporated into the students' identities.

'Multiple Literacies'

'Multiple literacies' refers to an understanding of literacy as 'social and cultural practices continually in flux' and reflects 'attempts to reframe literacy in relation to modern life' (Cervetti, Damico & Pearson 2006 p 379). In the literature, it involves many literacies and modalities beyond print literacy, including multiple technological activities, but equally refers to other multiplicities, such as, print, talk, image, art or culture (Cervetti *et al.* 2006). Kalantzis and Cope (2012 p1) write that in our increasingly diverse and complex society we move between different social spaces, which feature and call upon different social languages. They argue that negotiating those language differences, and identifying their patterns or designs, opens paths to social participation by learners from different cultural, social, gender and socioeconomic backgrounds, and is a crucial aspect of literacy learning. This later statement reflects 'multiple literacies' in this study. Contemporary university students encounter multiple social languages - many of which lack resonance with the literacies of 'non-traditional' students - and are required to acquire disciplinary, academic and professional literacies in this complex milieu. The literature suggests that navigating the learning of these different 'social languages', and the literacies associated with them, is most effective when attention to language and literacy is integrated into the learning of disciplinary knowledge and its contexts. Green (1988) makes the connection between literacy and meaning-making on the theoretical premise that context is critical to literacy development: 'meaning and thinking are activities underpinning and impelling an individual's usage of the written language system' (p158). He argues that the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge includes three inter-related dimensions of literacy learning - the operational, the cultural and the critical – which all contribute to students' development of literacy capacity. Operational literacy is competency in language: being able to read, speak and listen capably in the syntax, grammar and genres of a range of disciplinary contexts. Cultural

literacy proceeds from a recognition that learning disciplinary knowledge also involves

learning not just content but associated and often implicit culture:

> [W]hile there is certainly a significant degree of explicit teaching and learning
> involved in engaging with a particular subject, there is as much if not more
> learnt and taught implicitly. Learning a subject inevitably involves being
> socialised into the subject (Green 1988 p162).

Green (1998 p156) argues that attention to literacies is a cross-disciplinary endeavour:

> While part of the literacy process certainly has to do with the practical
> …problems of language … (the surface features of language systems), it is
> important to view literacy in relation to thinking… as thinking skills and so a tool
> for learning and meaning (p 159).

Green thus sees literacies as integral to meaning-making that is intricately inter-

connected with learning of discipline knowledge. The critical dimension of literacy

acknowledges that subject-specific learning - cultural literacy - is effectively an implicit

socialising into dominant knowledge systems, and that this needs to be exceeded

through greater reflexive awareness of the socialising processes. Consciousness is

raised to how knowledge systems are socially constructed, and their literacy practices

patterned by institutional and power relationships with embedded broader social goals

and cultural practices (Appleby & Hamilton 2006). Certain texts and literacy practices

are privileged over others in particular social contexts, and can serve to maintain

unequal power relations. Green (1988) argues that learners need more than

participation in the subject-specific culture; they need opportunity to gain critical insight

into the processes of knowledge production and selection, in order to take an active

part in these processes.

Socio-cultural Theories of Learning

The ideas of the *New London Group* were influenced by socio-cultural perspectives on

learning, owing much to Vygotsky's (1987) theories of the social origins and cultural

basis of individual development. Vygotsky believed that written language develops, as

does speech, in the context of its use (Moll 2014). He proposed that human thinking

must be understood in relation to concrete social and historical circumstances of

practice and use, rather than simply as a capacity of the human organism and its

inherent cognitive processes (Moll & Greenberg 1990). Vygotsky (1987, cited in Moll

2014 p33) argued that language is crucial to the mediation and development of

thinking, and that the construction of linguistic meaning is mediated by social

relationships. His concept of the *zone of proximal development* identified the

developmental continuum between what the learner can do independently and what

they can gain capacity to do with teaching-and-learning assistance from others – 'the

proximal level of development' (Vygotsky 1978, cited in Moll 2014 p33). Teaching

should thus target the proximal 'zone' that extends from what learners know through

life-based engagement, into further and more systematic understandings and

associated capacities that require instructional scaffolding, including assistance from

instructional others. Vygotsky thus argued that meaning-making in the educative

process develops through a dialectical interaction – they 'mediate each other' –

between students' everyday 'spontaneous' concepts and the formal 'scientific' concepts

encountered in schooling (Moll 2014 p35).

  Vygotsky's conceptions have informed socio-cultural theories that learning is

located within socially situated cultural practices of participation (Ivanič 2009 p38).

Socio-cultural theories of learning see 'knowledge' as shared between sense-making

people within the social milieux of 'discourse communities' (Bruner 1996; Wells 1999).

Wenger (1998) argues that knowledge arises out of a process of discoursing, situated

within communities of practice. The primary condition for learning therefore becomes

the ability to participate within a knowledge community. The focus of teaching, then, is

to enable participation in these discourse communities, providing access to the

intellectual and social power inhering in them (Northedge 2005). An academic

discipline has traditionally been a 'community' which discourses primarily through

highly focused, analytical and critical writing. Making the conventions and linguistic

patterns inherent in disciplinary discourse communities explicit to students is a means

to enabling their participation in the disciplinary discourse and access the knowledge contained within it (Lea 2008; Ivanič *et al.* 2009; Rai 2004, 2006).

Shaughnessy (1977) maintains that, by linking text features in students' work to participating in a discourse community, their mistakes can be seen as developmental. Comber and Kamler (2004) suggest that this can unsettle deficit discourses about students' literacy and language that focus on 'mistakes' as signs of 'failings' that need 'fixing'. The concept of discourse communities can reposition 'non-traditional' students: they become emerging participants in a new (not necessarily 'superior') discourse or literacy, so they can access it when they need it. The relationship between the different discourse communities that students inhabit can be explored, clarifying avenues of proximal access to discourses that needed for success. The new disciplinary discourse is therefore not a final authority, but a resource always open to judicious use and further question. Students can appreciate that participation in the new discourse does not annul, but enters into a complex relationship with, the identities and associated discourses they bring to education (Moraitis, Carr & Daddow 2012).

Academic Literacies

Closely allied to the 'New Literacy Studies', Academic Literacies research has examined the complex relationship between the acquisition and development of subject-based knowledge and writing in higher education (Lea 2008; Lea & Street 2006; Ivanič 1998; Lillis 1997; Lea 1994). Their scholarship highlights that students are not necessarily initiated into academic culture by mere exposure to the discourses and practices of established practitioners and discipline experts (Lea 2008). They argue that, if academics make the culture and its implicit expectations of disciplinary writing more explicit, students can learn the literacy practices more readily (Ballard & Clanchy 1988). Lea (2008) and other researchers in the *Academic Literacies* tradition argue that generic language and academic skills programs do not cater adequately for university students, given that each discipline has its own conventions, values and practices, Nor

is mastery of grammar, spelling, punctuation and syntax (Green's 'operational literacy') sufficient for competence in academic writing (Wingate 2006; Durkin & Main 2002; Hyland 2002). Research by Baik and Grieg (2009) supports this perspective; they note that research on the impact of language and academic support programs on student learning outcomes has been minimal and limited. Academic Literacies scholars argue that a more effective and inclusive approach requires an embedded model, in which needed literacy practices and capacities - academic and discipline specific - are developed as an integral part of the curriculum (Gunn, Hearne & Sibthorpe 2011; Dunworth & Briguglio 2010; Lea 2008; Lea & Street 2006; Percy & Skillen 2000). Embedding explicit academic skills within discipline curricula builds familiarity with the conventions and literacy practices of the specific knowledge disciplines under study, as well as broader academic capacities that run across disciplines (Lea 2008; Davison 2006; Skillen, Merton, Trivett & Percy 1998; Green 1988).

In the 1990s, Lea and Street (1998 p158) examined student writing 'against a backdrop of institutional practices, power relations and identities'. They argued that the 'socialisation model' of acculturating students into the discourses and genres of particular disciplines needs expansion to take account of the growing recognition of 'epistemology, authority and contestation over knowledge' (Lea 2008 p 231). They and other colleagues explored the nature of power and authority in academic writing, with a focus on meaning making, identity, and the power invested in particular literacies and discourses (Ivanič 1998; Lea 1994; Lillis 1997, cited in Lea 2008 p231). This work emphasised the importance of writer identity, constituted in and across a range of institutional, disciplinary and 'everyday' discourse practices. Such emphasis enables a clearer understanding of the power relations in the acquisition of academic writing literacy, and the processes diverse students go through in negotiating the uneven transitions associated with it (Thesen 2001 p133). Ivanič *et al.* (2009 p40) refer to research indicating the need of many students entering further or higher education to renegotiate their identities:

the education system privileges certain literacy practices over others, and study seems to have little in common with the vernacular ways of knowing, valuing and communicating which students bring with them from other domains of their lives.

Ivanič and colleagues suggest that, if literacies are socio-culturally situated, the boundaries between one context and another are somewhat permeable; and the reading and writing practices in other domains of students' lives – home, work or community – have the potential to be situated in the educational domain, as 'border literacies'. They argue that everyday literacies may then be mobilised to support student learning. This echoes the second pedagogic response advocated by Zipin (2009 p318) – building funds of knowledge into curriculum, and scaffolding learning around it, that 'recognises, valorises and makes *use* of knowledge from students' home, culture and community life-worlds'.

Code Switching

Read *et al.* (2003) argue that, while students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds are disadvantaged by institutional cultures, students do not need to receive these powerful cultural discourses passively. There is research to support 'non-traditional' students participating knowingly in more than one culture concurrently (Devlin 2013). Priest (2009) refers to 'code switching' in the US – where African-American students are encouraged not to passively adopt an alternate discourse or code, but instead to understand the value of the discourses they already possess, as well as to recognise the value of powerful discourses associated with, for example, academic writing (Devlin 2013). Delpit (1988 p293) argues that students of class-based, race-based and other cultural differences should not be passively taught to adopt the power-elite codes of education systems; rather, 'they must be encouraged to understand the value of the code they already possess, as well as to understand the power realities'. She illustrates this education for 'code switching' in an isolated Alaskan Native American community, where primary school students were, in age-appropriate ways, taught explicitly the codes necessary to negotiate dominant institutions – 'the explicit and implicit rules of

power' - but were not assimilated into these, as they were encouraged simultaneously to retain and value their own native literacies, as well as to contrast the codes of both, and critically to understand the power differential between them.

Funds of Knowledge

Researching less privileged literacies from students' life-worlds, and building them into curriculum to scaffold between home and dominant literacies, was explored for primary and secondary schools in the 1990s by scholars at the University of Arizona. Their approach, called Funds of Knowledge (FoK), was articulated in the late 1980s as a conceptual, methodological and practical approach in education to counter deficit perspectives in relation to Latino students and their families. The term originated in anthropology, defined by Wolf (1966) as resources and knowledge that household economies use and develop to make ends meet. Academics from Tucson, Arizona recognised the term and its associated ethnographic research as relevant to minority cultures in school settings (Hogg 2011). The term was defined by these educationalists as 'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being' (Moll *et al.*.1992 p134). The notion of FoK has expanded over time to include 'homes, peer groups and other systems and networks of relationships...which affect individual well-being' (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carillo & Collazo 2004 p38).

Gonzalez and Moll (2002 p623) maintain that effective pedagogy is connected to students' lives, their 'local histories and community contexts'. Reflecting socio-cultural theories of learning, they argue that learning is a social process, sitting within larger contextual forces that impact on students' lives and identity formations. Building curricularly on the life-world social and language resources that students bring to university can create meaningful connections between students' academic and social lives, and valorise their FoK as legitimate contributions to knowledge and learning processes (Moll & Greenberg1990). By contrast, when the institutional privileged

paradigms in learning environments preclude the meanings and contexts of students' vernacular literacy usages, students sense that their own forms of knowledge are judged as lacking and deficient. A Vygotskian dialectical balance is important, then, for seeking curriculum and pedagogy that *both* enables students to value their life-based cultural-historical traditions and conventions, *and* redistributes the privileged academic codes (without valorising these as 'superior').

Pedagogy that builds on students' funds of knowledge has had minimal application or scholarly attention in relation to *tertiary* education (Van Niel 2010). Rios-Aguilar and Marquez Kiyama (2012) cite Bensimon (2007 p446) as the first to attempt to use a FoK perspective in the scholarship of higher education, in analysing how university practitioners may facilitate or impede the achievement of equitable educational outcomes. Rios-Aguilar and Marquez Kiyama (2012 p8) explore using Latina(o) students' FoK in successful transition to universities, suggesting that the approach is not a panacea, but arguing the need for further research on its effectiveness for enabling transitions to higher education. They urge higher education researchers to recognise and use students' FoK to assist students in 'accessing other forms of capital (social and cultural) and in activating…these to increase their academic and professional success' (p14). There has been no specific scholarship on FoK, and scant attention to the integration of life-world literacies, in social work education, although such pedagogies would resonate, and attract significance, in a discipline that seeks to align itself with empowering the marginalised and disadvantaged.

Social Work Education

Until recent decades, social work education in Australia was dominated by North American and British models. Since the ferment of ideas in the 1960s, political waves of change initiated by the Whitlam government in the 1970s, and the growing diversity in the Australian population, Australian scholarship and Indigenous literature has proliferated independently from these earlier ties. Consistent throughout social work

education in Australia has been the need to respond to the vagaries of socio-political, economic and educational contexts, the professionalisation of practice, competing theoretical frameworks, the increasing diversification of Australian society and implications of these for social work education and practice (Napier & George 2001 p75).

Critical theorists have provided conceptual lenses for social work education and practice, usually from multi-cultural, feminist and, more recently, post-colonial perspectives (Fook 2012; Mullaly 2010; Adams, Dominelli & Payne 2009). However, the contested history of social work has limited the ways and degrees of uptake, in social work education and practice, from these traditions (Bransford 2011; Saleebey & Scanlan 2006). Social work values and practice, and consequently social work curriculum, has long expressed a tension between focus on charity (leading to individualist rather than social-change orientations), and a community-based justice focus on structural change through social action (Saleebey & Scanlan 2006 p11; Mullaly 2007, 2010). Such frictions stem from its early history and the evolution of social work (Mullaly 2007). More recent marketisation pressures have undermined the Welfare State by stressing policies that privatise responsibility for core services, and promoting an administrative managerial framework (Fook & Askeland 2007; Napier & George 2001). These have arguably privileged technical competence over critical engagement and injected conservative slants into debates about what knowledge and skills define the professional social work role (Clarke & Newman 1997; Fook & Askeland 2007).

Navigating these tensions, from 1974 the social work professional association – the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) – has set *Education and Accreditation Standards* (AASW 2008) for social work courses to be accredited as Association members, and later *Practice Standards* (AASW 2013) to guide the profession and its education. The *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards* (2008, updated 2012) remain significant in social work education because

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membership is an employment credential in lieu of registration, which makes it appealing to students and the institutions that seek to attract them (Napier & George 2001 p77). Socialisation into the social work profession has been traditionally located in field education, and this prevails in these *Standards;* although more recent reduced funding environments have put this under threat (Napier & George 2001).

It has been suggested that social work education has employed dialogic and collaborative learning approaches for some time due to a natural compatibility with the profession's stated values and practices. Extrapolating from the insights of group work and group process, addressing power inequities in classroom conversations, and inviting differences of opinion and ambiguities are considered relatively common practice (Saleebey & Scanlon 2005). Recent discussion has highlighted the inherent challenges and pedagogic skill required to navigate complex and emotionally charged dialogue in social work classrooms (Bogo & Wayne 2011; Miller 2013; Peterson, Farmer & Zippay 2014):

> social work classes inevitably include discussion of emotionally charged topics, strongly held personal and professional feelings, as well as complex, messy, and thorny practice issues (Schon, 1987, cited in Bogo & Wayne 2011 p8).

Writing from the US, Varghese (2013) points out that both new and experienced social work educators indicated that they frequently had not received specific pedagogical training for the intensities of integrating social justice concepts in social work education. Teaching social work to culturally, economically and educationally diverse students in a massified, resource-stretched tertiary education system adds overlays of complexity for such pedagogies (Garran *et al.* 2014).

There has been little in the social work education literature that has specifically engaged these pedagogic challenges, and what has been written is primarily from the United Kingdom and the USA. Healy & Mulholland (2007) have written about practical writing skills for social workers, arguing that these have not been well addressed in social work education, in spite of practitioner requirements to communicate in writing

for a range of purposes. Grise-Owens and Crum (2012 p517) discuss embedding a curricular writing component in a Social Work program at Spalding University to address a growing concern with the 'pervasive problem of inadequate professional writing skills'. Nelson and Weatherald (2014 p106) have recently discussed the challenges for students from non-traditional academic backgrounds to meet the rigorous demands of professional writing in the United Kingdom. They propose

> a 'social practice' approach to developing written language skills …defined as a course-based approach where staff engage directly with students in explaining the linguistic requirements of all aspects of the course (Nelson & Weatherald 2014 p117).

Rai (2004) has articulated the need, for some time, to make writing expectations explicit in social work education in the United Kingdom. Such practice concerns are surfacing internationally, albeit less so in the Australian context. However, early signals in Australia are evident in the work of Grace, Townsend, Testa, Fox, O'Maley, Cunstance & Daddow (2013 p121) who discuss 'grass roots internationalisation', which they describe as 'drawing students' diverse experiences into the curriculum in ways that enrich and internationalise the learning of all'. They tentatively explore associated pedagogies to achieve this, stating:

> This approach is informed by both critical pedagogy and critical social work. It is based on the belief that social work education should not only transform the lives of students, but should also give them the tools and the opportunity to transform social work education and social work practice in the future (p122).

Reviews of social work education have tended to be content specific (for example, curricular attention to health inequalities), or focussed on general education issues (for example, assessment practices, integration of multi-media or field education) (Fish & Karban 2014; Lister *et al.* 2005; Ballantyne 2008), but have not systematically explored the curricular and pedagogic challenges, and associated inequities, for contemporary social work education in a massified tertiary system.

Conclusion

When learners' culturally inherited ways of knowing differ from those privileged in curriculum, inviting them to engage in teaching and learning can be challenging (Zipin 2009 p317). This is compounded by the growing complexity of required literacies for students to succeed in both academic and professional settings. The proliferation of multi-mode literacies and cultural diversity in contemporary contexts means that students will need familiarity with the codes and patterns of multiple literacies to negotiate their academic and professional roles successfully. Exemplars of designing curriculum that makes meaningful connection with students' every-day literacies and ways of knowing, and using these as assets for learning – rather than dismissing them as cultural, linguistic or familial deficits – are evident in FoK research. Scholarship that encourages the valuing of students' vernacular literacies, while teaching them the codes necessary to succeed in tertiary education in the diverse and massified tertiary education landscape, supports a sophisticated and robust social justice agenda. While universities cannot change the situational and dispositional barriers experienced by many 'non-traditional' students, they can act to redress institutional inflexibility (Billingham 2009) and exclusionary curricular and pedagogic practices to support and enrich their educational progress.

FoK research and conceptual frameworks highlighting the relationship of language and literacy to learning encouraged a dual attention to literacy and discipline in this thesis' case study in tertiary education. Figure 1 reflects the interaction of the concepts previously discussed and enacted in the research project. Drawing on the notion of literacy as social practice, pedagogic connections were made with students' experience, vernacular literacies and Funds of Literacy – a concept developed in this thesis research (see a brief definition below, and fuller elaboration in Chapter Four) – to scaffold the learning of multiple literacies required for their successful participation in academic, disciplinary and professional contexts. In the process, codes of power were made explicit and interrogated using Green's (1988) three literacy dimensions –

operational, cultural and critical – as these interacted with disciplinary teaching. The concept of Funds of Literacy (as a particular aspect of Funds of Knowledge) reflects these interlocking literacy dimensions. The term acknowledges the literacy assets for learning that 'non-traditional' students embody and bring into an education system that does not privilege their literacy practices. It also suggests the need for pedagogy that is inclusive of the multiple literacies which they use and/or need in life-world, academic, and professional contexts in which they participate.

Figure 1: Students' Funds of Literacy used Pedagogically to Scaffold to Disciplinary Knowledge
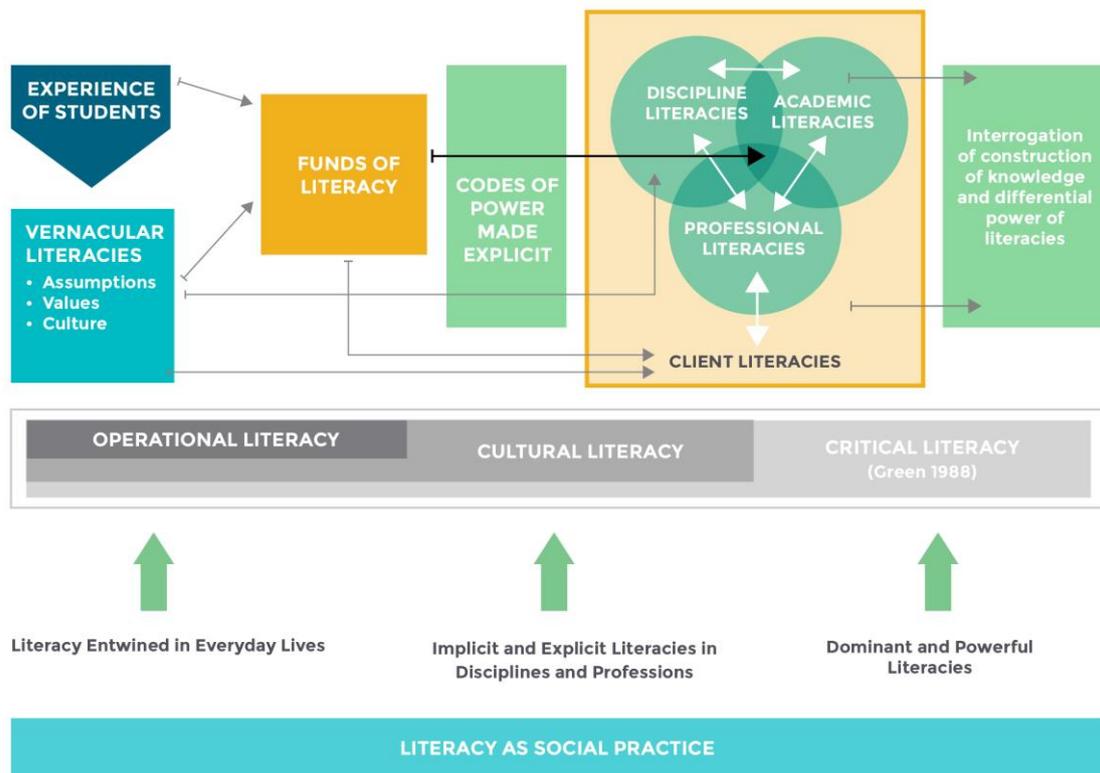
This thesis does not suggest that attending to such curricular and pedagogic practices is a smooth or sure pathway. Complex obstacles, considered in the thesis, include: 'specialised knowledge' required of practitioners (Bensimon 2007); lethargic and unmindful institutional practices; economic and practical restraints; and conscious

or unconscious institutional investment in maintaining elite codes which selectively privilege those already in power. These issues figure into what Kemmis *et al.* (2014 p3) refer to as *practice architectures* - 'cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements' in sites where practices actually happen – which enable or constrain practice initiatives. Tyack and Tobin's (1994 p454) reflections on what has inhibited lasting change to the 'regular structures that organise the work of instruction' in schools – what they call the institutional 'grammar of schooling' - are compelling. They suggest that the 'nature of institutional continuity and change' includes the political realities of organisations and their broader community contexts, and the associated strands of power and investments within and outside the school system. It also includes the emotional demands on educators as changes to the framework of education practices 'required teachers to replace old behaviour with new' and to persuade others - pupils, colleagues, boards - of the value of the new practices. While change can take place, Tyack and Tobin suggest that these are often only selectively enacted. They conclude that goals for change might be regarded as 'hypotheses – pragmatic blueprints to be evaluated by their effects – rather than as fixed targets' (p 478). The Action Research of this thesis tried out, analysed and evaluated curricular and pedagogic approaches for more respectful inclusion of 'non-traditional' students' life-world literacies, enacted in a complex contemporary urban context for university education. These are the 'pragmatic blueprints to be evaluated by their effects' in the undertaking of this research project, the design of which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three - Research Design

This thesis' research questions, outlined in Chapter One and also below, stem from broader debates and research gaps. They focus on the educational problem that tertiary education privileges students with relatively elite cultural capital and excludes the democratic participation and literacy practices of 'non-traditional' students in its curricula and pedagogies, inadequately preparing all tertiary students for the multiple literacies required in contemporary education and professional practice. Informed by the theoretical concepts discussed, this project embarked on Action Research that introduced more inclusive curricular and pedagogic practices into a tertiary education case study – two units in a Bachelor of Social Work course in an Australian University. This chapter elaborates the rationale for Action Research as the chosen methodology to respond to the research questions. It clarifies the researcher's positioning as a Practitioner Researcher throughout the project, and discusses the rationale for the methods used in data collection (focus groups, questionnaires, interviews, and field journal) and data analysis (interpretive thematic analysis). Also articulated are the context, parameters and location of the case study in which the Action Research was enacted, the recruitment of participants and collaborators, ethical considerations and limitations of the methodology.

The Research Questions

The previous chapter articulated theoretical frameworks related to the different educational challenges faced by 'non-traditional' students as they enter an education system that does not privilege their literacy practices – their ways of knowing, valuing and communicating - and as they encounter the multiple literacies of the new knowledge communities (academic, discipline, client groups and professional) in which they are required to participate. From these theoretical propositions, it was argued that curricular and pedagogic approaches which both (a) work with and valorise students'

familiar literacy practices, and (b) make elite codes explicit and practicable, more effectively scaffold students into new disciplinary, academic and professional literacies. Such pedagogies respond to the identified educational problem of tertiary education privileging students with relatively elite cultural capital and inhibiting the democratic participation of 'non-traditional' students in its curricular and pedagogic practices. These prevalent practices do not support the requisite identity shifts for 'non-traditional' students' participation in unfamiliar literacies.

To provide insight into how curricular and pedagogic approaches that have shown capacities to support the learning of 'non-traditional' students might be more substantively and effectively employed in tertiary education, the following overarching research question was posed:

What possibilities and constraints emerge when enacting pedagogic approaches to social work undergraduate programs that acknowledge and build on the literacies of 'non-traditional' students in an Australian university?

The following related sub-questions were developed:

- What pedagogic possibilities are opened up when explicit attention to multiple literacies, and raising consciousness to their differences and their codes, are introduced to the curriculum?

- How might this approach help prepare 'non-traditional' students to succeed in their academic, professional and personal life-world contexts?

- How do dual classroom focuses – on literacy, and on discipline content – interact in designing and implementing the curriculum? How do a literacy 'outsider' to the unit, and a teaching 'insider', work together?

- When putting such an approach into practice, what constraints do we come up against? How are the approach's potentials blocked by systemic-institutional practices and conditions? How are the latter experienced by students and staff?

- What aspects of the pedagogic approach need refinement for ongoing enactment?

These questions, raised in the context of widening tertiary participation policies (Bradley 2008), needed to be addressed to inform Social Work and ALL scholarship, as well as broader learning and teaching scholarship in tertiary education. The project was designed to answer these questions in action, as the pedagogies theoretically argued to be more inclusive of 'non-traditional' students were investigated in use at a tertiary level of education. Action Research provided the methodological framework for such enactment; addressing the identified problem through repeated action, reflection and change in the real-world context of the university setting (Herr & Anderson 2005).

The Context of the Study

The contextual setting for this research was a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in a 'new' Australian university that serves a larger share of 'non-traditional' students than most Australian universities. The curriculum and pedagogy were enacted in two units in the BSW undergraduate program: a second year subject, *Social Work Theories,* which was taught in the first semester of 2013; and a first year subject, *Introduction to Social Work,* taught in the second semester of 2013. The BSW program was in the process of curriculum re-design, so the project was timely in that new units were being introduced and existing ones were subject to some refinement. The *Social Work Theories* unit was included in the new curriculum design and selected from semester one, because students had traditionally struggled with the subject's density and theoretical content. It covered a range of traditional social work theories that have evolved in Western social work practice since the 19th century to the present. Its primarily Western paradigm posed challenges to educators and students, when teaching ethnically diverse students with culturally different backgrounds. For this reason, it was included in the research project for the first cycle of the Action Research.

The second unit, *Introduction to Social Work,* was a new first year unit to be introduced in the new course design, and was the first introduction to the course for the majority of students (exceptions being those who had Community Services Diplomas or relevant experience in the Community Services sector, making them eligible for prior recognition). The dual attention to literacies and content at this early stage of the course was designed, as part of this thesis' Action Research, to support students' orientation to the new disciplinary and professional knowledge. Content ranged across: historical and philosophical foundations for practice; Social Work values and ethics; notions of power and empowerment; the knowledge base of practice; the organisational context of practice; working with difference and diversity; the helping process; and critically reflective practice. Many of these concepts were new to the students, who often had quite simplistic perceptions and expectations of 'helping' people that had attracted them to the course. Students from diverse backgrounds would need to come to terms with new conceptual paradigms and knowledge. It was hoped that the research project's explicit attention to language codes of different discourse communities, including the students' own, might support students' learning and transition into the new social work discourse community.

Rationale for a Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative methods elicit insight into how people interpret and draw meaning from their experience in natural, every-day contexts (Tomal 2010). Qualitative research

> is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible….[T]his means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2000 p 3).

Qualitative research is concerned with 'why' and 'how' questions, especially when the situational conditions are not richly known in advance or controlled (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Stake 1995 p41). Qualitative orientations were used for this research, partly

because the research questions explore 'how' stakeholders - students and educators - experience pedagogies that support 'non-traditional' students, when enacted in tertiary education (and by implication 'why' they may or may not be enacted). A qualitative approach supported 'epistemological integrity', recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2006 p 55, cited in Gringeri, Barusch & Cambron 2013 p55) which is a congruence between the theoretical orientation brought to the subject under study and the research stance. Denzin and Lincoln (2008 p14) maintain that qualitative researchers

> stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape enquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of enquiry.

The conception that a social person is active in the construction of knowledge in a socio-cultural backdrop of shared and new understandings, practices and language, is central to the theoretical orientation of this thesis. This concept also informs its research stance. Drawn from a social constructionist or interpretivist epistemology, this stance maintains that all knowledge is contingent upon human practices being constructed from the interaction between human beings and their world (Crotty 1998 p42). The views and perspectives of individuals, and the meaning they attach to things, are considered central to understanding (Corby 2006 p50).

Investigation of curriculum and pedagogy in a complex natural setting aims to enable insight from stakeholders (those affected by the issue) and participants to inform the research questions, so as 'to achieve a holistic rather than a reductionist understanding' (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008 p80). This study sought to document and give voice to the students', the educators' and the researcher's experiences of the pedagogies investigated in use in the complex realities of the practice setting.

Case Study

The project involved a case study that sought to illuminate not only the participants' experience of the enacted curriculum and pedagogy at the site of study, but also the

contextual conditions that might facilitate or impede its enactment in the broader

tertiary context. Yin (1994 p3) maintains that case studies can be exploratory,

descriptive or explanatory; but all have the potential to retain the holistic and

meaningful aspects of real-life events, highlighting individual experiences and

concerns, organisational and managerial processes as well as broader contextual

changes. Yin (1994 p13) defines a case study as

> an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its
> real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and
> context are not clearly evident.

Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011 p1) state that, among the

range of ways in which it can be defined, the central tenet of a case study is the need

to explore an event or phenomenon in depth and in its natural context. Stake (1995)

has characterised three main types of case study: *intrinsic* (learning about a unique

phenomenon)*; instrumental* (using a particular case to gain a broader appreciation of

an issue or phenomenon); and *collective* (studying multiple cases to generate a

broader appreciation of a particular issue)*.* Within this Action Research study, the

instrumental case study applies: the research seeks to illuminate the broader

possibilities of the selected curricular and pedagogic practices for the tertiary context.

Stake (1995 p17) suggests that, in case studies, 'the nature of people and systems

becomes more apparent during their struggles' within practice sites, and

> issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social,
> historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in
> studying cases…issues help us expand upon the moment, help us see the
> instance in a more historical light, help us recognise the pervasive problems in
> human interaction (p17).

Although the instrumental case study is of a single instance, it is interested primarily in

what that instance might say about a wider class of related instances:

> This is not a generalisation in the statistical sense but rather an opportunity to
> modify and enhance understanding by providing new insights (Ellis 2003 p51).

The goal of this thesis is not to generalise so much as to illuminate and share insights from the case study of an undergraduate Bachelor of Social Work program in an Australian university that might be further explored, tested and expanded in other contexts.

Action Research as the Chosen Methodology

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988 p7) write that Action Research (henceforth AR) involves *'*action and reflection which is appropriate to the real, complex and often confusing circumstances and constraints of the modern [education environment]*'.* They further write that it provides

> a framework for recognising ideals in the reality of the work... - ideas in action - and ...a concrete procedure for translating evolving ideas into critically informed action and for increasing the harmony between educational ideas and educational action.

AR provided an opportunity to examine the ideals of the curricular and pedagogic approaches 'in action', in pursuit of greater congruity between 'the values one espouses and the values one enacts' (Torbert, cited in Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire 2003 p12). Kemmis (2009 p464) states that AR aims to change practitioners' *practices, understandings*, and the *conditions* in which they practise. This aim inevitably interacts with (and influences) pre-configured institutional arrangements - *practice architectures* - which are 'held in place by cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements' (Kemmis & McTaggart 2014 p3). Making changes in the site of practice – as AR requires – helps to illuminate the norms that shape current practice, and the power these have to constrain or enable change. Research in action enabled valuable learning for the researcher, as relatively new to higher education teaching, in an area with little prior scholarship.

AR has contested approaches, but most agree that it is 'inquiry that is done by or with insiders in an organisation or community, but never *to* or *on* them' (Herr &

Anderson 2005 p3). The disparate traditions that have emerged in AR are linked by the

key question of:

> how we go about generating knowledge that is both valid and vital to the
> wellbeing of individuals, communities, and for the promotion of larger-scale
> democratic social change (Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2003 p11).

The orientation to AR used in this research challenges the claims of a positivistic view

of knowledge, which holds that in order to be credible, research must remain objective

and value-free. This research affirms that knowledge is socially constructed and

therefore all research is embedded within a system of values (Herr & Anderson 2005).

AR is oriented towards changing or addressing a problematic situation. Although AR

variants have different positions on transformation or emancipation of participants, AR

demands some form of intervention (Herr & Anderson 2005). Carr and Kemmis (1986)

discuss three alternative orientations of AR: *technical* (focus on solving problems);

practical (local understanding and solving practical problems; and *emancipatory*

(promotes critical enquiry and organised action to overcome social obstacles).

Objectivity is not the primary aim of the process. Noffke (2009 p 7) argues that

> the theories we use and the data analysis strategies we employ are not neutral
> means; they embody our relations to power through the arenas they centre.

AR, in the comprehensive and emancipatory sense articulated by Carr and Kemmis

(1986), is recognised as a form of research that challenges unjust and undemocratic

economic, social and political systems and practices (Brydon-Miller, *et al.* 2003 p 11).

Noffke (2009 p 8) suggests that all forms of AR

> embody a political dimension. As action research works toward improvement of
> educational practice (the action part of the dual term's meaning), it does so with
> a vision of what might make the lives of…those with whom they work, and
> indeed the larger society, 'better'. Such visions of change embody the political
> in that they all work through and often against existing lines of power.

Noffke argues that AR includes three purposes: to generate knowledge and

understanding for personal and professional development; to critically challenge unjust

power arrangements; and to bring about practical and socially just change. In this

thesis, the active and reflexive components of AR facilitated exploration of

unchallenged normative curricular and pedagogic practices in tertiary education, into which practitioners can easily be drawn.

Reflexivity in Action Research

An aspect of this research included examination of the systemic-institutional practices and conditions that might facilitate or impede the conduct of the desired inclusive curricula and pedagogies. Schön (1983) argues that social institutions are characterised by a *dynamic conservatism* that draws practitioners toward the status quo: toward norms, rules, values and practices which become so pervasive and taken for granted that they go unchallenged. AR can function to reproduce those norms, rules, values and practices (if focused merely on *technical* or *practical* domains); but *critical* AR challenges them. Action researchers need to be aware that challenging such practices can attract defensive, self-protective institutional responses as part and parcel of dynamic conservatism (Herr & Anderson 2005 p 24). It has been argued that AR needs to be reflexive - undertaken with a critical approach - or it risks legitimating inequitable social arrangements. Tripp (1990 p161), in his discussion of socially critical AR, argues that the value of AR for critical pedagogy is that it forces practitioners to turn their theoretical reflections into action in the material world. He adds that this is

> the best means of opposing, modifying, and replacing socially re-productive technical practices with ones that will increase the possibilities for social justice.

This critical approach has been explored by Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis (2008) in terms of Habermas' (1971) view that knowledge production is never neutral, but is inherently invested with interests. In this view, attempts to gain knowledge through 'objective' empirical methodologies that supposedly negate researcher bias by separating the researcher from the subject being investigated, are illusory. Habermas argued that this illusion needs to be penetrated by means of self-reflection and critical analysis. This thesis takes up such a *critical emancipatory* orientation, aiming to release participants' human potential to raise consciousness to, and act beyond,

ideology and power embedded in the belief structure of an organisation that might constrict potential. The reflective dimension of the AR process, built into the data collection methods (outlined below), encouraged critical analysis of curricular and pedagogic practices – both 'mainstream', and those deployed in the research project – that might unintendedly perpetuate undemocratic and inequitable effects.

Practitioner Research

Various traditions have emerged in AR, ranging from the researcher as an outsider who collaborates to varying degrees with insider practitioners or community members, to 'practitioner researchers' – i.e. insiders to the setting are the researchers. (However, not all 'practitioner research' is *action* research: the latter requires at least two 'spiralling' cycles of (a) design, (b) enactment and observation, and (c) reflection, leading to redesign, etc. in a new cycle). Consistent in AR is the principle of collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem under investigation. Says Kemmis (2008 p124):

> If practice/praxis is collectively constructed, then practices must be understood not solely from the perspectives of the individuals involved, but also in terms of the collective understandings and collective effects of those involved and affected by the practice.

AR leaves the positionality (insider or outsider) of the researcher open, but acknowledges that where researchers position themselves has implications for power relations and ethical considerations (Herr & Anderson 2005). The term *practitioner research* puts insiders/ practitioners at the centre of the research. This research project was initially conceived as a collaborative partnership between a senior Social Work educator and the researcher, who at the time was an academic developer. By this design, the researcher would have been both inside and outside the site of study. However, the Social Work educator left the university, and the researcher was contracted to replace him, thus assuming the role of '*practitioner researcher'*. There were some advantages to this. It provided flexibility for the researcher in the classroom

context to react to changing conditions and to capitalise on pedagogic opportunities as they arose, all the while learning from the experience and informing the research questions. It was a valuable professional development opportunity for the researcher as well as contributing to the educational setting. *Practitioner research* has been recommended to deepen practitioners' reflection on practice, make a contribution to the researcher's own educational setting, and contribute to professional learning and organisational change (Herr & Anderson 2005). Practitioner research enables

> practitioners to engage in inquiry that is directed towards creating and extending professional knowledge, illuminating and improving practice and influencing policies in an informed way (McTaggart 1989; McWilliam 2004, cited in Goodfellow 2005 p48).

The aims of 'illuminating and improving practice' are significant in practitioner research. Kemmis *et al.* (2014 p54) more recently write that the 'traditional plan-act-observe-reflect cycle', repeated in a spiral of increasing insight and change, while important, 'understates what is happening'. They argue that the practices - *sayings, doings and relatings'* - in which teaching is embedded are often invisibly pre-ordained at the site where practice occurs. This is theorised as *practice architectures;* pre-ordained (often invisible) arrangements that hold in place the *sayings* of practice (*cultural-discursive* arrangements); the *doings* of practice (*material-economic* arrangements); and the *relatings* of practice (*social-political* arrangements), making practices sustainable (Kemmis *et al.* 2014 p55). Changes to practice (as an intent of AR) require changes to such architectural *conditions* that support practices: 'only when …new practice architectures are in place can new practices survive' (p56).

Practitioner research does require consideration of how the researcher-as-insider positioning might decentre other important stakeholders, such as students and educators, in the research process, and so influence the validity of the research findings (Herr & Anderson 2005). Efforts to resist such decentring in the research project included active participation (of the ALL educator), and ongoing feedback from stakeholders (students, educators and Social Work course team) to provide alternative

sources of explanation and to pursue a democratic outcome (Herr & Anderson 2005 p4). Ethical issues arising from the researcher's positioning are discussed more fully below.

In challenging more traditional and positivist paradigms, insider or practitioner research has not always been welcome in academia. The core epistemological issue of action research has been what Argyris and Schön (1989 p612) call 'the dilemma of rigor or relevance':

> If social scientists tilt toward the rigor of normal science that currently dominates departments of social science in American universities, they risk becoming irrelevant to practitioners' demands for usable knowledge. If they tilt toward the relevance of action research, they risk falling short of prevailing disciplinary standards of rigor.

Academics, as Bourdieu (1988) notes, tend to study others rather than themselves. Among the reasons given for this in the paradigm debates, most concede that the academy's elite status will tend to 'brook no intrusion by the messy and indeterminate world of practice. Practice should remain subordinate to traditional academic discourse' (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler 2006 p108).

Since the earlier contributions of Dewey (1933; 1958) and Schön (1983, 1987), advocates of practitioner research have argued that rigorous and critically reflective practitioner enquiry generates new knowledge about the complexities and realities of the practitioners' professional fields (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler 2006). Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott and Trow (1994) have argued that knowledge creation is not exclusively a matter for academics working in institutions, but may be socially produced and distributed in the form of what they called 'Mode 2 Knowledge': that is, reflexive and dialogic knowledge that is produced through the practical living of professional lives within organisations, outside the orthodoxies of academic disciplines. Other writers have recognised the need to develop professional knowledge *with* the field of practice, rather than *for* the field of practice, and have drawn attention to the

benefits that can flow to stakeholders, particularly students, as a result of practitioner

enquiry (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler 2006 p109). Hargreaves (2002) writes:

> [P]rofessional learning communities lead to strong and measurable improvements in students' learning. Instead of bringing about 'quick fixes' or superficial change, they create and support sustainable improvements that last over time because they build professional skill and the capacity to keep the school progressing (p 3, cited in Groundwater-Smith & Mockler 2006 p110).

As the practitioner researcher, I was researching from inside the setting, in

collaboration with other educators, students and the Social Work team. This provided a

rich opportunity to deepen what Herr and Anderson describe (2005 p6) as both 'local

knowledge' that illuminates practice in a particular setting, and 'public knowledge'

which offers insights that have implications for wider disciplines and tertiary contexts.

Insider research can provide insights from lived experience, and can have access to

privileged information and prior credibility and rapport with the subjects of study, to

inform the research choices and data (Brannick & Coghlan 2007; Mercer 2007). On the

other hand, insider research reduces distance and detachment from the subjects of the

research, which can lead to the risk of myopic and biased perspectives. Mercer (2007

p6) writes:

> Greater familiarity can make insiders more likely to take things for granted, develop myopia, and assume that their own perspective is far more widespread than it actually is; the vital significance of the 'unmarked (Brekhus 1998) might not be noticed; the 'obvious' question might not be asked (Hockey 1993, p.206); the sensitive topic might not be raised (Preedy & Riches 1998); …assumptions might not be challenged (Hockey 1993, p.202); seemingly shared norms might not be articulated (Platt 1981, p. 82).

As the sole researcher, all the sources of data were interpreted through my lens with

inevitable partiality, which could be seen as a limitation of the study.I sought to redress

the personal stake and emotional investment potentially influencing the interpretation of

the data sources through strategies discussed below, but recognise the inherent

dilemmas in the insider researcher role that can influence data gathering and

interpretation (Humphrey 2012; Tracy 2010; Mercer 2007; Brannick & Coghlan 2007).

Tracy's (2012 p844) study on criteria for excellent quality research describes 'multiple vocality' (multiple and varied voices in the qualitative report and analysis) as contributing to excellent quality. As discussed below, this study invited multiple voices into the research data and sought to represent these accurately through the use of transcripts of recordings and extensive participant quotes in the reporting of data . 'Member reflections' (Tracy 2012 p844) - input by participants to validate the processes of data analysis and reporting – was included when the ALL participant was invited to review the data analysis in early drafts (see p 59). Her input was significant given she observed all the phases of the action research. This was not intended to validate a 'single truth', but rather 'provide space for additional data, reflection and complexity' (Ibid. p848).

The concept of reflexivity, as previously discussed, seeks to address the relationship between the researcher and object of the research. It involves 'exposing interests and enabling emancipation through self-reflexivity' (Brannick & Coghlan 2007 pp 60, 63). I sought to recognise the multiple positions I occupied during the research process,

> many of which grant power and privilege to the researcher relative to the participants: investigator, expert, decision maker, participant recruiter, and insider/outsider, among others (Gringeri *et al.* 2013 p56).

Takacs (2003 p35) claims that awareness of these multiple positions increases the visibility of 'alternate claims to power' and enables the researcher to 'advocate for the marginalized' by pointing out the 'structures that make the dominant positionality [that of the academy or of the research enterprise] seem inevitable' (cited in Gringeri *et al.* 2013 p56). Reflexivity in the research process, and aiming to share roles and privilege in interactions with participants, was included in the AR strategies, as outlined below.

The Action Research

After gaining ethics approval from the Australian University in which the case study was situated, the four stages of Action Research outlined by Kemmis and McTaggart (1981) were repeated in the two cycles of this study (first in semester 1, and then in semester 2, of 2013). The cycles involved the following stages:

1. *Development of a plan of action to improve what is already happening*

   As the social work educator, I re-designed the curriculum of the unit, *Social Work Theories* (cycle one), to incorporate the preferred curricular and pedagogic approaches, in consultation with an ALL educator. This included some collaboration with the Professor of Social Work, the broader social work team and other colleagues with related expertise in the university.

2. *Act to implement the plan*

   The curricular and pedagogic changes were then enacted in the Bachelor of Social Work course in the first cycle of the research (semester 1 of 2013).

3. *Observe the effects of the action in the context in which it occurs*

   The effects on students and their educators were examined through open-ended questionnaires and focus groups (students) and interviews (staff). As the researcher, I maintained a field journal to reflect on each week's class. Unit documentation and assessments were available to inform this observation.

4. *Reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and so on through a succession of cycles*

   The research from this first cycle influenced refinements in the design of a second semester unit, *Introduction to Social Work.* This was designed and enacted by the researcher and the same ALL educator (in consultation with the Social Work professorin semester 2, 2013 (cycle two). The effects on students and educators in this cycle were similarly examined through open-ended questionnaires (students), focus groups (students) interviews (staff) and

through the researcher's field journal. Course documentation, university data on student demography (publicly available), and student assessment and feedback (after submission and assessment) were available as data. Reflection and analysis based on these findings was focused on the institutional openings and constraints for innovative pedagogy in the tertiary environment.

The timelines for these cyclic stages of the research project are outlined in the table below:

Table 3.1: Timelines for the Cyclic Stages of the Action Research Project

Stages:	Activity at Each Stage:	Time-lines:
Stage 1 Re-design of *Social Work Theories* and design of *Introduction to Social Work* curricula in the Bachelor of Social Work program	After receiving university ethics approval, Dr Rob Townsend (Social Work lecturer) and Angela Daddow (with assigned supervisors) commenced co-designing the first social work unit, Social Work Theories. After Dr Townsend's departure from the University, the researcher commenced designing the two units assigned to the project, in consultation with the Professor of Social Work, the ALL educator and other University colleagues.	June,2012 –Feb 2013
Stage 2 Enactment of pedagogy; participant briefing and consent sought. Questionnaires administered to students and ALL tutor	Pedagogy enacted in *Social Work Theories.* BSW students in *Social Work Theories* were briefed on the research objectives and process at the commencement of the course via emailed 'Information to participants' and in the first lecture and invited to participate, emphasising that such participation was voluntary. Hard copies of the Information to participants and consent forms were distributed in the following lecture, by thesis supervisors. Participants' confidentiality in the research data was explained. The researcher's role, the process of the questionnaires and focus groups (with possible follow up interviews), as well as permission to access marked assignments to contribute to the data, was clarified. Toward the end of the semester, the students were given the questionnaire to complete and invited to participate in focus groups. The tutor was interviewed. The results of	March – June, 2013

interviewed.	these, as well as course documentation, were collated and analysed to inform the next stage of the research.	
Stage 3 Second cycle	The curriculum of *Introduction to Social Work* was refined on the basis of findings in cycle one and the pedagogy was enacted to that unit with a different group of students in semester 2. The same briefing, consent process (consent forms administered by ALL educator) and data collection were undertaken with these students and the tutors at the conclusion of the unit.	June-Dec, 2013
Stage 4 Reflection and data analysis	Additional data analysis was undertaken after the completion of the action and reflection cycles, using interpretive thematic analysis to identify key concepts, themes and issues, consistent with the principles of Miles and Huberman (2014) and relating to the institutional openings and constraints for innovative pedagogy in the tertiary environment. Reporting of data findings, discussion and conclusions of the study were undertaken.	Jan-June, 2014

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods enabled data to emerge from the first cycle of the AR and to inform the planning and enactment of the second cycle. Data from the second cycle further informed the project and identified areas for additional research. The data collection methods included semi-structured interviews of educators, open-ended questionnaires and focus group interviews of students, the researcher's field journal and course documentation (including reference to student writing in assessments, results and attrition rates).

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (with the educators) and open-ended questionnaires and focus groups (with the students) were selected for data collection. Stringer (2007 p 65) states that in AR the aim is

> …to understand participant experiences in order to work toward a viable solution in which people will invest their time and energies. Participants and primary stakeholders are therefore consciously engaged in the process of describing the nature of the problem and gathering information.

Open-ended interviews and focus groups enabled an in-depth understanding of the experience of the stakeholders and participants, providing room for them to respond in some detail. Stringer (2007 p69) emphasises that interviews enable participants 'to describe the situation in their own terms', and that objectivity is not the primary aim of the process, as solutions need to 'make sense to the subjective experience of the participants'. Given that AR is a reflective process,

> it enables the interviewee to explore his or her experience in detail and to reveal the many features of that experience that have an effect on the issue being investigated (Stringer 2007 p69).

The interviews also 'symbolically recognize the legitimacy of their experience' (Stringer 2007 p69). Privileging stakeholders' perspectives in this way can provide a counter-balance to the inevitable power inherent in the practitioner-researcher's multiple roles (teacher /researcher /interviewer / focus group facilitator).

The researcher facilitated the semi-structured interviews, which had eight open-ended questions, aiming to avoid leading questions (see Appendix A). Kvale and Brinkman (2009 p 23) maintain that interviewers are 'historically and contextually located, carrying unavoidable conscious and unconscious motives, desires, feelings and biases', and so interviews are 'hardly a neutral tool'. Bias and subjectivity are inevitable in AR and are acceptable as long as they are critically examined rather than ignored (Herr & Anderson 2005 p60).

Open-ended Questionnaires

The open-ended questionnaires were used to extend the data collection to a broader range of student participants. This enabled a larger number of students to respond to questions pertinent to the research question, which became important given the low student numbers in the focus groups. Brief demographic data relating to the student

population was provided through closed questions at the top of the questionnaire. There were thirteen open-ended questions on the questionnaire related to the students' experiences of the curriculum and pedagogy in the units (see Appendix B). These were short and clear, aiming to avoid ambiguity or jargon, as recommended by Stringer (2007 p66). The student questionnaire was distributed to all students in final lectures of the subject. In the first cycle of the action research, 32 students responded to the questionnaire out of a total of 77 attending students. The questionnaire was distributed toward the end of the unit, and it was not compulsory, so some students were either not present or preferred to focus on their assessment obligations at this demanding time of the semester. The second cycle of the research attracted 36 respondents out of 67 attending students.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were utilised for the students in addition to the questionnaires to allow for richer in-depth data collection and analysis. Kvale and Brinkman (2008) maintain that the purpose of a focus group is to expose differing points of view. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008 p195) suggest that a focus group

> fosters interactivity and dialogue among participants, describes complex interactions, clarifies and extends findings yielded by other methods (and) allows for increased richness of responses through synergy and interaction.

The focus groups aimed to follow the guidelines as outlined by Krueger and Casey's (2000) recommendations on group size (this was influenced by the low numbers of participants), keeping a limit on the number of items to be discussed and maintaining focus. There were five focus-group questions to encourage further elaboration and clarification of issues raised in the questionnaires (see Appendix C). Some modification of the focus group questions took place after the first cycle, to allow closer attention to the research questions. The researcher facilitated the focus groups in both cycles, which were electronically recorded, using a mobile phone. Given awareness of the power imbalance between students and educator/researcher, focus group interviews

were conducted in a comfortable, private room at a different but accessible campus away from the teaching environment and at the conclusion of classes and assessment activity.

Field Journal

I kept a field journal of regular weekly observations in relation to the enacted curricular/ pedagogical approach, with an eye on contextual possibilities and constraints. The use of the field journal for critical reflection, the weekly discussions with the ALL educator, and discussions with other practitioner colleagues were strategies to 'reduce ignorance' (by expanding perspectives) rather than pursue 'the truth' (Wagner 1993 p18); to surface practitioner positionings; and to reflect on effects. It also helped to guide action on the ground as we went. Examples from the field journal illustrating this are throughout the study, but the following is an example of reflecting on effects and practitioner positioning from the first cycle:

> Researcher/lecturer field journal (May 2013): *In the class discussion of the final essay, it became apparent that students are really looking to the lecturer to provide an overview of the theory and unit themes. This raises some questions: have they revised the lectures themselves?; how much have they read?; how much are they looking to the lecturer to do some of the 'labour' of learning?; how might we have better engaged them to do more of their own pedagogic labour?*

These reflections helped to inform the design of cycle two, consider how the lecturer appears to be perceived by the students, and consider how our own practices may have contributed to this dynamic. A journal is commonly used in AR, providing the narrative and chronology of the project, as well as a thinking space (McAteer 2013 p69). It enabled efficient reflection at the time and made the documentation and reflection available for hindsight and critical analysis at the conclusion of the AR.

Brookfield (2006) has highlighted that testimonies of 'experiences' of practice might not necessarily involve critical reflection. To be critically reflective, the researcher needs to focus on uncovering submerged power dynamics and hegemonic assumptions (i.e. common sense assumptions about practice which can inadvertently serve the interests of the privileged) within the testimonies collected as data. Brookfield has developed a framework to support critical reflection by educators, as well as to model critical reflection to students as they make educative sense of their experience. This consists of examining our own autobiographies; seeing our actions through learners' eyes; participating in critical conversations with peers (which 'unravels the shroud of silence in which our practice is wrapped' p136); and reading relevant theoretical literature. The journal created the opportunity for such critical reflection during the research and retrospectively, sometimes incorporating critical conversations with other educators in the project. The journal helped to keep the researcher focused on the research questions throughout the study and helped to record contemporaneous reflections on events, thoughts, feelings and critical incidents. Some reflection on formal course documentation, informal notes, team discussions, student assessments and feedback (after submission and with explicit permission) also thus became available as data.

Course and University Documents

Course materials and publically available university reports were used to contribute to the development of materials and demographic information. This informed attrition and results data in the two units. Students' assessments (after they had been marked and returned to students) were available as data with the written permission of students and for anonymous reporting. Some samples of student writing in assessments were used as data; extensive use was limited by the scope of the study.

The Participants in the Study

The participants in the study were the students and educators in the BSW program units in which the pedagogies were designed and enacted. Their recruitment is outlined separately below.

Students

The researcher provided all students with verbal and written information about the research in the second lecture of the semester. All students present were invited to participate anonymously. It is noted that, while many students in this case-study were 'non-traditional' as previously defined, it was not necessarily the case for all (see student profile in Chapter Four). When providing information about the study to the students, it was clarified that students' participation (or non-participation) in the research would have no bearing on assessment outcomes and would remain anonymous in all reporting. All focus groups were undertaken after assessments had been marked and returned, to ensure the research and assessment processes remained separate. Consent forms were distributed by the researchers' supervisors or the ALL educator while the researcher stepped out of the room, to minimise any sense of coercion or obligation among the students. Semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to students in the final weeks of the units to complete anonymously, if they wished.

While these processes aimed to separate the data collection from the teaching relationship and processes, it created some recruitment difficulties for the focus groups. Because the focus groups took place after the assessments were returned, students were on semester breaks and more disengaged from the university world. Many were working or caring for families, which inhibited their attendance; even though more students had consented to participate, few actually attended in the end: a total of 10 in four sessions. In retrospect, some small material incentives to attend the focus groups could have been included in the research design (for example free movie tickets),

which may have attracted more participants. Fortunately, more students completed the questionnaires in both cycles: a total of 68 (see Table 3.2 below).

The Educators

As the researcher practitioner, I was the Unit Coordinator of the subjects under study in both cycles. In practice, I had continuing employment conditions with designated responsibility for course content, lecture delivery, assessment design, teaching of some tutorials, some marking and support of the subject tutors. Qualified sessional (casual) staff were employed to conduct weekly tutorial classes and mark student assessments (one was seconded from another section of the university). Regular contact between me, as the Unit Coordinator, and the tutors provided support and debriefing for them, added to their engagement and promoted consistency in quality. The different employment status of the researcher/ practitioner and the tutors created a power imbalance that needed to be navigated in the practitioner/ researcher roles (Byers & Tani 2014). This is discussed more fully in the next chapter, but methodologically the researcher/practitioner aimed to maintain a respectful stance, and invited tutors' feedback throughout the planning, Enactment and reflection phases of the project. The ALL educator was highly qualified in academic learning and linguistics, attended all lectures (including some co-teaching), and co-taught in the researcher's tutorial. She contributed to planning the curriculum and teaching in tutorials – by, for example, deconstructing assessment tasks to make their requirements more explicit, leading discussions on academic reading and writing, providing models and resources online for students and the other tutors to access. She was also available for individual student consultations on academic literacies. As an outsider to the discipline, she could potentially feel less powerful in the teaching and research process. However, her expertise and contribution was integral to the planning, enactment and reflection stages of the project. Having worked with her in previous social work units, there was maturation in the negotiating of our roles in these stages. The collaboration included the

two of us meeting weekly to discuss and plan for refinements in the curriculum and pedagogy. Such processes contributed to *democratic validity* in the Action research (the inclusion in collaboration of all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation) (Herr & Anderson 2005 p53).

All the subject tutors (three in total) and the ALL educator agreed to participate in interviews. Unfortunately, the subject tutor in the first cycle had to return abruptly to America two-thirds through the unit for health reasons. I had to quickly recruit another tutor who had little time to find her feet. Whilst the initial tutor was willing to participate in the research, it was felt that her health issues were such that it did not seem appropriate to follow up with an overseas interview through Skype. The newly recruited tutor had insufficient time to participate in the unit to be able to participate meaningfully. This meant that the only other educator interviewed for the first cycle was the ALL educator. In the second cycle all educators were interviewed.

All the educators were briefed about the project before commencing teaching, both verbally and with information sheets, and given opportunities to ask questions. The location of the interviews was in a quiet and private office on a campus negotiated with the educators, at their convenience. The interviews were conducted as 'informal conversations', as recommended by Stringer (2007 p69) and undertaken on only one occasion per cycle for each educator. They went for approximately one to one and a half hours, as recommended by Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), allowing all participants to articulate issues at some length, making it possible to go beyond first impressions and to develop equality in the dialogue. The interviews were electronically recorded, except for the first interview when technology failed. Data from the first interview was based on written notes taken by the interviewer during the interview (as a back-up strategy). Whilst recording can be perceived as intrusive in some contexts, the use of a mobile phone to record was fairly simply and unobtrusively managed.

As indicated above, the first cycle had only one educator to interview – the ALL co-teacher/designer. Her observations, as an ALL educator and outside the social work

discipline, were important as she was primarily an observer in the lectures and partial contributor to the tutorials. In the second cycle, two social work tutors who were both new to the subject, and the same ALL educator, were interviewed. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005 p72) suggest that, 'people generally find the experience [of being interviewed] rewarding'. According to their comments afterwards, the interviewed educators were positive about their interviews. They found the time to reflect and discuss the unit constructive for their own learning, a welcome (and rare) opportunity to debrief after teaching during the semester, and they were happy to support the study. The participant numbers and the data collection methods are summarised in Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2: Participants in Data Collection

	Student Questionnaires	Student Focus Group	Staff Interviews	Field Journal	Collegial Conversations across the University
Cycle 1	32 responses (out of 78 enrolled)	Focus Group 1 3 students	1 ALL educator	Social Work Theories Weekly entries	Weekly with embedded ALL educator; additional ALL and social work colleagues and thesis supervisors
		Additional Interview of 1 student who couldn't attend the FG			Academic Language specialist from another faculty; Senior staff member from Learning Support; Social Work Professor and Senior lecturer (SW)
Cycle 2	36 responses (out of 75 enrolled)	Focus Group 1 3 students	3 ALL educator and two discipline tutors	Introduction to Social Work Weekly entries	Weekly with ALL educator and 2 additional ALL colleagues outside the study; thesis supervisors
		Focus Group 2 3 students			Academic and senior staff from Learning Support in the university; Social Work Professor

Security Processes in Relation to Data

All collected data was made secure in in a filing cabinet in my office, which is locked when unoccupied. No names were attached to transcripts of interviews or focus groups – rather, 'Interview 1, first cycle'; 'Focus group first cycle', etc. Electronic data was stored in password-protected files. Each participant was guaranteed anonymity. In relation to focus groups, participants were encouraged to share what they were comfortable with and asked to respect each other's confidentiality. There was acknowledgement that focus groups limit researchers' control over confidentiality, but anonymity was maintained.

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

According to Schwandt (2007 p6), data analysis involves the 'activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorising data'. Qualitative research has several approaches to analysing and making sense of data. This project used interpretive thematic analysis: identifying, analysing and reporting themes within the data (Liamputtong 2013 p249). It involved searching across the data set 'to find patterns of meaning' (Braun & Clarke 2006, cited in Liamputtong 2013 p250) or 'patterns of experience' (Aronson 1994 p1), relating all the data to these patterns, then collating these into themes and sub-themes and building an argument to reflect these. Data was coded by categorising, summarising and labelling sections of the data (Charmaz 2006, cited in Liamputtong 2013 p242). Such active coding allows researchers 'to repeatedly interact with their data and ask many different questions' about it (Liamputtong 2013 p246).

Data from the interviews and focus groups was professionally transcribed. A broad transcription key was used for this; words not used from the transcript for the purposes of clarity were represented by the traditional .... I read these transcriptions several times to identify emerging themes and code them as they connected to themes identified in the other data sources. Questionnaire responses were collated into table

form and examined alongside the verbatim recorded data, coding similar themes and identifying additional ones. Entries from my journal were added to this analysis, identifying related and additional themes. Course documentation, including retention rates, student results and some written assessments, was included as part of this analysis, with recognition of the limitation of these within the scope of this study. Data was selected for reporting to represent all the themes that emerged. The combining of the data brought together what Leininger (1985, cited in Aronson 1994 p1) describes as 'components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which are often meaningless when viewed alone' (It also contributed to *triangulation* of the data to add validity to the research findings by comparing and contrasting different perspectives from different data collection tools (Cresswell 2013; Stake 1994).

Research Validity

Herr and Anderson (2005 p53) argue that AR should not necessarily be judged by the same validity criteria as positivistic and naturalistic research. Positivist research aims for *validity* in the sense of 'objective truth' (Campbell & Stanley 1963), while naturalistic research has used the term *trustworthiness* (Lincoln & Guba 1985) to ensure quality criteria in research. Herr and Anderson (2005 p53; Anderson & Herr 1999) have tentatively formulated validity criteria, hoping to span the multiple traditions of AR. Most relevant to this project are *democratic validity, catalytic validity* and *dialogic validity. Democratic validity* is the extent of collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation and how multiple perspectives are taken into account. The perspectives and contributions of key stakeholders in the project were sought (all students and educators across two disciplines) in the research process. This enabled multiple perspectives to be heard and differences to surface. Triangulation of data enabled the inclusion of discrepant or discordant themes in the analysis to ensure the study's credibility. This is important in presenting qualitative research, which is interpretive and complex (Tracy 2010). *Dialogic validity* refers to communicative

collaboration amongst relevant peers. I consulted with colleagues in the university in both the social work and language and learning fields at different points throughout the project for debriefing, in order to incorporate their suggestions, feedback and perspectives. The collaborative work with the ALL educator was another means of inviting expert consultation throughout the AR. As part of this collaboration, after the data analysis a timely draft of the methodology and data chapters was forwarded to the ALL educator for her feedback. I quote her written response, which was unequivocal:

> Chapter 4 is very, very informative and intriguing to read... I think it is a really rich account of what was going on inside the classroom and the students' and teachers' minds… I've now read the revised version of chapter 5 you sent to me on September 22. Again, the chapter gives a very cohesive and rich description and interpretation of the realities found in the two cycles. There's not much for me to comment on or suggest as the chapter is really good research writing.

Catalytic validity is the extent to which all involved in the research deepen their understanding of the social reality under study and are moved to change it (or re-affirm their support of it). The action and reflection cycles over the two semesters, and the multiple sources of data, allowed a growing understanding and response to the research questions posed at the project's commencement, as discussed in the following chapters.

Whilst AR outcomes often apply primarily to the particular context of the study, detailed descriptions of the context, activities and events that are reported as part of the study outcomes can expose how the study might be relevant elsewhere and facilitate transferability (Stringer 2007 p59). This research has been very explicit about the context, activities and events pertaining to the study so that outsiders can make judgements about the similarity of their own situation for the outcomes to be made relevant.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher proceeded with data collection only after receiving confirmation and approval from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 12/145). All participants received written and verbal information and all interviews were undertaken after the signing of consent forms. All participation was voluntary and participants were advised that they could withdraw at any stage of the process. Confidentiality was respected at all stages of the research; for example, no names were attached to questionnaires or interview transcripts, which were professionally transcribed. Student work used as data had students' written consent, obtained after unit assessment was completed, and were reported anonymously.

One of the most important challenges in collecting qualitative data is negotiating issues of researcher power over participants, particularly when the researcher is 'inside' the research process and has another role in relation to the participants (Jones, Torres & Armenio 2013). As the researcher/practitioner, I negotiated the boundaries and parameters of the study with the participants, involving them as co-researchers, but not expecting them to undertake substantial amounts of additional work (Noffke & Somekh 2005 p90). Given that I was both the researcher and the educator of the students, it was difficult to avoid the possibility of the students in the focus group saying what the teacher 'might want to hear'. Ensuring the focus groups took place after assessments had been marked and returned, avoiding leading questions in the focus groups, and reassuring students that their responses remained anonymous, were among the strategies to minimise this. The anonymous questionnaires, distributed and collected by thesis supervisors and the ALL educator, were another attempt to counter-balance this dynamic. Similarly, the discipline tutors were essentially recruited by the lecturer/researcher, so again a power imbalance was inevitable. Fontana and Frey (2008) recommend *empathic interviewing,* where researcher and participant co-create findings. The development of rapport and trust is important, not for the researcher's

ends, but through sincere development of shared language and meanings (Fontana & Frey 2008, cited in Jones Torres & Armenio 2013 p161). I aimed to provide a welcoming and empathic space for the interviews and focus groups, inviting co-contributions to our collective learning.

In respect to partiality and the locating of the researcher, all the participants were advised of the research, its intent and the explicit role of the lecturer/researcher in the research early in the initial teaching stages. The researcher had 'conscious partiality' and sought to form 'non-exploitative relationships with research subjects', as advocated by feminist researcher Berger (1993, cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005 p23). Collegial consultations with peers and research supervisors assisted with maintaining some emotional distance from the teaching and research at different points in the research process. At all stages, I sought to undertake the research *with* the collaborators and participants, not *on* or *about* them, and to represent their experience and perspectives with honesty and integrity (Noftke 2009). I was mindful of ensuring that no participant felt pressured, intruded upon or vulnerable to harm as a result of participation in the research process. This probably influenced the lower participation rates (causing some tension for the researcher), but at all times this was given priority. Participants were advised of the availability of the completed thesis though the University's library, so that they could be fully informed of the project's outcomes.

Further Chapters

This chapter has provided the methodological rationale for collecting data to address the research questions that emerged from the identified educational problem. It has oriented the reader to the epistemological foundations of the research, prefacing the data findings that are outlined in the next two chapters. Chapter Four articulates how the curriculum and pedagogies were enacted with the students and educators in the two AR cycles in the BSW program. Data on the stakeholders' perspectives about the curricular and pedagogies, and the institutional and contextual facilitators in the case

study, are presented and discussed in relation to relevant literature. Emphasis is on the first phase of the data analysis; that is, at the time of curricular and pedagogic enactment, which involved discussions, review and reflections during, between and immediately after the cycles. The second stage of the data analysis, after the enactment had been completed, is examined in Chapter Five which presents analysis on the institutional and contextual constraints to the enacted curriculum and pedagogies, and is discussed in relation to the literature.

Chapter Four – Enablers and Possibilities of the Pedagogies

Introduction

This chapter provides an outline and analysis of the pedagogical and curricular practice of this research. It clarifies how students' vernacular literacies and Funds of Literacy (FoL) were engaged in the curriculum and pedagogy in the two units in the Bachelor of Social Work. These FoL were contrasted with other literacy genres and communities while learning the discipline knowledge, and elite codes were made explicit. The chapter outlines a profile of the students in the case-study, indicating the proportion and characteristics of 'non-traditional' students. The chapter responds to the research questions about what educational possibilities emerge when pedagogic approaches that acknowledge and build on students' FoL are enacted, including:

- the possibilities that open up when explicit attention to multiple literacies and raising consciousness of their differences and their codes are introduced to the curriculum;

- how the approach helps to prepare 'non-traditional' students to succeed in their academic, professional and personal life-world contexts;

- how the dual foci on literacy and discipline content interact in designing and implementing the curriculum and how the literacy 'outsider' to the unit, and the teaching 'insider', work together?

To respond to these questions, students', educators' and the researcher's responses to the enacted practices are presented from the five main data sources - student questionnaires, student focus groups, educator interviews, researcher's field journal and course documentation. Findings from the data analysis are discussed in relation to the literature, identifying the possibilities for 'epistemological access' (Morrow 1993) by 'non-traditional' students. The analysis highlights how learning discipline content necessarily involves negotiating the multiple texts, literacies and knowledges available

to students, and how 'non-traditional' students' FoL (literacy assets for learning that educational institutions normally fail to recognise and use) can support this negotiation, as students re-author new social identities and successfully participate in tertiary education.

Planning and Design

This section examines how the dual foci on literacy and discipline content were integrated in the design phase of the curriculum. The planning stages of the AR had an initial phase prior to each cycle and then continued week-by-week throughout the enactment stages. The weekly planning and review by myself, as the lecturer/researcher, and the ALL educator enabled a pedagogic responsiveness to the particular students we were teaching, and informed weekly lectures and tutorial guides (provided to discipline tutors). Moll (2014 p117) points out that the processes and outcomes of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development are 'emergent and not pre-ordained', reflecting the 'variability and generativity' of the dynamics of student and educator interaction. Week-by-week planning and reflection acknowledged these emergent processes, as we responded to the interactions, activities and assessments of students as we got to know them. Discipline tutors provided feedback before and during the semester through regular conversations. These key players formed the teaching team (henceforth referred to as 'we'). To give a sense of the students we were teaching and the proportion from 'non-traditional' backgrounds, a profile of the students in the case-study is included below. The strategies we aimed to use, to connect with students in the early stages of the course as we were getting to know them, are specified.

The Process of Curriculum Design

As previously discussed, the original thesis proposal had me in the role of academic language specialist, collaborating with the discipline Social Work senior lecturer, who

would teach *Social Work Theories* (SWT) in the first cycle of the research. This potentially enabled space for the co-creation of the curriculum, with some distance of the researcher from the teaching process in the first cycle. It also provided some space in the initial cycle to intentionally bring together the literacy and discipline dimensions of learning. However the senior collaborating lecturer's resignation weeks before the semester commenced, after protracted illness the semester before, made collaborative curriculum design ultimately not possible. Given my discipline background and prior teaching experience (although not in the units specified in the research), it was agreed that I actually *do* the teaching in the first cycle unit (SWT), synthesising the discipline content and literacies components in the process. The Social Work professor was available for additional discipline consultation over the curriculum development.

The Choice of an Embedded Model

To pay due attention to both the literacy and discipline dimensions, I enlisted the expertise of a University ALL specialist, with whom I had previously worked on another Social Work unit. The ALL specialist's role was to assist with the curriculum design in its final stages and to co-teach the unit, bringing her academic literacy expertise into direct connection with the teaching-and-learning of discipline knowledge content – referred to in the literature as being 'embedded' in the discipline (Gunn *et al.* 2011; Moraitis *et al.* 2012). The ALL specialist was briefed about the research and attended all lectures and the researcher's tutorials (except for one unavoidable absence). This embedded model enabled her teaching, assistance to students and contributions to curriculum development to be fully contextualised by the discipline content. This resource was utilised for both cycles of the Action Research. _I and the ALL specialist met prior to teaching for her to review assessments and curriculum design, and then weekly to reflect on the previous session and plan aspects of the more detailed curriculum and pedagogy for the following week. This became a valuable resource, particularly in the explicit teaching of academic discourse components, and provided

someone outside the territory of discipline teaching to observe and provide critical input, informing week-by-week planning. The skeletal curriculum structure – as articulated in the Unit Guide – was submitted to the Professor of Social Work for her final review and approval. The first unit had an 'inherited' curriculum from the former senior Social Work lecturer; the second, *Introduction to Social Work* (ISW), was a new unit in the course, which was designed from scratch. In both cases, the text books for the units had been pre-assigned.

We were designing the curriculum within existing organisational systems that had fixed aspects. For example, the timetabled teaching space was 12 weeks of one lecture and one tutorial (of multiple groups), of one hour (first cycle) and one and half hour (second cycle) duration, with a web-based platform that was under review. In both cycles, the lecture was repeated at another time slot in each week, with additional tutorial times. One discipline tutor (DT) was allocated to the first cycle (Social Work Theories) and two discipline tutors (DT1 and DT2) were allocated to the second cycle (Introduction to Social Work). For field work immersion, as part of my research, I conducted two tutorials in the first cycle, one of which had the ALL specialist co-teaching, and one tutorial in the second cycle with the ALL co-teaching.

The Student Profile in the Case-study

University records provide publicly available demographic data of students in each unit of study. This was supplemented in the case study by an informal questionnaire given to students to get to know some things about their life-worlds outside the university (Cuseo 2011). Both of these data sets provide a profile of the students in the two cycles of the case study. According to university demographic data, in the first cycle (SWT), among the 78 enrolled students 75.6% were female; 51.3% were 25 years and over and 42.3% aged between 20 and 24; and 28.2 % were international students.

Socio-economic status (PHPI - *Person Home Code Indicator*)[2] of domestic students indicated 10.7% 'low', 51.8% 'medium' and 37.5% 'high'. There have been questions raised about the accuracy of indices used to measure SES of higher education students (Devlin 2013 p940). They are generally based on students' postcodes, which have been geographically ranked according to educational attainment, employment and vocational skills. In terms of being the first in family to attend university, 5.1% of mothers and 20.5% of fathers were reported as having completed university studies. 51.3% were born in Australia and the rest originated from 23 other nations. 64.3% spoke English at home. 27% had completed a Diploma or Advanced Diploma, and 21.8% a Bachelor degree, at enrolment. The demographic features of this data are represented in the graph below:

Figure 4.1: Student Demographic Profile - Cycle 1
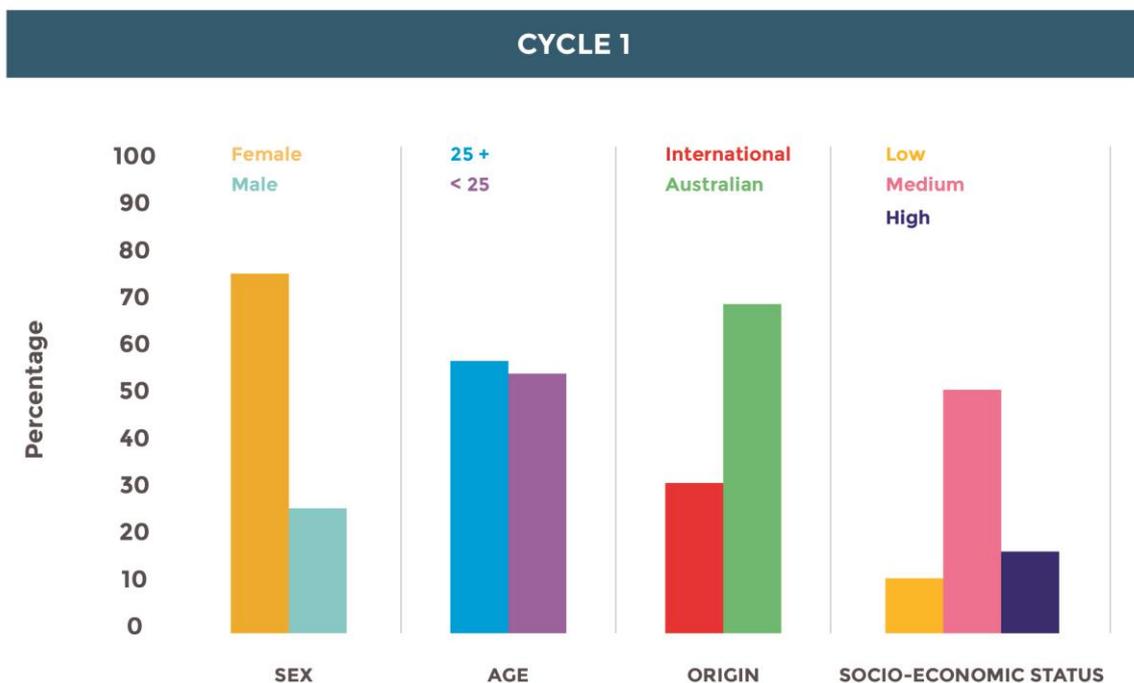
The second cycle (ISW) presents a similar picture with some minor variations. There were 75 enrolled students, 89.3% of whom were female; 26.7 % were 25 years and over; 12% were international students. In terms of PHPI socio-economic status of domestic students, 21% were rated as 'low', 54.5% 'medium' and 16% high. In terms of parents who had completed university studies, 12% of fathers and 5.3% of mothers were reported as having completed a bachelor degree. 68% of students were born in Australia and the rest originated from 16 other nations. 72% reported English as their spoken language at home. Prior educational experience indicated that 10.6% identified as having completed a Diploma or Advanced Diploma, and 6.7 % as having completed a Bachelor level qualification. See the graph below for representation of the student demographic profile for cycle 2:

Figure 4.2: Student Demographic Profile - Cycle 2
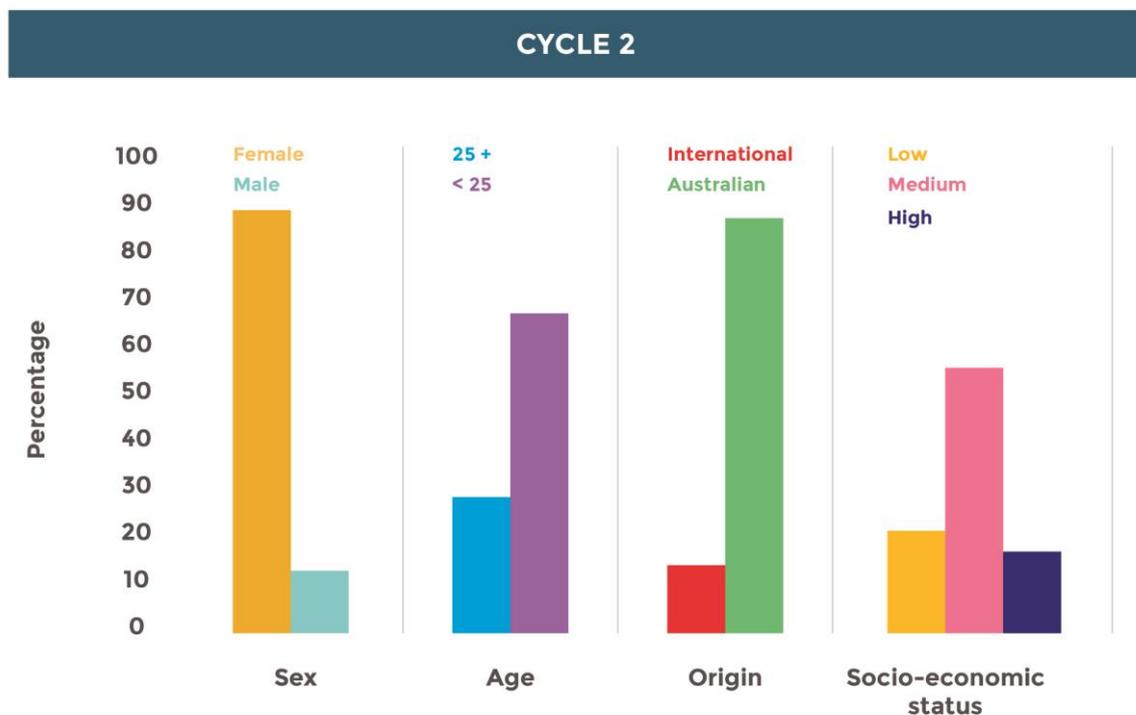
This data suggests a student profile that includes 'non-traditional' students to a significant degree, particularly in terms of a large majority being first in family to attend

university and a proportion being from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The large proportion of females is consistent with traditional proportions in the profession, which is highly feminised (Cooper & Crisp 2002; Schilling, Morrish & Liu 2008). There is a higher representation of students from 'low' to 'medium' SES groups among domestic students. There was no reference to Indigenous students in either of these cohorts and it seemed that students self-identifying as having a disability were not indicated. This does not mean that Indigenous people or students with disabilities were not enrolled, only that they did not self-declare on enrolment documentation.

Although the SES ranking is higher than anticipated, recent research from Deakin University (Devlin & O'Shea 2011 p5) confirms that key elements identified for effective teaching of low SES students align with research on effective university teaching generally. The implication is that, while there are a number of specific aspects of effective teaching that are particularly useful for low SES students, these teaching practices will benefit all students (Theis, Wallis, Turner & Wishart 2014). For example, interviews with students from low SES groups at Deakin University identified four major areas that have particularly assisted them to succeed in their studies. These include having teachers who are approachable and available, enthusiastic and have good rapport with students, use language and examples that students can understand, and provide clear expectations in relation to assessments. Such practices are consistent with broader literature about effective tertiary education teaching and learning (Biggs 2003; Ramsden 2003; Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall 2008).

The curricular and pedagogic design was enacted with all students in the case study, with no differentiation according to students' prior educational performance, experience or cultural, linguistic or other aspects of their backgrounds. This was to avoid any sense of some students being in 'deficit,' and in recognition of the approach being consistent with good educational practices for all tertiary students.

Making Connections with Students

Cuseo's (2011) questionnaire (*Student Information Sheet*), designed to make key connections with students particularly in the first year in higher education, was adapted and given to students in both cycles in the first lecture. The questionnaire (see Appendix D) was designed to build rapport with students in the early weeks of the unit, through questions about their personal backgrounds, abilities, interests, values and distinctive qualities, in order to learn their names and more about them. Cuseo (2011 p6) argues that such rapport meets students' needs for acceptance and validation, necessary in establishing the social-emotional foundation for subsequent learning and personal growth. Not all enrolled students returned the questionnaires (for example if they were late to the class, missed the first lecture or chose not to hand it in), but a large majority did (46 respondents out of 77 students in the first cycle; 56 respondents out of 75 students in the second). We encountered some obstacles, such as student absence or shyness, in enacting it as Cuseo had intended, but it did signal some key features of the students we were getting to know, in the early stages of both cycles. In the second cycle, as well as administering the questionnaire, we focused on engaging with students and learning about them through exercises in tutorials (paired interviews, name-learning warm-up activities, etc.). In practice we were grappling with the tension between privileging the (normative) focus on discipline content and also trying to fit in 'community-building' for student engagement, juggling time constraints and its associated anxieties with investment in such activities.

The students' responses to this informal questionnaire provide a useful snapshot of strengths and experiences they brought to the unit and what was important to them. In the first cycle, 70% of respondents had work or family commitments, with 38% of those having both work and family commitments; in the second cycle, 66% had work and/or family commitments. In both cycles, students identified as 'being good at' communication-related skills (other indicators were photography, make-up, music, sport, dancing, crafts and cooking). The large majority listed their greatest achievements in life so far as having successfully commenced university studies and/or

completed prior studies (exceptions were volunteering, family, prior careers and overcoming various life hurdles). The majority indicated that positive experiences of education were related to social connections and new learning. A significant number indicated negative experiences in their school education and others cited stress as being the most negative aspect of tertiary education. Almost universally, in both cycles, the students cited their family relationships as being of most value to them.

The student profile in the case study indicates a significant range of ethnic and cultural diversity, with success in education and family relationships as highly valued across this cultural and ethnic span. As well as Australia, students were represented from Africa, China, South America, Vietnam, Myanmar, Chile, The Philippines, India and Iran. This signals a wide range of cultural and other resources likely to be present as assets for learning and literacy, as well as potentially providing a rich contribution to the social work discipline and profession. As commonly experienced among contemporary students, a significant proportion were juggling multiple roles as well as that of student. This can be experienced as competition for time and energy for learning, imposing additional pressures on students, and pedagogic challenges for educators. The ALL educator and the researcher drew on the *Student Information Sheets* in a general sense to inform their pedagogical decisions week-by-week. To make better use of this collated information, it would have been good for the teaching team to reflect on the literacy possibilities that the students brought with them. In reality, the momentum of the semester's commencement gave little time for pause, and this potential was not realised as fully as it might have been.

The Curriculum and Pedagogy Enacted

This section discusses the enactment stage of the AR, highlighting the pedagogic possibilities that emerged when the curricular and pedagogic practices were enacted. The discussion includes the discipline-literacy connections made while negotiating the tertiary education context, with the pedagogic use of dialogue, experiential exercises,

student writing and assessments. The engagements of students' FoL for pedagogic use at different points in the teaching cycles are examined, as well as strategies for developing a critical frame. The educational possibilities that surfaced in the AR data are discussed as these practices are analysed with reference to relevant literature. These possibilities are also drawn from the analysis of student focus groups, questionnaires and educator interviews.

Negotiating the Tertiary Context

Students' vernacular literacy practices are entwined in everyday life and contain cultural assumptions (Gee 2007; Ivanič *et al.* 2009), including attitudes, values, emotions and social relationships as cultural ways through which students draw on experience (Barton, Ivanič, Appleby, Hodge & Tusting 2007). The research sought to draw on the vernacular literacy practices that students from diverse life-worlds bring to universities - identifying assets from students' values, culture and language systems (Funds of Literacy, or FoL) that might be put to use in processes of learning new academic and discipline literacies. It was proposed that this would assist them to navigate the multiple literacy practices encountered in tertiary studies, particularly for that significant group of first in family/generation to attend university. It is worth clarifying that not all students' vernacular literacies constitute *Funds* of Literacy. Students' vernacular literacies constitute assets for learning when they represent rich elements of lived-cultural use and meaning, such that engaging with them curricularly and pedagogically strikes strong identity resonances which offer scaffolding grounds for bridging to new learning, thus extending what Vygotsky calls the zone of proximal development (Moll 2014). They become pedagogically potent because they draw on students' ways of knowing and being that inhere in their cultural life-worlds beyond educational institutions. Such connections facilitate meaning-making that can bridge between life-world knowledge and practice, and the learning and practicable use of disciplinary knowledge (Zipin 2013).

The project used a range of curricular and pedagogic approaches to elicit students' vernacular literacies and, from these, to draw out FoL that offered value in relation to learning academic, disciplinary and professional literacies. While university education generally does not incorporate FoL, some disciplines lend themselves to eliciting students' prior and outside experiences and their associated values and assumptions more than others, and to varying degrees. The discipline of Social Work often seeks to elicit and explore students' existing values and life experiences in relation to Social Work subject material, because awareness of the 'self' in relation to others and the role of critical reflection are central to its theoretical perspectives and enacted practices (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2012; Adams *et al.* 2009). For example, in *Social Work Theories* (SWT), several of the texts encouraged critical reflection on students' socio-structural positions and the language (narratives) with which these are associated, to examine their own ideological assumptions and those of the theories they were encountering (Fook 2012; Mullaly 2007). In *Introduction to Social Work,* the first chapter in the text book specifically invites students to explore their socio-cultural experiences, values and motivations prior to entering the Social Work profession, through various exercises and readings, and connects the significance of these to Social Work knowledge and professional practice through the multiple voices of practitioners and clients (Chenoweth and McAuliffe 2012). This discipline attention to students' cultural values and ideological assumptions facilitated the eliciting of students' life-world knowledge outside the university context and enabled connections to disciplinary and practice knowledge. Students noted this connection in the student focus group (FG) in the second cycle, when asked about ways in which they were aware of the subject deepening their understanding of their own background:

> FG (second cycle) Participant 1*…this subject is good to learn about my own values and really understanding what shapes me…. it is how we influence others and our preconceived ideas and how that could be negative. That was really interesting because from [another discipline] background you are taught*

to be objective, but it's not true, is it? You are going to come across

eventually…I came in thinking I wanted to be working in alcohol and other drugs

and I have (realised)...I have got some personal issues. I lost a brother to drug

use and when I was doing research for it, it sort of brought up personal feelings

and I thought how can I work in this field if this is how I feel? And then it opened

up…

Participant 2*: …Pandora's Box.*

Participant 1*: Exactly…*

Participant 2*…yeah that really resonates with me as well. Similar to yourself in*

[another discipline] they say you don't have any values, you don't have

anything. This is the [professional standards], you live by this and how you feel

about something doesn't matter, it is all about how your patient feels which is

lovely but who can actually achieve that? … So I think it's very important to

acknowledge your prejudices and areas that you might have an emotional link.

And I really wanted to work in Women's Health …I have issues… Maybe I am

going to be triggering myself… is this the kind of work/life that I want to have

where I will be awake all night thinking…maybe I need to look at other avenues

where I am not so personally affected. Or even just explore how I can be OK

with that.

The students have become aware of how their life-worlds and histories are relevant to

the discipline and future practice of Social Work in the first year of the course. The

students' challenging experiences in their histories are here expressed in terms of

potential for 'bias', rather than the potential to connect with future clients, at this early

stage (an observation discussed more fully later). However, hints are given in this

dialogue that such experiences might be assets for relating to the plights of Social

Work clients. Indeed, by the end of the *Introduction to Social Work* unit, they tended to

connect their personal (socio-cultural) values and experience (literacy practices) with their discipline studies, thinking of them less as prejudices and more as assets to make connections to the new disciplinary knowledge. They come to sense connective possibilities in terms of identifying with potential clients around difficult issues and personal histories. This connection has been facilitated by the discipline content giving attention to the students' personal and socio-cultural values and experience; but the pedagogic attention to, and valorising of, such experiences and values – as assets for students' learning – reinforces and strengthens this connection.

The Discipline-Literacy Connection

The central aims of the pedagogical work of this project were influenced by the multi-literacies pedagogy of the New London Group (2000, cited in Mills 2009 p108) - 'situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice' - and incorporated the dual aspirations, referred to earlier: (a) making elite codes of universities explicit and practicable; as (b) scaffolded into connection with curriculum that valorises and makes use of knowledge from students' home and community life-worlds (Zipin 2009 p 318).

In practice, this meant developing curriculum that paid attention to both disciplinary and literacy learning, recognising these as integrally connected (Green 1988; Ivanič *et al.* 2009). Ivanič *et al.* (2009 p36) argue that literacy is integral to the learning and teaching of all subjects and not a discrete set of skills to be learnt alone. In their view, it is 'the responsibility of all educators to consider the communicative aspects of pedagogic practices'. Green's (1988 p160) three dimensions of literacy - 'operational, cultural and critical' - highlight the importance of integrating these literacies in learning any discipline. Students need a degree of operational literacy (competency with the language system) to learn and be socialised into the implicit and explicit culture of any discipline (cultural literacy). However, this socialisation tends to acculturate students into a dominant culture that is socially constructed by powerful

socio-political systems. Critical literacy provides insight into such socially sanctioned processes of knowledge production, so that alternative possibilities can be considered and taken up. Students can then potentially not only participate in discipline knowledge, but actively contribute to and transform it (Green 1988). The project sought to recognise and address these three dimensions of literacy, which align with the New Literacies Studies (New London Group 2000) pedagogies: 'situated practice' and 'overt instruction' broadly pertain to cultural and operational literacies, and 'critical frame' pertains to critical literacies.

In the project, Green's (1988) three literacy dimensions (operational, cultural and critical) were integrated into learning for induction into the three Discourse communities of knowledge and literacy – specific disciplinary; academic more broadly; and professional practitioner – required for students' successful participation in a professional undergraduate degree. Table 4.1 below indicates this overlap between Green's three literacy dimensions and the three Discourse communities. It is important to appreciate that the three literacy dimensions are potentially present in all literacy encounters. For example, to successfully participate in disciplinary Discourse, students need operational literacy to express disciplinary knowledge; cultural literacy to use discipline Discourse differentially in a range of contexts (for example, in different subjects, genres, field placements, interactions with peers and professionals); and critical literacy to interrogate texts and new knowledge with regard to power relations. To participate in academic Discourse, students need operational literacy to express discipline knowledge in an academic genre; cultural literacy to apply the conventions of academic Discourse to a range of academic genres (for example, essays, oral presentations, reports, case studies); and critical literacy to express critical analysis in academic written and oral tasks. In professional Discourse, they need operational literacy to accurately express clear, written and oral communication in a range of genres as required in the profession; cultural literacy to transfer skills and knowledge from formal academic genres to written and oral requirements in the workplace; and

critical literacy to apply a critical perspective and critical analysis in practice. Discourse'
and literacies are often used interchangeably. In the table, I've used 'Discourses'
because Gee's (2007) definition of Discourses includes behaviours and dispositions as
well as language, which is particularly relevant for professional contexts.

Table 4.1: Green's (1988) Three Literacy Dimensions Intersecting with Discipline and Academic Discourse/Literacies

		Green's (1988) Three Literacy Dimensions		
		Operational	Cultural	Critical
Discourses (Literacies) Required for Successful Participation in Tertiary Education	Disciplinary	Clearly and accurately express discipline knowledge	Appropriately use discipline Discourse with growing integration into student's identity	Develop a critical perspective to interrogate texts and disciplinary knowledge and contribute to it
	Academic	Accurately express discipline knowledge in an academic genre	Accurately apply the range of Discourse/literacy expectations of the academic genre	Develop capacity for critical analysis in academic writing and oral genres
	Professional	Accurately express clear, written and oral communication in a range of genres, as required in the profession	Transfer skills and knowledge from academic genre to written and oral requirements in the workplace	Apply a critical perspective and critical analysis in practice

In practical terms, examples of integrating literacies into the learning and
teaching of the discipline are given throughout the chapter. These were sometimes
brief, unassuming techniques that brought the literacies together: for example,
revisiting language and concepts to check understanding at the beginning of each
lecture; encouraging students to make a glossary of new terms; not assuming
understanding, but checking students' grasp of new or discipline specific Discourse (for
example, 'Peak Body', 'empowerment'; 'paradigm'; 'ideology'; 'charity'; 'justice';
'boundaries') through questions, dialogue, giving a brief example of its application and
automatically writing new terms on the board while talking (for the spelling - particularly
for students for whom English was an additional language); and using examples and

stories to illustrate new language and concepts. The temptation is for the educator to be so immersed in the discipline Discourse that they forget the unfamiliar gulf from which students might be coming. Assessment criteria included almost equal ranking of operational (structure and expression), cultural (conceptual expression of discipline content and academic expression) and critical (analytic, evaluative and/or reflective) capacities for the majority of assessment tasks. This gave weight to the three literacy dimensions in the assessments.

Accessing Students' Funds of Literacy

FoL were identified within students' vernacular literacies as the latter were elicited through dialogue about their life-world experiences as well as their responses to (and questions about) the new knowledge to which they were being exposed. The ethnographic research labour of earlier Funds of Knowledge (FoK) research - home visits and individual interviews, examined by the educational teams to build curriculum (Gonzalez *et al.* 2005) - were not practical for this project without significant additional resources, especially time. All the educators and tutors involved in this project were teaching new units, which was time-consuming and constant, as acquaintance with new texts and materials had to be undertaken throughout the semester, placing additional demands on them. At the same time, we were learning to juggle the sometimes vexed tensions of attending to both discipline and literacy in limited time. Our prior teaching experience alerted us to the complexities and intensities with which students' prior experiences and vernacular literacies (perhaps related to the student population attracted to study social work) encounter the expectations of professional, practiced-based qualifications (Collins, Coffey & Morris 2010; Jones 2006). This placed additional demands on educators both inside and outside the classroom. These challenges influenced our pedagogic choices, as outlined below (and more fully explored in the next chapter, where constraints to the project's approach are discussed).

Street (2005 p23) encountered similar practical challenges to accessing FoK for use in the secondary education system. He used students' writing as a 'window' into their life-based expertise to learn more about students' FoK. He argued that students' writing about personal experiences can inform educators about their lives, while at the same time affording literacy gains. Green (1998 p164,165) emphasised the importance of writing for cognitive learning, as learners engage with new information (usually reading and listening) and transform it into personal understandings through the active production of 'their own texts, their own meanings'. Gonzalez (1995) affirmed that learning can be enhanced when educators learn more about their particular students' lives outside school (cited in Street 2005 p23).

Curricular and Pedagogic Approaches

We employed the following approaches to engage students' vernacular literacies (expressing their 'life-world experiences') for scaffolding to disciplinary learning purposes in enactment stages of the AR in the case study. These curricular and pedagogic designs are reported from the range of data drawn upon in this chapter, including field notes, course documentation and records of conversations between the ALL educator and me as the primary lecturer for the unit/s. The design sought to 'situate meaning making' ('situated practice', as expressed in the New Literacies Studies pedagogy), which involved 'building on the life-world experiences of students, to situate meaning making in real-world contexts' (New London Group 2000, cited in Mills 2009 p108).

    I.   Use dialogic and discursive spaces and student writing to:

        o   elicit students' vernacular literacies and use them pedagogically to scaffold to the new literacy practices; for example, inviting students' experiences and responses to new learning into classroom dialogue, to

draw on for intentional pedagogic dialogue ('situated practice');

- o identify FoL that might be used as assets for learning as students express their experiences and their reflections in classroom dialogue or writing and through experiential class exercises ('situated practice');

- o raise consciousness about language (how it functions in different contexts, with differential power) and its role in the learning of academic, disciplinary and professional knowledge, as well as (and contrasted with) Social Work clients' vernacular worlds (new literacy practices/discourses), for example through analysing the differences between every day, professional and academic discourses and the purposes and interests these serve, and implications for academic and Social Work practice ('overt instruction');

- o pay explicit attention to language and literacies through the intersection of disciplinary themes and language, for example exploring the social construction of language, its relationship to power and how dominant discourses silence and potentially 'other' minority groups ('overt instruction' and 'critical frame');

- o raise awareness of 'code-switching' to negotiate differential power across multiple literacies and literacy contexts (or Discourse communities), through explicit teaching and analysing texts and discourses to which the

students are exposed ('critical frame' and 'transformed practice');

o use critical reflection and analysis in classroom dialogue to identify the role of power in knowledge construction, language and socio-political structures that support vested interests of dominant social groups ('critical frame' and 'transformed practice').

II. Embed an ALL educator in the discipline to attend to both literacy and discipline learning by teaching explicit academic literacy practices and contributing to classroom dialogue ('situated practice', 'overt instruction' and 'critical frame');

III. Draw on a range of literacies (for example, newspaper clippings, videos, visual representations, music, popular literature) as a bridge between students' vernacular literacies and the disciplinary knowledge and literacy practices, to encourage meaning-making ('situated practice'; 'overt instruction').

These curricular and pedagogic approaches are discussed in the following sections.

Creating Dialogic and Discursive Spaces

Dialogue became an important vehicle for accessing students' vernacular literacies in order to draw out and build on their FoL. Dialogue facilitated respect and mutuality, which created the pedagogic climate for students to feel welcome to express their knowledges and literacies normally disregarded, or treated as 'deficit'-laden, in academic settings. The project drew on adult education principles, suggesting that adults learn best when they feel respected, supported, accepted and they are treated as capable adults (Larotta & Serrano 2012). In the student questionnaires, most students in both cycles of the AR expressed how their experience of such dialogue

contributed to their learning. This is illustrated in excerpts of responses to the question on approaches to learning and teaching that the students found noteworthy in the units:

> Student questionnaires (first cycle), student 1*: Hands on, sitting with us and totally explaining concepts. Letting discussions flow and sometimes guide the class...and explained things if needed. …engaging and not intimidating…welcome questions and comments…*

> Student 2*: Definitely different from other units in that it is much more interactive and tailored to our needs. We can stop and ask questions.*

> Student 3: *…communicating – both ways. We are all teachers – and learners.*

> Student 4*: I like the approach to involve everyone in the lecture to make sure that things were understood.*

> Student questionnaires (second cycle), Student 1: *The level of warmness (sic) and comfortable environment created by the teachers enabled me to feel comfortable sharing myself with the rest of the class.*

The importance of students feeling comfortable to ask questions and contribute to the classroom dialogue is linked to it being 'tailored to our needs'. Such dialogue created opportunities for students' meaning-making, as they encountered new concepts and literacies. Power differentials between student and educator were minimised in dialogue as students' contributions were welcomed. Trust developed, giving room for the expression of students' FoL, which could then be accessed to make pedagogic connections with the multiple literacies students encountered.

> Student 2: *the focus is a lot on us, and pushes us to think of the practicality of being a social worker, as well as what we can offer to the profession and what we need to work on.*

> Student 3: …*there were more discussions and getting involved, rather than sitting and being told what to do… [which] helped me.*

The students identified their active role in learning and alluded to their own assets ('what we can offer to the profession'), as well as the need for reflection on growth areas.

In universities, the prevailing pedagogical model has traditionally been hierarchical, where the voice of the teacher has been the 'privileged transmitter of knowledge' (hooks, 1994 p 82). In such a system, students learn to adapt without critically analysing their situation, which Freire (1970 p26) called 'dehumanising' as it denies students the 'vocation of becoming more fully human'. Friere (1970) argued for respectful discussions that value diverse perspectives, engage students' questions, explore problems and invite critical analysis. One of the discipline tutors (DT1) commented:

> DT1, (second cycle): …*you gave space for all in discussion about people's experience around particular topics…in smaller group work …even in the lecture, where they were able to have some discussion about how their personal experience…can relate to the topic at hand…you also gave us (the tutors) that space … to use the tutorials a lot for discussion…to be able to relate personal experience with the content. I think that was a very important learning experience.*

Dialogue created opportunities for students' existing literacy practices to be made more explicit, so that they could be explored pedagogically, validated or challenged and connected to the new disciplinary values and literacy practices. Saleebey and Scanlon (2005 p13) write that a dialogue-centred classroom in Social Work education involves stimulating the perspectives of everyone in the classroom

> … and encouraging reflection on how these experiences are consistent and different from formal social work knowledge, …promoting discussions of cultural

and class differences and similarities and sharing of experiences of domination and oppression, and … stimulating a healthy appreciation for ambiguity and disagreement in the classroom.

Students' expressions of life-world experiences, knowledges and literacies, along with raising consciousness to embedded cultural values and assumptions, need to be carefully and dialogically teased out to make learning connections to learning of new knowledge and discourse. While students' testimonies from experience offer valuable contributions to the learning space, and are privileged in a dialogic approach, 'experience' needs to be put to work pedagogically – which, in early progressive education debates, Dewey (1938) argued demands more of educators than transmission approaches. Dewey (1938 p25) wrote that:

> Experience is integral to education, but not all experience is educative…some experiences are mis-educative…(when it) has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience.

Dewey (1938) maintained that experience needs to be connected to emergence of new and useful experience, and 'depending on the quality of that experience, it can become educative' (p 27). The timing and manner of this introduction or link to 'new experience' involves nuanced pedagogy. Like Dewey, Brookfield (2006 p129) argues that uncritical sharing of experience is not in and of itself educational and can be counter-educative. He suggests that when and how educators and learners move people beyond affirmation to alternative critical reinterpretations 'is one of those unresolvable tensions of practice' (p130):

> There is no formulaic answer or standardised series of steps to guide us through this dilemma. We obviously need to be wary of scaring learners away by introducing prematurely the threatening act of deconstructing and challenging familiar ways of understanding the world. So there is an obvious necessity to extend the period of affirmation long enough to engender the trust needed to bring learners to a point of critical readiness.

These learning connections require a period of 'trust-building through affirmation' so that students feel safe enough to 'make the epistemological or psychological' leap that is required for critical analysis in this dialogic space (Brookfield 2006 p130). This leap -

and the movement from expressed vernacular literacies into the new discipline discourses - was highlighted in the discipline tutor interview in the second cycle of the project. In this case, dialogue in class as well as personal dialogue between the educator and student (outside the classroom) connected the student's experience to the new knowledge. In the interview the tutor reported that a student in the tutorial was expressing reactionary views toward people who misuse drugs and alcohol, that were clearly at variance with values in Social Work that encourage a non-judgemental and anti-discriminatory stance (AASW Code of ethics 2010). Other students were reacting critically – in covert and overt ways – to this student's contributions, causing the student distress.

> Discipline Tutor 2 (DT2) (second cycle): *(The student) basically said some things that were crass, judgemental, loud, persistent…nobody said anything, but she came to talk to me midway through the unit and she had started to perceive some of this and people were starting to make comments to her. And I talked with her about [it] because I could see what …she was doing that was triggering some of this.*

The tutor had obviously developed sufficient trust with the student to challenge her familiar ways of viewing and being in the world. Later the student intentionally chose an essay topic that required research related to the issues formerly discussed, in which she acknowledged her prior ideological position had been based on a lack of knowledge and awareness.

> DT2 (quoting what the student had said to her): "*I am really excited, I am feeling really proud of myself because I feel like I have learnt something…*"

> DT2 (commenting): …*when she saw the reaction (of other students), though she felt hurt, she decided it was her responsibility to go away and...learn something.*

A further indication of that trust was evident in a private follow-up conversation between the tutor and the student in which the tutor also explored the student's use of language in the tutorial - the ways she expressed her opinions (vernacular literacies) - that perhaps contributed to the other students' negative reactions. The tutor drew attention to the more polite and tentative language that the student had used in emails to her and encouraged her to think about transferring that more modest approach, when expressing opinions verbally. The tutor later observed her having a go at this in a future discussion group, which was attracting a very different response from group members.

> DT2 (first cycle): *I was watching her [trying the new language] and …she had this really delightful smile and it was very humble, delightful smile …this was quite a new experience for her and my sense was that she felt really included and that she felt really listened to but that she was also listening to other people…and I remember thinking maybe this is a breakthrough*.

Creating room for possible alternative perspectives, with more tentative language, when expressing an opinion, is a common feature of professional Social Work and academic discourse. It reflects the theoretical principles of there being no fixed or final social reality, the possibility of new information or knowledge emerging, and the importance of working with people's perceptions before opening up new possibilities for consideration (Fook 2012; Connolly & Harms 2012). The explicit attention to the use of language in this educative sequence - in both a practical and ideological sense – highlights the pivotal role that language plays in how students learn to appropriate the cultures and practices of the new discipline (Gee 2011; Brown, Reveles & Kelly 2005). It illustrates the link between learning and identity formation, as students are inducted into a community of practice through its socio-literacy practices or Discourse (Lave & Wenger 1991, cited in Barton & Tan 2009 p5).

The vernacular literacies that students draw on can be understood as reflections of their identities; the language they use at home and with their peer

networks reflects their familiar cultural and social-structural positions and associated identities. As they engage in discipline learning, students acquire new overlays of identity related to who they hope to become (Wenger 1998). For example, a young African-Anglo woman who was first in her family to attend university informally discussed her resistance to academic demands with some despondence, as they felt alien to her strong practical impulses to help others. As her identity shifted and struggles were named and normalised, and language codes associated with these shifts were identified, she felt encouraged to press on with necessary academic labours. Dialogue enabled language exchange between students' vernacular literacies and the new literacies. Making 'educative use of students' familiar literacies… to help them develop capacities in the structurally dominant literacies they need to be effective' supported the students to grow into the new discipline and associated professional identities (Zipin & Brennan 2006 p336). For example, a mature age woman explored the role of story and identity in narrative concepts as she talked about her step-children negotiating alienation from their birth mother. The students negotiated new language and identities as their more familiar literacies were put to educative use in the classroom through dialogue.

There were times when it became apparent in the classroom that the Social Work discipline had new or even contradictory cultural assumptions and values that needed to be understood and integrated – and simultaneously interrogated – by students, as part of enabling their participation in, and contribution to, discipline knowledge. At these times, dialogue created a potent form of educator and peer intervention in the learners' progress across the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky 1987), to maximise their learning, integration and interrogation (Alexander 2008 p109). As students explored their reactions to evocative case scenarios, other students sometimes respectfully challenged or questioned reactionary or judgemental statements made. At other times, educators were able to do this through dialogue,

gently guiding students' participation and shifts into new literacies and shifting/developing identities.

Such educative dialogue often competed for time with more familiar teaching practices. A significant learning challenge for the educators, between the AR cycles, was to maximise space for dialogue, and not 'fill time' with content and 'teacher talk'. The temptation to revert to more familiar teaching practices, particularly when pressed for time, surfaced noticeably in the first cycle. Looking back on the lecture notes in that cycle, there were lost opportunities, where asking questions and engaging students' own experience, rather than introducing more content, would have enhanced the learning. In the second cycle, we were more aware of opportunities to ask questions and slow down to create room for dialogue (we also had more time). Cultivated by the action-reflection cycle of the AR (Schön 1987), we learnt to become more alert to the pedagogic opportunities that dialogue enabled, as we developed curriculum in our week-by-week reflections and between the two cycles. 'Thinking on our feet', as educational opportunities emerged in dialogue and student interactions, was important learning for the educators throughout the project.

Funds of Literacy in Dialogue

In these dialogic interactions, FoL were put to work as legitimate student resources for learning, used spontaneously in classes and potentially considered for week-by-week planning. In the first cycle, a student asked if she could use her hand puppets to illustrate narrative theoretical approaches in her assessed class presentation. This was willingly agreed to, and it became a stunning and creative presentation where she drew on her FoL, connected to her expertise in puppetry, to connect to the new knowledge and effectively engage other students in learning through the process. Another student in the same tutorial group used photographs and elements from her family history to very effectively illustrate social construction theory in an engaging and thoughtful explication to students. Another student presentation connected her new learning about

cognitive-behavioural theory with her personal experience of its enactment at a time of personal anxiety. Her personal story was both engaging and respectful of her own boundaries, reinforcing professional behaviours and modelling these to other students. These students had the courage to explore their new learning through the 'funds' of their experience and literacies from their lives outside the university context, in quite high-stakes assessment activity. Their courage to do so was supported by educators' privileging of FoL and valorising their expression in the meaning-making process, thereby reducing the judgementalism usually associated with high-stakes assessment. High stakes assessment presents a contradiction to pedagogical efforts to work with FoK; however it is unavoidable in the academic milieu and so itself is an 'academic literacy' to be scaffolded and learned.

In the final class of *Introduction to Social Work* (second cycle) a mature age student for whom English is an additional language tentatively discussed how her Buddhist beliefs had helped her navigate personal challenges and change, wondering if they might have a place in her future Social Work practice. This discussion encouraged other students to discuss their experience or understanding about personal change from their cultural belief frameworks. In another class, discussion about a case study in aged care was enlivened by a young student's contribution from experience with her 'Poppy'; other students quickly built on this from their work or voluntary experience in aged care. The introduction of students' FoL into the dialogue provided rich opportunities for meaning-making, as students learnt about the place of their values and life experience in relation to social work values and the ethical considerations of sharing experience with clients. These interactions illustrated Vygotsky's (1978) central premise of the *cultural mediation of thinking:* the ways in which cultural practices and symbolic systems mediate in thinking development (Wertsch 2007, cited in Moll 2014 p2). The cultural practices and systems of the students' life-worlds were mediating their developing understanding of the discipline and its application to professional practice. The formative role of others (educators and

peers) in mediating students' thinking (i.e. through extending the *zone of proximal development*) was important in the pedagogy. Like experience, interaction is not necessarily educative in itself; classroom talk in vernacular literacies needs to be both examined with critically reflective consciousness, and scaffolded to engaged thinking processes that advance meaningful learning and understanding (Alexander 2008). Dialogue needs to be educative (scaffolding to new knowledge) and sufficiently paced for students to link with and actively construct this knowledge. In her interview in the second cycle, the ALL educator commented on the students' contribution in the final class, referred to earlier, particularly from a non-dominant culture. She acknowledged that such dialogue cannot be 'forced' but emerges sometimes gradually from creating safe spaces for meaningful dialogue:

> Interviewer (researcher): *I wonder…if there was anything we could have done to help that to happen a bit (earlier – rather than in the last session)?*
>
> ALL tutor interview (second cycle): *I am happy with that late… blossoming because I think … that feels natural…rather than forcing it…But that is again very personal, perhaps ...because I am that kind of learner…I know that I am silent first for a long time.*

Alexander (2008 p185) argues that for interaction to be dialogic, it needs to be 'collective' (teachers and students address learning tasks together), 'reciprocal' (teachers and learners listen to each other, and consider different viewpoints), 'supportive' (no fear of embarrassment), 'cumulative' (teachers and learners build on their own and others' ideas into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry) and 'purposeful' (teachers plan and steer classroom talk to meet specific educational goals). He advocates a 'repertoire' of dialogic spaces - whole class, group or individual interactions (pairs); and varying degrees of teacher direction – depending on the particular students, the discipline and the context.

These dialogic and scaffolding principles guided curriculum development, pedagogy and our weekly reflections throughout the project. We increasingly created collaborative dialogic spaces and exercises for the whole class, small groups or pairs for example, to respond to set questions, problem-solve through consensus and articulate questions or responses to studied material or issues raised. In questionnaires and focus groups, students in the research (second cycle) consistently highlighted one or more of these collaborative and dialogic exercises as memorable, in ways suggesting that they thus became producers and users of language – not just listening to language, but interacting with it. In *ISW*, the lecturer introduced students to new terms and concepts (such as 'teleological' and 'utilitarian'), related to the philosophy of ethics for Social Work practice before involving them in a simple exercise to scaffold their learning to a deeper understanding of the terms, drawing on their own experience and FoL. The exercise involved the lecturer outlining a practice scenario with an inherent and quite complex ethical dilemma from the lecturer's prior practice. Students were then asked physically to go to the side of the room that represented one of two courses of action that might ethically be the 'right' one. While moving into position, students interacted with each other as they considered their (uneasy) choice and reflected on their own values and 'everyday' experience to inform their choice. They then 'embodied' a 'utilitarian' or 'teleological' ethical position by virtue of their own reasoning, values and ethical decision-making, drawing on their life-world knowledge and values. When they settled on their choice, the lecturer asked students whether they thought the decision they had taken was 'utilitarian' or 'teleological', and why. Further discussion and reference to discipline knowledge (by the lecturer – helping to mediate new learning) elicited that both stances could be argued from different ethical philosophical positions. Teasing out this question in whole class dialogue, and making ethical decisions based on their own values, helped students to make cognitive connections to the new terminology, concepts and values integral to Social Work

practice. As students went back to their original seats, they were engaged in heightened discussion as they processed all of this meaning-making.

Another quite different example, from the first cycle, was Cuseo's (2011) *One-Minute Papers*, where students were asked at the end of the lecture to spend one minute writing down responses to the following questions: What was most memorable about the lecture? What did they consider to be the most central point or concept from the lecture? What was the muddiest point for them? We then collected these quickly written responses and used them to guide our planning week-by week and for tutorial discussions. This cemented learning and sent a message that participation is expected and valued; it involved all students, and gave students who might be reluctant to seek clarification verbally the opportunity to express their uncertainties or confusions. We did this several times throughout the semester as another form of personalised dialogue with students (Cuseo 2011). This practice sought to centre students' own experiences, giving permission for positive and negative reactions and feelings in the educative process, and to get a sense of how their meaning-making was progressing. In these dialogues, where usually ignored aspects of students' identities were brought into the university classroom, students drew from their FoL to renegotiate the borders of their participation, allowing them to build social identities in the new discipline (Barton & Tan 2009 p52).

Critical Framing in Dialogue

Dialogue and questioning facilitated 'critical framing' (New London Group 2000), reinforcing theoretical concepts in the Social Work discipline and the orientation of the *BSW* in the case study, as well as attending to the critical literacy component of disciplinary learning, advocated by Green (2008). In dialogue, students were encouraged to express a dissenting perspective in class discussions, case studies were examined from multiple (theoretical) perspectives, and analysis of power was included (Brookfield 2006; Fook & Askeland 2007). In the first cycle, less socially

dominant epistemological perspectives, such as Indigenous ways of knowing, were explored through Indigenous Social Work writers (Bennett, Green, Gilbert & Bessarab 2012) and guest lecturers, as a critical perspective on more traditional ways of knowing. Less dominant perspectives among students, from their cultural heritages and life-worlds, were invited into that space, but these were less freely expressed than we had hoped, particularly in the first cycle (see Chapter Five). The values and assumptions of theories were examined, to avoid them being uncritically enacted. The underlying assumptions of theories concerning social reality (how 'truth' is discovered) and how social change occurs (Burrell & Morgan 1979) were explored as part of this critical exploration. Social Construction theory underpinned more recent social work theories, and was examined in relation to how dominant discourses (the role of language) create and shape social reality, and perpetuate or challenge socio-political power relations (Fook 2012). This exposed the lack of neutrality in language and its role in supporting or maintaining powerful interests in social relations, and provided a productive discipline-language connection to explore how language works in different contexts.

In student questionnaires in the research, their responses to the question, 'what helped your learning?' were typified by the following comments:

Student Questionnaire (first cycle): *The teacher giving me the opportunity to discuss and question and explore.*

Student Questionnaire (second cycle): *By hearing other people's thoughts and opinions it opened up my mind to a lot of different beliefs.*

Student Questionnaire (second cycle): *The group work definitely helped me to be more open. The discussions were very clear and allowed me to think more critically about issues.*

Student Questionnaire (second cycle): *the hands-on tutorials are really stimulating and push me to think 'outside the box'.*

The students were learning from each other's experience and world views, which were, according to them, supporting their learning of the discipline. Both educator and peer interactions informed as well as challenged students' existing world views. Brookfield (2006) argues that questions from educators in the dialogic space need to ask how students' experiences might be understood from different perspectives, what aspects of 'experience' need questioning and further inquiry, and what aspects are absent in the telling; in order for ;experience' to be educational, 'it has to be allied to critical analysis' (Brookfield 2006 p129). He cites Horton and Freire (1990) who point out that adult educators too often start and then stay with the affirmation of learners' experiences and miss the point of critical engagement (Brookfield 2006 p130).

This was important learning for the educators in this AR, who had to think through how to recognise and valorise students' FoL but also find points of critical engagement, to ensure that students' experiences were educative and effectively initiating them into the Social Work discipline. Through the action and reflection of the AR, we learnt from nuanced and sometimes challenging educational encounters, noticing some missed opportunities as well as successes. This supported our development in curricular and pedagogic practices, and informed responses to the research questions (what learning possibilities emerged, and how were they constrained, when pedagogies affirming the knowledge and literacies of 'non-traditional' students were enacted). We were living the reality of these questions and learning as we went.

The second cycle had different subject material, but critical reflection on students' socio-structural positions was encouraged through reflective tasks and questioning. Students in the focus group at the conclusion of the second cycle discussed their growing critical awareness when watching news or reading newspapers:

> Student FG (second cycle) participant 1*: You are so much more aware of what is going on in the background.*

Participant 2: *You start to question them. Where is this coming from? Where is your evidence?... that is something that I've really noticed is that I'm so analytical and critical of things when I watch them and …going, "well that is actually serving a purpose for a certain entity"…*

Participant 1: *…let us look at the actual truth behind that.*

The students in the focus group then discussed the use of language to serve particular interests, for example the term 'illegal' in the political discourse around asylum seekers in Australia. In the above extract, the fluidity between the students' everyday worlds and their university learning reflects Vygotsky's (1987) educational imperative to create dialectical bridges across the 'spontaneous' everyday concepts (inherent in everyday lives) and 'scientifically' systematised concepts. Vygotsky (1987) argued that the relationship between these is reciprocal. Says Moll (2014 p25):

> They mediate each other. Everyday concepts provide the "conceptual fabric" for the development of (education) concepts, and the everyday concepts are also transformed through their connection with the more systematic concepts (Moll 2014 p 35).

The inclusion of students' life-world knowledge and literacies in the tertiary education space provided the 'conceptual fabric' for the learning of the new disciplinary concepts, as a mutual enrichment of conceptual development rather than scaffolding thinking away from everyday into scientific knowledge, or vice versa. The reciprocal relationship between everyday lives (and language) bridging to systematised discipline learning is illustrated in the following extract from the discipline tutor (1) interview in the second cycle:

DT1 (first cycle): *… I tried to get them to understand what 'feedback' means and how you give constructive feedback…so it wasn't just about, 'I can't stand this' or 'This is boring' ….to try and engage …What are your expectations? Are your expectations being met? If they are, why? And if not, why not? Is there something we can change or is it something that you might need to address?*

The tutor was listening to students' feedback expressed through their vernacular literacies (*I can't stand this' or 'This is boring'),* and exploring how feedback is understood in terms of professional literacy practices ('*What are my expectations and are they being met'?)* and critically reflective questioning (*Is there something we can change or is it something you might need to address*?'). Familiar literacies were scaffolded to new literacies, extending 'zones of proximal development' in the dialogue (Vygotsky 1997). A dialectical relationship between students' life-world literacies and the discipline literacies was being established to further learning.

A curricular design in the second cycle to foster this bridge between the students' life-world and disciplinary knowledges, and to strengthen critical reflection, was a reflective writing assessment task. In the Focus Group (second cycle), students expressed how pivotal this had been in their learning:

FG (Cycle 2) Participant 2: *I am aware that every one of us has something to bring to Social Work…like life experience, volunteer, culture, upbringing and all that. But I think the first assessment, the reflection on the purpose of Social Work that was really…good because it made me sort of think, go deeper about the social biography and all of that. All the things that make that up and how that can influence the…values and the way we go about social work…*

Participant 1: *Yeah, I was going to say the same thing; that first assignment when we really... had to stop and think about the way our own background… is going to influence or bias our work was really something I had never thought about before.*

Participant 2*: It really helped. That is right.*

Participant 1: *And I thought it was a really important thing for us to be aware of.*

Participant 2: *I agree.*

Participant 1: *It was actually something that I had never thought about before. It was really good. I thought that was the thing I took away the most.*

A discipline tutor reflected similar sentiments in her interview:

DT1 (second cycle): *The first assessment around the biography, which was really about the students having to look at themselves and … trying to critically analyse their experience and how it fits with (discipline) themes. So I think that was actually …a very useful … assessment (that) …related to the… importance of being able to critically reflect on yourself.*

Students were making connections between their personal biographies – including their experiences, perceptions and values - and the perspectives and values underpinning Social Work practice, as these were being learnt. The importance of recognising one's social identities (historical, socio-cultural constructions), positionality (where individuals are positioned socio-structurally and within various identity groups or Discourse communities), and standpoint (epistemological perceptions of reality), to encourage critical consciousness in readiness for social work practice, is well noted in social work education (Pitner & Sakamoto 2005). Recognition of students' positional perspectives leading to partial objectivity ('bias' in their terms) in the above student focus group extract was critically appropriate. However, we noticed in teaching interactions and assessment writings that students' reflections oriented very quickly to a perception of themselves as having 'deficits' ('biases', triggers, past injuries, failures). Few identified themselves as bringing cultural assets into Social Work education and the profession. We wondered if our orientation toward critical reflection was too much applied to selves, and not enough to socio-structural formations of power inequality, which might unintentionally obscure students' recognition that they embodied cultural and literacy assets. This possibility was reflected in my field notes:

Reflection on fieldwork journal (Nov, 2013): *One observation I had during the ISW unit was how students quickly oriented to their deficits in …their reflective*

assessments, even though their strengths were invited in this task. Some recognised their strengths, but many focused on the negatives… (which were) seen as a 'hindrance' to their Social Work practice…it's perhaps hard to…both value strengths and attend to the potentially problematic areas effectively. Which do we prioritise and at what points during the course? How do we create room for processing and integrating of students' FoK?

The pedagogic room for both the important critically reflective work and the exploration of cultural assets requires time for dialogic teasing out and reflection. How do students (and educators) attend to the unexamined assumptions and values in students' testimonies about everyday life experience, in order to develop critical consciousness, as well as identify students' lived-cultural assets for learning, within the curricular and pedagogic spaces available in tertiary education? We found this balance challenging at times, and it showed up in students' written reflections.

Related to this challenge was students' disclosure of 'darker' experiences from their life-worlds - what Zipin (2009) refers to as '*dark funds of knowledge'.* The interaction between students' spontaneous (life-world) knowledge and systematic (disciplinary) knowledge (Vygotsky 1997) can elicit students' experience of personal injuries, violence, oppression, trauma or illness which can offer knowledge for understanding the social world, and the plights and needs of Social Work clients, as systemic issues. However, this requires sensitivity from educators in both pedagogic and pastoral responses*.* While there potential merit, for Social Work learning and practice, in evoking students' life experiences that may resonate with that of future clients, this needs to be processed educatively and carefully (sometimes therapeutically outside the educational context); and students need to learn appropriate boundaries about self-disclosure in the educational setting. At the same time, Zipin (2009 p321) argues that

> students' eloquent expertise in speaking on dark topics – as matters of vital lifeworld resonance – makes a compelling case for incorporating them as curricular *funds* of knowledge: that is, as learning *assets.*

To invite *dark funds of knowledge* into curricular spaces can facilitate pedagogic connections through 'vital lifeworld resonance', useful as assets for learning; but this requires time and space for these connections to be made skilfully and sensitively. If such elements of experience emerge in classroom dialogue as by-products, and are not given due care, they – and their embedded assumptions - can remain unexamined and possibly inhibit the development of critically reflective skills in preparation for Social Work practice (Fook & Askeland 2007; Bransford 2011). Such invitation, therefore, raises questions about the time available for educational attention (and, possibly, therapeutic attention in students' own time) and associated additional demands on both students and educators in the pedagogic space. How students experienced the surfacing of their FoL that might include dark FoK, particularly combined with the structural and personal challenges that some 'non-traditional' students can experience throughout their education, is briefly discussed in Chapter Five and is flagged for further investigation in future AR cycles.

The time-and-space challenges for authentically inviting alternative experiences and knowledges, and to engage these with 'expert' disciplinary knowledge, has been explored by Whatmore and Langström (2011, deploying Stengers concept of 'slowing down reason' (cited in Whatmore & Landström 2011) p586). They brought together people with academic expertise and local knowledge in a community project near York, United Kingdom, to respond to local environmental problems of regular flooding. They specifically enacted Stengers' (2005) 'slowing down' of reason to ensure that multiple (not just expert) perspectives were invited into a dialogic space of collective interrogation, with room and time to speak and be heard. Ideally, the concept of 'slowing down reason' might invite both critical reflection and recognition of students' FoL as assets in Social Work education, but by definition this requires sustained time for such exploration. This is educationally challenging in the realities of the curricular time and space, and the internalised emphasis primarily on expert knowledge in tertiary

education (explored more fully in the next chapter). The concept warrants consideration, however, when enacting pedagogies that seek such engagement, particularly for 'non-traditional' or diverse students, whose knowledges and experience might be most at variance with that of the normative university academic genres. It is possible that further action and reflection cycles to design, enact and reflect on pedagogies that engage students' cultural assets would build educators' expertise to *respond to these pedagogic challenges.*

The Three Literacy Dimensions in Discipline Teaching

The project sought to use students' FoL as assets for learning the operational, cultural and critical literacies integral to successful participation in the discipline, and to support the identity shifts associated with that participation. Using Green's (1988) argument, students' successful participation in the cultural literacies of academia, the discipline and profession were enabled by attention to the three literacy dimensions. Strengthening students' operational literacy enabled participation in the cultural literacies of the Social Work discipline and academia more broadly. Students needed critical literacy to learn how to think analytically about power and values, as stated by Freire and Macedo (1987), because no literacy is politically neutral. This section reports on the educative possibilities and successes that became apparent in the project when the three literacy dimensions were integrated to some degree into the teaching of the discipline.

As it intersected with discipline themes (for example, social construction theory; dimensions of power; the deconstruction of language; discourses and ideologies in narrative approaches; engaging clients; critical reflection), explicit teaching about language and literacies was integrated into lectures and tutorial discussions. This was supported by the co-teaching of the ALL specialist, whose contributions were embedded in the learning of discipline content. For example, early in the teaching enactment phase of both cycles, the students were introduced to the Northedge (2005

p22) table that contrasts 'tribal language', 'professional' language and 'academic' language or discourse. Differences in structure, language choice and tone of the discourse were discussed, and the values, assumptions and unspecified agendas reflected in these. We used questions to elicit the features of the Discourses and their different status, depending on contexts: every day is more informal and potentially inclusive and connecting in a range of client interaction contexts; professional appeals to particular field and organisational identities and can serve to support them; academic is more reasoned and argued and can stimulate thinking and analysis). The limitations of each Discourse type was also on the agenda: for example, everyday might not examine underlying values and assumptions contained within it; professional can be framed to protect the status quo; academic can be alienating, ideological and exclusive. Through discussion, we explored the implications for students: for example, how 'every-day' and 'workplace' discourses have different logics and goals from those of the academy' (Macken-Horarik, Devereux, Trimingham-Jack & Wilson 2006 p243), and where they might position themselves in relation to these Discourses when working with clients.

There were indications that students grasped this awareness and used it to strengthen their cultural literacy and prepare them for participation in their professional futures. In a Focus Group Interview (first cycle) a student talked about her use of her everyday language to connect with clients and the 'shorthand language' of professionals, and the value of differentiating between them:

FG (first cycle) Interviewer (Researcher): *I am wondering… where that valuing of your own [literacies] has come from - apart from feedback from potential clients and classmates…?*

Student participant: *It is about rapport and connection. If you can't build rapport with someone straight off then you lose them …[in] part of my community there is a lot of disadvantage, a lot of people that are using drugs and if I walk in and*

talk to them like I talk around here on campus [they] wouldn't have a bar of me straight off, so it is important for me to not have language as a barrier. There is enough other barriers. …

The student has grasped the significance of language when participating in the Social Work Discipline in the university, and that it needs to be used differentially in Social Work practice with clients. She is able to express not only her consciousness about language, but also important aspects of her learning about the discipline, the profession and clients:

Interviewer: *So have you experienced … academic or professional language as a barrier?*

Student Participant: *I think initially probably … until I … got a grasp of it and then yep. It is almost like I interpret things in my head … now … with the correct language…*

… it is almost like it is shorthand language now because I have got friends that are also studying Social Work …elsewhere and we can talk. Our conversations are shorter now … because we have that shared language which is important … it is about discourse isn't it? That is what we need to be able to communicate with other Social Workers…and funding bodies….and enacting for grants and everything else.

The student recognises that individuals often 'code-switch' in and out of language systems to suit different purposes and contexts, and that their vernacular literacies may meet clients more readily, reducing 'barriers' in the professional relationship. She identifies discipline or professional language as 'correct language', perhaps reflecting the way in which it is privileged in educational and professional contexts.

Interviewer: *… 'shorthand language'… is quite a helpful concept so that it is not a language that has to totally define who you are.*

Participant: *It is shorthand, but it is not really shorthand because it is so loaded.*

> *…Do you know what I mean … (Laughter) … it is a shorter conversation because everybody is understanding what all the loading is. The loading of the language.*

The student has differentiated between the use of language in different contexts, how its meaning is densely packed ('so loaded'), and by implication not neutral, depending on the context (Gee 2011). She is also flagging identity shifts associated with language use, as she and her colleagues become participants in new Discourse communities. She continues, elaborating on another Social Work graduate known to her who, it seems, had difficulty negotiating differential literacies and had not recognised (been taught?) that language operates as socially constructed practice.

> FG First cycle (same as previous) student participant*: I…had a friend…who started uni a bit later in life…he became very arrogant very quickly and I don't think it was that he was arrogant, he was probably a little, but it was his language and the way he was expressing himself and how it shifted during his academic studies and everyone went, "Oh what has happened to that person? What is going on? I don't feel I can relate to them anymore." And I think language was a big part of that. His shift in language was something that was noticed by my social circle.*

This illustrates the challenges in negotiating identity, when learning new and alien literacy practices that are 'superimposed', rather than gradually integrated with existing literacies to assist identity renegotiation. In Vygotsky's (1987) terms, the developmental continuum starts from what students 'know independently', expressed in vernacular discourses or literacies. When educators (as the more knowledgeable assistants) use students' existing literacy practices as assets to scaffold to the new learning (within a zone of proximal development), students are supported to make the necessary identity shifts to negotiate new language and learning. This integration of knowledges and

discourses from different spaces has been referred to as the construction of a 'third space' (Moje *et al.* 2004 p41):

> the space that *merges* the "first space" of people's home, community, and peer networks with the "second space" of the Discourses they encounter in more formalised institutions.

The active integration of 'first space' FoK and FoL into 'second space' institutional settings enables a scaffolding for students towards 'third space' understanding of how to code-switch and navigate across texts and literacy practices needed for academic and professional success while not abandoning 'first space' identity connection. Such integration equips the Social Work students to negotiate the varied literacies encountered in academic, Social Work as a discipline, and Social Work practice, without losing the vital social-cultural fabric of home, community and peer-network literacies that remain *assets* for ongoing learning-in-practice. A student in a focus group in the second cycle captured this reciprocal relationship, or the merging of 'first' and 'second' spaces, in his learning:

> Student FG 1 (second cycle): *I was seeing a student counsellor the whole way through [the unit] and I thought she was just great with rebuilding ideas…it helps so much with your [assessment] work as well. I know that I ripped off a few things she was saying, things like, "And in Social Work, you are always trying to take care of others and the last thing you think about its taking care of yourself, but that is just as important." And I used that in my talk [assessment presentation]…how can you look after others if you can't look after yourself?*

The student is engaging his normally disregarded life-world connective tissues from outside the university context, to inform his growing knowledge of the discipline and its cultural literacies. He highlights the integration of different literacies in his learning. It is possible for students to respond more authentically to these complex interactions when their own life-world senses of meaning and identity have been valued as part of undertaking the necessary identity shifts in the education process. The nurturing of

such authenticity, through pedagogies that support a reciprocal relationship between students' life-worlds and academic disciplines, further the necessary re-negotiation of students' identities. The above interview extract suggests that such a scaffolding approach ultimately benefits not only the students, but potentially future clients, the profession and the discipline. Such possibilities are significant for all tertiary students, but particularly 'non-traditional' students, who do not have the normalised cultural capital to draw on in their meaning-making, and have greater identity shifts to negotiate when entering new discipline and professional Discourses than other students. The students' responses in focus groups and teaching interactions pointed to this identity re-negotiation, affirming its educational potential for 'epistemological access'.

Student Writing to Develop Literacies

Green (1998) emphasises writing to support internal cognitive learning, and Northedge (2005) recommends a bit of writing often, with regular educator feedback, to support 'non-traditional' students as they become participants in new university discourses. Early in the first cycle (SWT), we asked students spontaneously to write a paragraph about their personal response to one of the readings in the tutorial, which we returned the following week with our feedback. This gave us a sense of the students' writing levels as well as insight into their backgrounds in some cases. One student wrote that she had only been in Australia for 18 months (from Eastern Europe) and she was trying to learn as much about Australia as she could from this new place and so acknowledged her difficulty in responding to the reading. This became helpful background for us later when she presented as part of her assessed group oral presentation (she 'read' a dense piece of text). She became tearful and upset after the presentation, as she felt that the group's low mark, although a pass, was caused by her lack of understanding of the expectations of such an assessment. This was confronting for us, as we suspected that we had made cultural assumptions and not been sufficiently explicit about the task and our expectations, particularly for students from

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other cultures (Delpit 1995). It also alerted us to the need to be more explicit around the group dimensions of such presentations for assessments. We wondered if students' anxiety and unfamiliarity, regarding high stakes assessments, made it difficult to 'hear' the scaffolding that was provided. Interestingly, the student used this painful incident to propel her into ensuring she was very clear about assessment expectations, and her assessments increasingly reflected higher standards.

After this experience, in the second cycle of the AR, we designed (individual) student presentations (a reading summary) and the ALL educator and I briefly modelled a presentation to the class (before the students started theirs) and asked the students to identify aspects of the assessment criteria (provided) that they could identify in our presentation. We then discussed the processes we used in preparing for the presentation. We were making sure that our expectations were very explicit, so that there could be less room for confusion among students unfamiliar with such assessments.

Such writing exercises are labour intensive and consumed the very limited contact time we had with the students in tutorials, so we were unable to continue them on a regular basis, in spite of their potential. As a compromise, we set 'off-campus tasks' most weeks which students were encouraged to complete, with various reflective questions and written responses to post on a discussion board, as a basis for discussion in tutorials. This was an adaptation of Cuseo's (2011) 'prompted journals', where students respond to the lecturer's prompts with written reflections completed outside class. We also engaged students' literacies in early written assessments in both units. These off-campus tasks reinforced learning in lectures and tutorials relating to content and consciousness about language and its role in the learning of academic, discipline and professional knowledge. Written discussion forums online rely on consistent feedback and participation of educators to be constructive. We found this also quite labour intensive. Several students posted written responses online, and low numbers brought written responses to tutorials, but because they weren't required for

assessment, we found few students invested in such written activities, which limited their value. We brought elements of these exercises from off-campus tasks into tutorial discussions as best we could. These discussions, however, were severely hampered by lack of time, particularly in the first cycle, where we had a one-hour tutorial immediately after a one-hour lecture in a different building, so we effectively had only 45 minutes of tutorial time.

The low participation in the off-campus tasks reflects contemporary students' lives, as they juggle working and other life-world responsibilities that more 'traditional' students in a more fully funded tertiary system decades ago did not have to negotiate to the same degree. This resistance to more than minimal course workloads for many students creates tensions when designing curriculum to support 'non-traditional' students, as the very students who might benefit from such scaffolded exercises are not necessarily accessing them due at least partly to such life-based time pressures (Zipin & Brennan 2006 p337). In the student questionnaire (first cycle), one student made unsolicited reference to the value of the off-campus tasks, stating that, '*I think the off-campus activities were helpful in assisting my learning as it meant I enacted the reading instead of just trying to take it in'.* However, because of the low response to these tasks, which were quite time-consuming to prepare and respond to, we did not include them as regularly in the second cycle. This is a reflection of our time pressures and students' priorities, rather than their inherent and potential value for those students who accessed them.

The Role of Assessments

Assessments are central to performing in academic and disciplinary literacies, so this was an important pedagogic aspect of the project and indicator of potential successes. The ALL educator and I collaborated in giving careful attention to the design of assessments, made them explicit to students in class discussions, used learning and teaching activities to scaffold them, provided detailed feedback on progressive

assessments and provided academic models and resources. We designed written and oral assessments that might give room for expression of FoL for both learning in the discipline and for our pedagogic information, with awareness of how student learning involvement is often driven by assessment (Boud 2010). Assessment that was consistent with our embedded literacies and scaffolding approaches was more challenging than we expected, as elaborated in the following chapter, so we turned to fairly traditional written and oral assessments, making adjustments to give room for students to draw on their more familiar linguistic registers, as they grew into the new discourses. The ALL educator, in the first cycle interview, commented on this strategy, suggesting that 'newer' students

> …*don't know which register to draw on from their identity. [To provide a choice] gives them some room to think about the register and select a more familiar one.*

The first written assessment provided two alternatives in both cycles: one in a more academic genre (discursive essay; personal reflection); the other involving a more familiar register or genre (a letter to an editor; interview of a practitioner). This sought to give room for students to access a more familiar register or genre, while at the same time noticing the difference in the required adaptation to more formal academic structures within that familiar genre (the *formality* of a letter to the editor; *writing a report* on the interview). Such adaptation was apparent in a student focus group when a student in cycle 2 who chose the personal reflection for her first assessment contrasted it with her experience of a diary entry (more familiar genre):

> FG (second cycle) Student: *… I used the (ALL) guidelines online and I think it was very helpful too, especially with the reflection piece…to look at the guidelines and realise, okay, so it's not a diary entry but it is not an academic*

essay, it is sort of an amalgamation of the two. I have got clear guidelines that I

can work upon. I think, for someone who is just starting out that is very helpful.

Reflective writing is a genre favoured throughout the Social Work course to encourage students' growing self-awareness and critical reflection, and can be a resource in terms of students' FoL, but it is a complex task in academic writing (Lea 2008; Rai, 2006). Efforts to encourage reflective writing in class practice were thwarted by lack of time. When we did set a task to write reflectively in the second cycle, we found the majority of students talked quite freely, but resisted writing. This was possibly due to the unfamiliarity with reflective writing (it is important to remember that all students in this unit were first-year students at university), the challenging nature of the genre and the need to pace the students through the task more carefully. The ALL tutor commented on this in her interview:

> ALL specialist interview (second cycle): *The other task … where they had to*
>
> *reflect on three things they loved to do as a child and think about whether these*
>
> *three things are still present in their lives today [in relation to self-care] …I can*
>
> *accept that it is very hard to do in 15 minutes… for them it is all very new. And*
>
> *as a student expressed, 'I am an adult now so to actually see the value of it',*
>
> *that needs more time again.*
>
> Interviewer: *It does need more time, yes. And some students are quite coy, I*
>
> *mean it is a little bit different in University … you're not really expected to be*
>
> *thinking about … such things and … of course it might be hitting some raw*
>
> *places … there were a couple of students who totally resisted (even the verbal*
>
> *component).*
>
> ALL Tutor: *Yeah, it is so important that they, even if they don't do it but they*
>
> *realise okay I might be a bit shy here or coy but as we said, in [the Social Work]*
>
> *profession it is your body, it is your mind that is the main tool with which you are*

working. You have to develop a capacity, to [look at things] from very many

different angles.

…To really search yourself… And so perhaps …it needs more time.

Interviewer: *More time, and more time to frame it.*

ALL Tutor: *Frame it, exactly, I agree. ...And also it is a reminder to myself to be*

patient, to be comfortable also with silence and students not responding right

away… because I think they really need more time.

This extract illustrates some of the tensions associated with including writing as

practice in class in order pedagogically to attend to: cultural literacies ('*it is your body, it*

is your mind that is the main tool with which you are working. You have to develop a

capacity, to [look at things] from very many different angles'); operational literacies

(written expression); and academic literacies (reflective writing). It highlights the

importance of timing and pace when working with students' experience through

reflection on their vernacular literacy expressions, so that they can be used

pedagogically at multiple levels.

Making Elite Codes Explicit

Delpit (1988 p293) argues that students who embody cultural or other power

differentials should not simply be taught to adopt the elite codes normalised in

education systems: 'they must be encouraged to understand the value of the code they

already possess, as well as to understand the power realities'. At the same time, they

do need to gain access to the elite codes of academic, disciplinary and professional

Discourses through explicit disclosure and practicable use of those codes, which more

usually remain implicit and untaught. This both/and approach – making elite codes

explicitly learnable, while in the process making explicitly valued use of the codes

students already possess – was approached through multiple practices in both units.

Among these practices were: being explicit about the value of students' own cultural

heritage and literacies (for example, in building relationships with clients); being explicit

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about the differential use of language and its associated power in different contexts (as this relates to disciplinary concepts and academic literacies); being attentive to utilising connections between students' existing experiences and literacies, and the new literacies they encounter in Social Work units; valorising students' literacies in respectful and interactive dialogue and working with these as assets; clearly unpacking new language and concepts; encouraging dissension and critique (of texts, knowledge, ideological assumptions and personal reflection) through questions and dialogue; and developing students' metacognition about language and academic literacies through making assessment expectations and academic genres explicit.

Embedding the ALL educator in the discipline learning supported these practices, as the elite codes embedded in disciplinary cultural literacies were made explicit and contextualised with the assistance of her expertise (Lea & Street 2006). We sought to develop *all* students' metacognition in relation to discipline and academic literacies (not only those selected as needing additional assistance). This brought resources into the teaching space to strengthen students' academic literacies and to support the project's dual focus on discipline knowledge and multi-literacies. Drawing on the Academic Literacies tradition, we resisted the 'deficit' approach of identifying and removing students out of the discipline learning who 'needed additional support'. Time was allocated in tutorials and lectures for the ALL and discipline educators to explore the explicit expectations of assessment tasks, breaking these down and examining text structure and features in relation to the tasks and providing models to discuss. This developed a shared 'meta-language' with which to describe language structure and vocabulary (Nelson & Weatherald 2014 p109).

Macken-Horarik *et al.* (2006 p248) explore how register and genre enable differentiation of the linguistic potentials of a discourse domain in the multi-literacies environment in tertiary education. They maintain that the structure of a text can be articulated in terms of a sequence of prototypical elements or stages which students can learn about explicitly in the required register and genre. Such differentiation was

the aim of the ALL educator's teaching, primarily in tutorials, where explicit teaching on the relevant genre for assignments was included prior to their submission. This teaching, as well as individual consultations, drew students' attention to academic structure and style (which is typically unfamiliar to 'non-traditional' students); for example, the use of the passive voice; nominalisation; essay structure in response to the essay topic; how to integrate literature in the body of the essay; and analysis of paragraph structure.

Because it was difficult to juggle both the discipline teaching, and attention to the explicit language features and expectations of the discipline and academic discourses (and sometimes in-class assessments), the online resources and individual consultations were designed to complement in-class work. Models and resources were available on the student online management system for students to access in their own time, and for discipline tutors to incorporate into their tutorials.

Individual consultation with the ALL specialist was available to all students by appointment (at a campus other than where the lectures were given). In the second cycle, this was made even more accessible by a specific timeslot being made available on the campus where lectures were given, on the same day of lectures and tutorials, in addition to other negotiated appointment times. In both cycles, students were encouraged to maintain a glossary to build familiarity with the vocabulary of the new language and literacies they were encountering. Also introduced in the second cycle was the submission of an essay plan as part of the second assessment, on which we provided quite extensive feedback. This revision and feedback modelled that writing is a process, and enabled us to reinforce explicit writing concepts, such as organisation, readability and the development of 'expert tenor' (Macken-Horarik *et al.* 2006; Horton & Diaz 2011). Educators sought to provide quite detailed feedback on students' assessments and to express this in constructive and non-punitive language (Ramsden 2003).

Feedback from student questionnaires and focus groups demonstrated that students almost universally appreciated the inclusion of the ALL educator in the discipline, indicating how helpful were the online resources, explicit teaching in class, and the option that some students took up of submitting drafts to the ALL educator to see if they were 'on track'. There were indications from students that it supported their academic success:

> *Student FG (first cycle): …having (ALL Educator) around - a team approach has been awesome. The (online) learning guides were very helpful' (Domestic student).*

> *Student FG (second cycle): (ALL educator) has also been very help full [sic] in disecting [sic] what is expected from us…. (International student).*

> *Another student FG (second cycle): And the emails popped up every now and again about times you could meet her to ask questions and so it was really helpful to actually have someone that you can go to…Tutors are sometimes really busy and it is hard to pin them down…and she helps with our language, the way we write, that was quite hard and she helps us to build up the essay with clear structure.*

The qualitative impact of such embedded work on assessments (and student success in those terms) is difficult to gauge as there are so many dimensions of practice at work. However, there were some indications of shifts in early and final assessments, where students who had struggled in early written tasks appeared to have made significant use of the overt instruction provided. There were two examples of this that stood out, one from each cycle. In the first cycle, one student (for whom English is an additional language) failed her first written assignment (6/15) as she struggled to express concepts in coherent sequences (even though they were 'on the right track'), made unsubstantiated generalisations, and had not yet appropriated academic nor

discipline discourses to express discipline concepts (see extract below). Written assessments had weighted components of assessment criteria for written expression and included: structure of paragraphs and overall work (eg. introduction, argument development of points, conclusion); tone and register (eg. qualifying language, nominalisations, passive constructions, formality); clarity and economy in written work (for example conceptual coherence); accuracy in spelling and grammatical construction.

(First cycle) Extract from the first assessment (discursive piece - errors as in original text):

'The Charity Organisation movement is easily represented and influenced within this society, and is demonstrated through the social problem of refugees. The Western society, consider refugees as people who can not control their own lives, therefore the 'right' sort of people are in place to take care and control over them. These refugees poverty is simply based on 'a character defect' and 'moral deficiency'. This society is ready to teach the refugees the right attributes to survive within this world by changing the individual and controlling them and their way of life. In other words, the government has forced themselves to care for these people, the refugees. This was seen as the solution in the Charity organisation movement and is also seen as the solution towards refugees.'

The student showed significant advances in her academic and discipline literacies by the time of her final assessment, for which she received a high distinction (40/50). The following extract from the second assessment indicates more conceptual coherence, albeit drawing heavily on other texts:

Extract from the final assessment – (an essay - errors as in original text):

Social work profession is not based on practical work alone; theory has a major contribution within the profession of social work, as a practitioner must apply theory to practice with each client. Theory has been constructed to help social work practitioners, for them to fully understand the client's circumstance in their life, whereas the practice is applying this information into the work to assist the client's needs. Therefore theories within social work practices works as a social guide for practitioners to be able to interact with the realities of life (Payne 2005). The relationship between theory and practice is that one cannot solely work without the other. Both are needed to assist the profession of social work.

While this second extract possibly comprises paraphrases from texts by others, it demonstrates the student's growing understanding of the importance of adopting academic discourse forms. She is clearly using markers of an academic essay genre, for example by appropriately positioning her argument in the context of other authors' work. She utilises more appropriate grammatical devices, including qualifying language, nominalisations and passive constructions, although she does not yet have complete mastery of these complex constructions in English. Most importantly, the paragraph is more conceptually coherent, suggesting the importance of the interplay between developing conceptual understanding in the discipline and the development of academic literacy. It is difficult to know whether the student had additional outside assistance with her work, but all assessments were marked with the use of plagiarism software, to help confirm that submitted assignments were students' own work. Interestingly, this student included the explicit elements of the essay structure, provided by the ALL specialist in the online resources, at key points in her submitted essay (such as the introduction, the body and the conclusion), seeming to use these as a compass (or literally a scaffold) as she applied the explicit teaching on academic discourse, and then leaving the scaffolding there. It appears that the student utilised the explicit codes provided, and contributed her own labour, to enable 'epistemological access' to the discipline literacies (Morrow 1993).

Another student in the second cycle (for whom English is an additional language) failed the first assignment (7/20), and passed the final assessment (28/50). This student had many (personal) obstacles to overcome, so the transition was quite significant.

Second Cycle: Extract from the first assessment (interview of a practitioner – errors as in original text):

The important broader issues which affect the individual families that she had work with is that it about the person in the environment, it about social justice and making sure that every individual have equal opportunity. These problem are address by social workers doing a little bit each, if one person dose it by themselves it would not be easy.

One of the ethical dilemma that she deal with in her practice is when the judge order custody of the child back to the parents.

The theories that guide jenny social work practice are equal logical theories, system theories, and social justice.

This writing is conceptually uncertain is informal in register, has minimal formal structure (for example, paragraphing), and has listed ad hoc and undeveloped responses to suggested interview questions (provided to the students), indicating a lack of understanding of the task (a 'report' on the interview). A key discipline term (ecological) is misspelt ('equal logical'), possibly suggesting a lack of comprehension of the term (or perhaps the auto-spelling check in the word processing software misread another spelling mistake). This highlights the need to attend to operational literacy (Green 1988) while teaching the discipline (for example, checking that terms are understood while teaching, writing them on the board, encouraging the use of students' glossaries, returning to challenging terms repeatedly and using them in different contexts to model their use).

It is possible that the student's improved writing in her final essay – see extract below – was supported by her two individual consultations with the ALL educator, the explicit attention to expectations of the final essay in tutorials, models provided, and feedback on the draft essay plan, all of which could be considered potential contributors to her developing academic literacy.

Extract from the final assessment (essay – errors as in original text):

Social workers are committed to improving the lives of others. This can include helping unemployed people to find employment or helping clients to find accommodation or access to health care. Social workers are required to carry out their jobs according to the standards and values of the profession. The social work profession is committed to the pursuit and maintenance of human well-being (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2010). According to the Code of Ethics (AASW 2010), social work is about enhancing the welfare of people. The values for social work are important because they help them make the right decision. Social work aims at maximising the development of human potential, fulfilment of human needs and providing assistance to improve the well-being of clients. The values in social work include social justice, professional integrity and respect for persons (AASW 2010, pp. 12-13)...

While clearly the student has drawn heavily on the studied texts, her selection of appropriate excerpts and attempts to reference these indicate a growing understanding of both the disciplinary and academic genres. In addition, the essay demonstrated a clear overall structure and stronger internal organisation, including appropriate use of paragraphs. The student appears to have gained a growing awareness of the importance of 'an expert tenor' and of using language relatively 'distanced from the self' (Macken-Horarik *et al.* 2006 p247).

The shifts in these assignments suggest a likelihood of students accessing the explicit linguistic resources embedded in the discipline, in order to increase their facility in expressing the concepts they have learnt. Both of these students were from linguistically and culturally 'other' background, which suggests that making linguistic resources available to them may be have been of particular importance. Scholarship in Australia and elsewhere indicates that skills in English as an additional language need to be developed through deliberate intervention in teaching and learning and embedded in disciplinary knowledge, rather than left to generic programs or informal acquisition by living in the host country (Volet & Ang 2012; Murray 2010b; Bretag 2007; Arkoudis & Starfield 2007). As second language learners, the discourse markers of academic writing may be particularly hard to notice and acquire without explicit assistance. Explicit instruction in these cases may have encouraged the students to draw on models of the required language to supplement their existing English proficiency. It is worth noting that the students who made such gains were second language learners.

 In reflecting on how such progress might be possible over the 12 weeks of teaching (and considering the possibility that the student had additional outside help), the ALL educator clarified the pedagogical activities in her individual consultations with students, indicating how such progress might be possible. Her written response:

> *I… worked with these two students for a couple of one-on-one session as well*
>
> *as via email. In my conversations with the students, we talked about the*

complexity of academic writing, for example: the importance of good time

management (which was an issue for one student); the importance of reading

the unit guide and the short synopses of the weekly descriptions to build a

comprehensive understanding of the unit's content; understanding the unit

readings so as to be able to paraphrase the key ideas and thus making a more

sophisticated argument; the importance of paragraph structure (TEEL);

I remember that both students put in a great effort in time and dedication once

they had come to a deeper understanding of the essay topic in our face-to-face

conversations. They both said how helpful that was and that they felt more 'on

top' of the task. I think that being able to talk through content areas of their

assignment with me, the ALL lecturer, was seen by both students as an

additional bonus. Very often I hear feedback from students, who go to student

writing mentors or 1:1 sessions that are run by sessional tutors who are not

embedded in their coursework, saying that the general kind of support is not as

focused, that it is often very limited in time, and that the support person does

not have the same understanding of the task that I have.

This commentary suggests that individual consultations targeted individual students'

needs, decoded academic and discipline cultural expectations through dialogue and

the use of key (contextualised) documents, checked conceptual understanding of

relevant literature and encouraged students as they contributed their own efforts to

produce their academic writing. It further suggests an important learning interaction

between spoken and written literacies.

The students themselves need to contribute the necessary 'labour' to integrate

such learning and to enable the necessary conceptual expression to take place, as

Morrow (1993) suggests. Not all students made such evident strides, but overall the

students in both cycles of the case-study negotiated considerable learning (evident in

final assessments), most of them seemed engaged (Student Unit Evaluations and

Student Evaluations of Teaching were very positive in both cycles), and there were

indications from assessments, focus groups and questionnaires that 'non-traditional' students were making the epistemological leaps necessary for their academic success. It could be noted that the ALL educator in the case study was teaching students about academic genre beyond the profession of Social Work, indicating possibilities for transfer to other disciplines.

In terms of student results, all but three students passed SWT; of those three, two did not attend classes. In ISW, seven students withdrew from the unit (and the course) while it was in progress, two failed, one of whom did not attend classes and the other had extenuating personal circumstances that prevented the submission of her final assignment. ISW is the first unit of the course for most students, and some discover that there is more complexity to the profession than they anticipated.

The composite project data suggests that students in the two units in the project were supported toward academic success. Academic results from units in the project (compared with those of the previous year) could be another indicator. However, given that one unit (*SWT*) was taught by different educators over the two consecutive years, and the other (*ISW*) was taught for the first time in the course, it would be difficult to make comparisons. Another indication could be the numbers of students who remained in the unit throughout the semester to complete it (related to retention). In the *SWT* unit in 2013 (the year of the project) 15% of students left before completing the unit, which is significantly lower than the SWT subject the year before (2012) when 24% of students left before completing. (These figures exclude students who withdrew before the unit commenced). This may be an indicator of successful curricular and pedagogic engagement – bearing in mind, however, that students leave units for a range of reasons beyond curriculum and pedagogy. This flags room for future research, where the academic results and retention rates of the same units (and educators) are compared after such curricular and pedagogic interventions in one of the units. Close attention to students' writing developments in higher numbers of students is another area for further research.

In recognition of the needs of students for whom English was an additional language, all lectures were recorded so that students could access these in their own time:

> Student Questionnaire (first cycle): *The lecture is always recorded in this unit and this …makes it different from other units…this is a good step…especially to provide more help to international students.*

Other students (English as a first language) indicated in the student questionnaires that they found this helpful too. It provided flexibility in recognition of students' complex lives with multiple roles other than that of student. One mature age student informally commented to the researcher as she was struggling to complete her final essay in *SWT*, '*thank God you recorded the lectures'*, as she was using these to revise for her essay writing. The digital space (through the online student management system) supplemented lectures and tutorials in both cycles. It seemed that students comfortably negotiated most aspects of the digital space from their experience of prior subjects, except for some unfamiliarity with the plagiarism software (Turnitin^{TM}). This was addressed more explicitly in lectures in the second cycle, by the ALL educator showing students how to check their work using this software on the projected screen. The focus group in the first cycle suggested that online discussion forums for students to support each other in wrestling with new theoretical concepts might be a helpful addition. This was established in the second cycle, which cleared up some student questions around practical matters, but was used minimally for the purpose suggested by the focus group participants, possibly because it was a less theoretical subject and there were longer lecture and tutorial timeslots in which to explore concepts in the second cycle.

Real World Contexts

Delpit (1995 p45) argues that we need to teach codes to enable students to participate in academic and disciplinary discourses 'not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, de-contextualised sub skills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavours'. The embedding of the ALL educator contextualised the teaching of codes, as she was familiar with the concepts, culture and Discourse of the discipline by her active presence in the discipline, and drew on these when teaching explicit codes. The use of experiential learning exercises, case studies and scenarios sought to relate learning to real world contexts ('situate meaning in real world contexts' - New Literacies Group 2000). In the student questionnaires (both cycles), the students frequently referred to the importance of relating what they were learning to practical scenarios that might be encountered in future practice, through case studies for analysis and guest practitioners as speakers in both cycles. For example, in the first cycle (SWT) students were divided into groups in the lecture. Each group was given a different 'hat' that represented a particular theory. A case scenario was presented to all the students and each group discussed how their allocated theory (with its associated 'hat') might help them to understand and intervene in this scenario. A delegated spokesperson then presented their theoretical perspective (with their 'hat' on) and further discussion ensued. Students could see the enactment of theory in relation to practice, as well as learn by contrast from the different theoretical approaches enacted in relation to the case study.

In cycle two (*ISW*) a panel of practitioners came to the lecture and were interviewed about advice they would give to social work students. The lecture was then divided into groups and a practitioner was assigned to each group. Students were free to ask the practitioners whatever questions they liked. The students found this exercise so engaging they didn't want to end their conversations with the practitioners. Their curiosity about practice could be explored from their own questions and situate their

learning in the real-world lives of practitioners. It was helpful for us as educators to listen to their questions, to remind us of their life-worlds and literacies. As educators, we too could get caught in our discipline and academic Discourses and lose connections with students and their life-worlds. The value of such exercises for students' learning was expressed through numerous references to the value of case studies, guest practitioners and interactive exercises in students' questionnaire responses in both cycles:

> Student Questionnaire (both cycles): *A lot of group work activities and more participation from students, it was great! The discussion was always alive and respectful.*

> *(another student) The lectures were more engaging and a different environment compared to other units.*

> *(another student) Interaction was helpful in helping me work through difficult theories.*

> *(another student) Most entertaining, enjoyed the visual…bringing in practitioners from the field…more interactive in class - very helpful.*

> *(another student) Always like the links to every-day life that we will be presented with in work.*

> *(another student) Interactive and visual helped me to understand the contents.*

Some of these comments relate to the use of more familiar literacies to introduce complex concepts or language in the project - for example, videos, newspaper articles, 'stories' of other social work students and social workers, interactive links, visual graphics, case-studies, songs, pictorial representations (such as concept maps, time-lines, family genograms) scaffolded more familiar genres to the new discipline literacies. The ALL educator interview, in the first cycle, suggested that we could have

more fully exploited these opportunities by exploring differences in text features and their relationship to particular purposes and contexts. She suggested an exercise to place students into different groups of literacy practices and have them 'travel between these' and notice differences in experience of the texts and their features. This was a suggestion we incorporated in adapted form in the second cycle (adapted because of time limitations). We selected three different written texts on the same subject (feminism): a tract we picked up from a demonstration; a reflective narrative by novelist Helen Garner; and an academic extract. We divided the tutorial group into three groups and asked them questions to stimulate their thinking about what they noticed about the text they had been given – purpose, audience, likely context, language used, structures used and why. This discussion had pedagogic potential but competed for time and took place at the end of the day, when all were quite tired. This is another example of the tension of privileging discipline content over literacy (leaving the literacy task to the end), and the time-pressure we often felt in completing tutorial tasks. It may also indicate some uncertainty in our new experience with the pedagogies. We too were growing in the dual focus of discipline and literacy and the exploration of ways to integrate these pedagogically. As we reflected on the project and experienced possibilities, we felt encouraged as educators to work with more confidence in the integration of literacies and content in future teaching.

'Code switching'

The group exercise discussed in the previous section was intended as one way of introducing and exploring the notion of 'code switching' between different literacies; that is, students selectively adopting the codes and practices of academic and discipline literacies to preserve and value their own linguistic and cultural traditions and values. Students becoming more aware of the possibility of 'code-switching' between various literacy environments can resource alternative codes as they negotiate multiple literacy environments. Such explicit attention can reinforce students' operational, cultural and

critical literacy developments, as they become more acquainted with codes that were previously less accessible. Other methods for this explicit attention to codes were through tutorial discussions, particularly as this intersected with disciplinary themes. One such example was recorded in the researcher's journal (first cycle):

> Researcher/lecturer Journal (first cycle): *Followed up lecture with questions on Northedge table for off-campus tasks. While only a quarter of students had done it, we were still able to have a good conversation about different kinds of literacies in different situations (practice/professional/academic/clients). One student discussed when she first started working in welfare, people observed that she talked 'like the clients' and naturally. She said some (clients) liked that, but others looked for and felt more secure as her language became more 'professional'…[We discussed] the change in her in this process of growing into the professional discourse, so it can be accessed when it's useful (for example, with some clients, or in professional, cross-disciplinary meetings). The conversation continued as we explored, with examples, how language can provide power in certain situations, which can be used to benefit clients, and our credibility in the profession, and when it might alienate or intimidate, etc.*

It was challenging to engage students in such dialogues, particularly with their strong and dominant interests in the practical aspects of the discipline teaching. Another example from the researcher's journal (first cycle) illustrates this:

> Researcher's Field journal (first cycle 3.4.2013): *Discussion about off-campus task – to get students thinking about all the institutions to which they belong – and notice how their language changes... A student said that since that exercise he'd become more aware of language and he'd noticed an elderly woman talking on a tram in a very self-deprecating way. He suggested that this was an effective way to elicit sympathy from others, and thought this was quite powerful for her…I suggested that the self-deprecating language could also elicit*

different responses and, as her customary and unreflective narrative, it might

not serve her well in all situations…. By becoming aware of language (our own

and others) we can recognise its power and then make choices about how we

use it…. This would have been a good point to explore the enactment for

students and their relationships to the dominant discourse of disciplinary

knowledge, but, as usual, we ran out of time… Students were more interested

in how this might be used with clients, and I'm easily drawn into a discipline

focus… we finished the tutorial briefly exploring that…

The ALL educator observed that students were exposed to quite a lot about literacies, language and discourse, but 'practical' motivations were always at the forefront for them:

ALL educator interview (second cycle): *…all these aspects [language and*

literacies] were raised and perhaps some students are more conscious about

them than others. It depends on their developmental stages where they are at

in their lives …I think there was an indication that they understood that

transition into academic and disciplinary knowledge, but they were all the time

craving for practical knowledge.

At the same time, indications of effective 'code-switching' were evident in the research. Another illustration in the first cycle focus group indicates a student for whom English is an additional language coming to grips with the differences in everyday and academic and professional literacies.

Student FG participant (first cycle): [In] *Academic discourse … I can't say what I*

want or … provide examples from personal experience. … [it needs a]

statement and together with the evidence to support it … it is academic like

structure … you can't provide your personal opinion. So you always mention

about … more books [you have read] to provide any evidence to support ideas

or argument.

Interviewer: *Do you think that spilt over in any way to other areas of your life?*

Participant 2: Yeah, way of thinking is a big one. For example if I am trying to

negotiate with … the Insurance company … back then I used to say, "I feel like

this and that", but now after I have learned the academic discourse how to be

aware of the language I use you know … or evidence to support … your claims

...I try to delve into things more and try to understand them. Before I was

probably more accepting of first view, now I am really critical of everything

which I hear.

The student is explaining how he has learned to 'code-switch' to his advantage in

academic literacies and is transferring this to everyday situations that might benefit

from a different language genre. The student is developing awareness of the

differences in every-day register (a personal tenor and using written language that is

close to self and to familiar experience), as opposed to an academic essay that

displays specialised knowledge ('*more books you have read'*), enacting an expert tenor

('*evidence to support your claim'*) and written language relatively distanced from self

and others (Macken-Horarik *et al.* 2006 p247). There was evidence of students

successfully moving between vernacular and discipline literacies, as indicated by a

focus group participant in the second cycle, who reported on her recent conversation

with a friend about the care of her elderly mother:

Student FG participant (second cycle): ….*and I was talking to her about self-*

determination. And I would never have known what self-determination was 12

months ago but I was saying to her maybe just give her all the options and let

her make up her own mind. And she said that had really helped her…" Since

you've told me that I have been taking a step back and I am telling her what the

options are and if she doesn't want to do it that is up to her''.

The student is moving with ease between the two literacies – vernacular ('just give her all the options and let her make up her own mind') and the discipline or professional ('self-determination'). She is using this language in the context of friendship and not only academic or professional settings.

Other students in the first focus group (second cycle) were discussing the need to use language differentially, which clearly reflected teaching-and-learning conversations engaged in throughout the unit:

Student FG1 (second cycle) Participant 2: *Language can be very powerful, it has meaning and power that is linked with identity…the social worker's …language can be used in a negative way if the language they use is a bit too professional; it is a bit distant from the …client.*

Participant 1: *It can alienate…like you use that almost like over somebody….Maybe make sure you are on an equal footing with whoever you are dealing with. Try and look at things from their perspective…*

Participant 3: *That is why we need to use different language in different (…)*

Participant 1: *Different situations.*

Participant 2: *What is appropriate language for the person, yeah?*

Participant 1: *So one for your colleagues maybe and then try and be aware of the client you are dealing with…and speak to them in a way they will understand and won't intimidate them.*

The students are recognising the role of language in professional practice and the power it can have to connect with or alienate clients and other professionals. They are articulating a metalanguage with which to reflect on their future practices, drawing together the three literacy dimensions to which they had been exposed throughout the unit: the operational, cultural and critical literacies (Green 1988). This highlights the

possibilities inherent in integrating the three literacy dimensions when teaching a discipline, rather than a sole focus on discipline knowledge contents, as in traditional education. Bruner (1966 p72) writes that

> we teach a subject not to produce little living libraries on that subject, but rather to get a student to think [as a social worker] for themselves, to consider matters as a [social worker] does, to take part in the process of knowledge-getting.

The students in the focus groups, in the first year of the course, were learning to 'consider matters' as a social worker, illustrating the identity shifts they have undertaken as they have participated in the multiple literacies (Discourse communities) involved in tertiary education. Making these literacies and their inherent power explicit, and attending to their development while teaching the discipline, has provided tools for students to recognise the code-switching involved in multiple literacies, identify codes in genres required for their academic success, and develop critical awareness of language and its role in maintaining power relations that exert the dominance of elite social groups over others. Possibilities identified throughout this chapter, that emerged in the research project from the enacted pedagogies, affirm the value of curriculum and pedagogies that scaffold diverse students towards multiple literacies in tertiary education; pedagogies that (a) seek resonance with, and valorise, students' life-worlds; (b) make elite codes explicit; and (c) build critical consciousness to support identity shifts for successful participation in tertiary education and professional worlds, while acting to change those institutional worlds in socially just directions.

Conclusion

The project's efforts to design and enact pedagogies that pay explicit attention to both language and discipline, and use students' FoL as assets for learning, resulted in qualitative evidence of students successfully engaging with, and participating in, disciplinary, academic and professional knowledge. The project created structured opportunities in the curricula for FoL to emerge and to be used pedagogically to augment learning and to explore critical dimensions of both language use and

disciplinary knowledge. Assets identified from the students' life-worlds in the case study included multi-linguistic resources; prior work of students when they lived in different nation states; diverse work roles in Australia; active involvement of students in their own communities; professional or volunteer experience; political affiliations; and overcoming of significant life hurdles. Inviting and valorising these in the tertiary learning context meant that students were not defined solely by what happened in the classroom, which is a reduced social context;

> they are understood as persons who partake in a broader social life, of which classrooms are only one part; and they are understood with a strong sense of what their social life means in terms of funds of knowledge (Moll 2014 p 119).

In our reflections on the approach's effectiveness, we found that some students were more aware of academic and discipline codes, and the notion of 'code-switching', than others, perhaps depending on the quality of the 'dynamic interaction' and where the students were developmentally positioned. Within the curricular and pedagogic opportunities created, and the emergent student and educator interactions, there were indications of growing familiarity with academic discourse, of growing consciousness of language and its differential power, of the use of language to 'code-switch', and a of growing critical awareness in relation to both life-world and formal disciplinary knowledge. These are hopeful signs for 'non-traditional' students negotiating the identity transitions implicit in professional tertiary education, which can be more arduous for them when traditional pedagogic models prevail.

The value of making tacit academic and discipline codes explicit for students was supported by their almost universal affirmation of the ALL educators' integration in the discipline. Interestingly, this was valued by all students, not only 'non-traditional'. The history and evolution of the Academic and Learning support field, which has resulted in a focus on embedding academic support in discipline curricula, considerably enabled the project. The availability of the University's ALL resources and the

cooperation of the Social Work discipline team supported the efforts of this doctoral AR project.

Some congruence between aspects of the pedagogic approaches and the values of the Social Work profession, as well as the theoretical orientation of the *BSW* unit in the case-study, facilitated the enactment of the pedagogies. While Social Work education has adopted more experiential and relational pedagogies that reflect the values of the profession, these function in a university education system that can limit or undermine them. The weight of history in university education has traditionally seen pedagogy as knowledge 'transmission' when working with 'less advantaged' learners, which still dominates the curricular spaces and structures in a resource-stretched and vocationally oriented university system. This was evident in the traditional lecture mode of large groups and contact time constraints, which undermined the dialogic approaches we sought to implement, as explored more fully in the next chapter.

Social Work educators Saleebey and Scanlan (2005 p16) draw parallels between what Social Work professionals hope to achieve with their clients, and what Social Work educators seek for their students. In both cases, liberation from structural power relations might not be possible, but hopefully both groups are assisted in

> recovering their own voice individually and collectively, to tap into their innate wisdom and strength, to discovering the sources of oppression – interpersonally and institutionally – and to employ the resources within them and around them in the achievement of their project and their well-being. We should do no less in the classroom.

The curricular and pedagogical approaches in the case study were designed to realise such aspirations for all *BSW* students, but particularly those 'non-traditional' students who were less familiar with academic and discipline Discourses. We were aware that some of the 'non-traditional' students in the case study were encountering economic, cultural and social barriers impacting on their educational progress. These students were experiencing some of the structural injuries that the Social Work profession seeks to address. These very experiences entail cultural assets that potentially can position 'non-traditional' students well in the complex and culturally diverse realities of

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contemporary Social Work practice (Jones 2006). This project's intention was to contribute to curricular and pedagogic practices in tertiary education that do not compound structural injuries, but that enable 'non-traditional' students to find a stable and welcome footing in disciplinary and academic communities, in the early years of a Bachelor program (for continuing development throughout the course).

The AR provided a fertile learning environment for educators, activated curricular and pedagogic change at the site of the case study, and exposed possibilities for change in the broader tertiary context. As contextual realities were negotiated in classroom enactment, facilitators and constraints were identified, providing rich data sources to respond to the research questions and highlight the contextual features requiring renegotiation for future enactment beyond the case-study. The next chapter explores contextual and institutional constraints experienced when enacting the project's curricular and pedagogic approaches. It is hoped that identifying these will assist in future enactment of these approaches beyond the limits of this particular case study.

Chapter Five – Constraints on the Pedagogies

Introduction

This thesis has argued from the theoretical position that the new students entering tertiary education in the context of widening participation are better served pedagogically by a dual attention to literacy and content in curriculum; more specifically through making powerful and elite codes of the discipline and academia explicit and scaffolded to the use of FoL as assets for learning. I have argued from the data that pedagogical approaches aligned to this dual attention have educational merits for all students as they navigate the complexities of a global society with cross-cultural encounters and associated multiple literacies. The previous chapter identified research findings in the case study confirming the value of such curricular and pedagogic approaches in practice over both AR cycles and for later reflection. This chapter responds to the research question about what constraints emerged as the curricula and pedagogies were enacted in the two cycles of AR: how the approach's potentials were blocked by systemic-institutional practices and conditions, and how these were experienced by students and staff. It reports on research findings from the five primary data sources: interviews with tutors and the ALL expert; student questionnaires; focus groups; the researcher's field journal; and course documentation, indicating challenges to the enactment of the preferred curricular and pedagogic approaches.

The accidental shift of my role from external collaborator in the project (from the central Learning and Teaching unit) to a sudden and new 'insider' practitioner-researcher serendipitously provided rich analytic value, particularly as we encountered constraints in the AR. Becoming a practitioner immersed me in an experiential micro-level of everyday practice, and required me to think with a 'practitioner's hat' on; while, simultaneously, my 'researcher's hat' required that I sustain analytical attention, as best I could, to the meso level of institutional arrangements and the macro level of broader socio-structural contexts. This put me in a position to grasp and reflect on how all of

these levels intersect in complex and fluid ways, in 'practice architectures' that constrain or enable practices (Kemmis *et al.* 2014). As I was new to an academic teaching role in the University, I was less habituated to the constraints of the inside, and so I was more acutely sensitive to them in practice – and consciously attentive to them in wearing my 'researcher's hat' – as we 'bumped into' them in the AR. At the same time, like other insider practitioners, I experienced constraints to our efforts to realise pedagogic aims in an embodied way, rather than as an outsider with perhaps romanticised ideas of what we were trying to do, unchecked by direct encounter with the inhibiting systemic and structural dynamics – and all their associated experiences of frustration and ambivalence – that infuse the untidy and uncertain world of practice.

Kemmis *et al.*'s (2014 p55) concept of 'practice architectures' is useful for analysing the complex matrix of conditions that enable and/or constrain practice at interwoven micro, macro and meso levels. They argue that teaching is embedded in institutional arrangements of practice architecture that include cultural-discursive (sayings of practice), socio-political (relatings of practice) and material-economic (doings of practice) elements. These 'sayings, doings and relatings' were experienced, and became analysable, in the AR as enablers and constraints to the pedagogies. *Cultural-discursive* factors – 'sayings' – comprised prevailing ideologies, historical pedagogic norms, prescribed pedagogic structures (time and space), internalised power relationships, and the privileging of assessments and 'success' by both students and educators. *Material-economic* factors operating institutionally, and partly constraining what we could *do* in the planning and enacting of the pedagogies, included resource limitations, heavy educator workloads, a casualised workforce and time constraints. *Socio-political* factors influenced the ways in which we as practitioners, and I as the researcher, could *relate* to broader systems and stakeholders in the project, operating particularly through the regulatory environment, managerialist impositions and consumer dispositions, which were experienced as constraints. Situated awareness of these factors provided rich analytic material about

the contextual conditions we negotiated, and aspects that could be refined for future enactment of the curricular and pedagogic approaches.

Negotiating New Curricular and Pedagogic Practices

There is an inter-dependence between institution-wide policies and practices, and program and classroom practices, which attempt to foster quality teaching and learning in tertiary education (Hénard & Roseveare 2012). The pedagogic approach in the project was necessarily designed and enacted within the existing curricular policies and practices of the University. Lea (2004) states that course design will always be limited by specific institutional and wider quality assurance procedures. Identifying these limitations and how they operate became an important dimension of the investigation in the AR. Institutional norms are often interrupted in AR; and such interruption produces effects which make the norms more visible. Kemmis (2009 p463) maintains that AR 'animates and urges change in practices, understandings and the conditions of practice'. In this AR project, we were interrupting norms while dealing with our own subjective experience of being tertiary educators in these times – sometimes an uneasy tension. The AR methodology, with action and reflection in real conditions, enabled us to explore these tensions as we sought to enact the curricular and pedagogic ideals in practice.

Key Themes from the Data

A number of themes emerged from the AR illuminating how elements of practice architecture operated to constrain the pedagogies. Accountability, administration and resource systems sometimes took pre-eminence over the space and time required to design and enact the pedagogies. The broader socio-political context driving these systems infiltrated the institutional 'sayings' and 'doings' and established structural arrangements, expectations and norms that directly influenced our practice on the ground, as discussed more fully below. This same context influenced institutional

arrangements that casualised and diversified academic workloads (in the interests of economic efficiency), impacting on collegial relationships, time available, teaching quality and the extent to which the pedagogies could effectively be enacted. We were working within prescribed pedagogic structures and institutional norms that did not necessarily support the design and enactment of the new pedagogies, underscoring Kemmis *et al.*'s (2014) premise that AR needs to consider these institutional arrangements if it is going to effect changes in practice. As discussed in the previous chapter, the collaboration with the ALL educator was an institutional arrangement that afforded the projects' intentions to integrate academic literacies with discipline learning and highlighted the institution's intentional commitment (through 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings') to support students from non-traditional backgrounds. However, we also encountered the inherent complexities of the contemporary tertiary teaching space, including internalised power relationships, cross-cultural dimensions, students' stresses and life demands, as well as consumer dispositions, which sometimes challenged our dual efforts to use FoL as learning assets and make elite literacy codes explicit. At the same time, as we reflected on these challenges throughout the AR process, our own professional learning was developing and we were modifying our practices as the cycles progressed. The AR enabled us reflexively to discern areas we needed to develop to be more effective in our pedagogic efforts, including identifying the factors of practice architecture that had to be negotiated for present and future effectiveness.

Accountability, Administration and Resource Systems

In the initial design phase of the AR, we experienced accountability and administrative systems as competing with considerations of pedagogic merit. One practical expression of this, referred to earlier, was the University's rules on the number of cumulative words for assessments, considered appropriate to Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) levels, which meant that when we designed assessments we were limited to approximately 3000 cumulative words per unit. In the case study, this meant

that written off-campus tasks (or other regular written assessed tasks) could not be included in overall assessments (without exceeding the recommended 'word limit' for assessments at AQF levels 5 and 6, equivalent to years one and two, as in the project). Northedge (2005) and Green (1988) recommend the practice of written work ('a little bit often') within the discipline to enhance development of literacies, especially for 'non-traditional' students. More flexibility in assessment word limits could have facilitated such writing practice. Our experience was that few students undertook such writing tasks if voluntary rather than connected to assessment requirements. This is unsurprising, given that learning and teaching literature in higher education consistently notes that assessment drives learning (Boud 2010; Ramsden 2000). This is possibly intensified in the current environment when new university students juggle multiple roles to fund their studies and absorb a consumerist disposition, seeing education as 'a purchasable product that can simply be appropriated' (Naidoo & Williams 2014 p9). In the case of assessment limits, centralised and imposed standards for word length inhibited preferable pedagogy in the local context and were privileged over academic discretion. Such generic prescriptions might discourage 'over-assessing' and encourage consistency, but some flexibility would provide more room for pedagogic rationales and choices to operate.

The University's extensive and protracted course approval system (designed to meet compliance with external accountability systems) had to be negotiated in these early design stages and did not always provide the affordances we needed for re-designing the curriculum. This course approval system required prescribing an outline of unit assessments long before teaching commenced and prior to our involvement (even in the 'new' second cycle unit). These could be substantially changed only with time-consuming administrative burdens. This potentially vied for time and constrained innovation around assessment design, as indicated in the following extract from the researcher's journal in the curriculum design stage:

Researcher/lecturer field journal (design phase): *I inherited a curriculum to which I made minor changes – once you start changing assessments there is a lengthy and cumbersome process of course approval. Making 'major amendments' to courses, invokes this process. There is therefore little incentive to make innovative changes to assessments or curricula that is already set…It was also the first time that I'd taught the unit, so I was coming to grips with the material and texts – there was little time for innovation. I did, however, make a change to one assessment, trying to stay within the bounds of the course approval system.*

Retaining student presentations as one of the assessments in the first cycle when there was lower student contact time (one hour tutorial per week) meant that the time for integration of literacies and discipline content was significantly reduced in tutorials. The ALL tutor observed this in her interview (first cycle):

ALL educator (cycle one): *The focus in the first few weeks on the importance of language and discourse became lost throughout the course due to the presentations and lack of time to revisit literacy work… We were also very mindful of students' obligations and the need to be flexible. We needed more class time to prepare for the essay and drafts – to make the essay more central.*

In the second cycle, the assessments of the new unit prescribed in the course approval system were more general, which gave us some room in the design. Making the most of this flexibility in the design of the second cycle, we included an essay draft as part of the assessment and modified presentations (reading summaries) to take up less tutorial time. We also had longer designated tutorial time in the second cycle (one and a half hours), which gave us some more room for the integration of both literacies and content.

Accountability requirements have become accentuated in the changed relationship between universities and government in the last three decades. Traditionally universities managed quality assurance through internal processes, peer review from external representatives from other universities, and accreditation by professional bodies. From 1998, Australian universities were required to undertake self-assessments of progress on quality assurance goals and provide related data to the federal government; the Australian Universities Quality Agency was created in 1999 to periodically audit universities' processes and actions arising. Universities found to be deficient could become ineligible for federal government funding (Anderson 2006 p162). This incentive for universities to collect documentation demonstrating their commitment to quality assurance remains today, through audits by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) and reporting to the federal government. Critics of these quality assurance systems raise the obvious concern about the shift of power in such external processes, and the notion of 'quality' as compliance with reductive standards, which it is argued can promote instrumental, minimalist and mediocre outcomes rather than educational excellence, and can be time-consuming, and unproductive for university staff (Anderson 2006).

During the AR, we became aware of how government policy decisions around university accountabilities, with underlying 'human capital', 'cost-saving' and other 'economic' rationales, had created internal arrangements ('sayings, doings and relatings') that curtailed our practice decisions. The 'sayings' and 'doings' associated with increased accountability (to assure maximum 'efficiency') were directly impacting our practice decisions as we began planning and designing the curriculum in the AR. We found ways to navigate to some extent in the second cycle, but already our best intentions were hampered to a degree. Marginson (2013 p355) points out that ideologies and reforms in higher education over recent decades have resulted in more emphasis on financial 'efficiency' and 'productivity' (in volume terms), but 'there is no evidence that teaching is better'. Bexley *et al.* (2011) discuss the administrative burden

of university accountability systems on academics, citing recent research that recommends the need to streamline the regulatory environment. Institutional sayings, doings and relatings that focused on 'efficiency' and 'accountability' impeded pedagogic innovation in our AR efforts (Kemmis *et al.* 2014 p55).

We were learning and growing into the pedagogies, so perhaps didn't feel as confident to negotiate existing systems as much as we would have liked. We became aware of 'relatings' in the matrix of practice architectures, which lured us to concede to 'safe teaching' and traditional pedagogies given that changes were cumbersome and time-consuming in the planning stages, and we were in unfamiliar territory. I was finding my feet in a new academic role and building new collegial relationships, and so I was tentative about the extent to which I could 'rock the boat' or negotiate for change. We sensed ourselves becoming complicit in the existing practice architectures. Naidoo and Williams (2014 p10) maintain that requirements to comply with extensive monitoring can make academics 'more instrumental in their attitudes and behaviour', particularly when paired with the threat of student complaints in more consumer-driven relationships. The consumer levers in marketised learning - greater transparency in university performance indicators, student satisfaction surveys, contractual relationships through student charters, and complaint mechanisms - purport to enhance student choice in the education process and positively impact on the academic practices of universities. However, the productivity pressures on universities from these levers have led to prioritising outputs, progression rates, and the quality and quantity of research, rather than harder-to-quantify educational qualities or intellectual challenges (Naidoo & Williams 2014 p7). Quality pedagogy that might benefit 'non-traditional' students - such as relations of trust between learners and educators' risk-taking, and challenge to existing institutional norms - come under pressure in this context:

> …Risk-taking does not sit easily with a learning relationship based on passive consumerism in which there is an assumption that qualifications will follow in return for specified levels of work (Naidoo and Williams 2014 p10).

These consumer levers can militate against widening participation as 'non-traditional' students may not necessarily negotiate choice mechanisms as successfully as their middle class peers (Reay, David & Ball 2005, cited in Naidoo & Williams 2014). When they arrive at universities where quality teaching is potentially undermined by such mechanisms, they can encounter pedagogies that are entrenched in a more elite system, which do not necessarily serve them well.

In addition to accountability and administrative frameworks, financial resources have been cited in recent research as essential to 'the appropriate teaching and research infrastructure' for quality tertiary education systems (Salmi 2011 p338, cited in Williams *et al.* 2013 p600). In the case study, we were designing the curriculum at a time when the University's student learning platform was out-dated and in the process of being replaced due to its limited capacities. Innovative ideas for assessment explored with colleagues in the early stages of curriculum design, such as engaging literacies through collaborative work with WIKIs, making podcasts of interviews of SW students or SW graduates on literacy/language themes, and exploring the possibility of the 'flipped classroom' (i.e. where didactic components and related tasks are delivered online and student contact time is focused on interactive pedagogies), were abandoned, partly due to the limitations of the student learning platform and time demands:

> Researcher/lecturer field journal (Oct 2012): *Hard to contemplate doing this [podcasts of interviews with students or graduates] – fitting in the time and technology that this would take – while dealing with content, marking and other administrative tasks associated with teaching.*

This illustrated how material-economic arrangements and historical norms can shape practice, rather than pedagogic values and preferred practices. This was frustrating to experience and signalled quite early how social justice initiatives 'are necessarily tempered by "pragmatic" reckoning with constraints' (Zipin & Hattam 2009 p503). It

didn't cloud myresolve, but I found myself taking 'pragmatic' options even in the planning stages.

Related to resources, the theme of time constraints echoed throughout the project, indicating the challenges for innovative curricular or pedagogic design whilst in the turbulent fray and workload demands of teaching and research. Given the course in the case study was professionally accredited, the relationship of the case-study units to the other units in the course (for a 'whole of course' perspective) in curriculum design needed consideration. This involved consultation with other social work staff, which was constructive and supportive, but again took time and negotiation, as indicated in the researcher's Field journal during the curriculum design phase:

> Researcher/lecturer field journal (Oct 2012): *I was also aware that I needed to get a draft curriculum to the SW team for their input and also for the professor's approval. I wanted feedback from the team to ensure a 'whole of course approach' to see how else the students were scaffolded into the knowledge - in other preceding and co-taught units. I didn't want overlapping assessments or pedagogic approaches….*

> (A later entry – Nov 2012): *I had one hour to [present to social work colleagues] and it seemed far too short – the other academics were trying to absorb the curriculum document (I should have sent it prior) and were also trying to think about it in relation to their own units. It was the end of the year and people were preparing to go on Leave…*

I had a supportive team of Social Work academics, to work with, who facilitated the curriculum design (follow-up conversations with individuals took place after the initial presentation). However in terms of broader enactment, the limiting processes discussed above all impinged on everyone involved (discussed more fully later). The attraction of individual academics to remain focused on their own units, and avoid the collegial teamwork necessary for good course and unit design, is understandable in this context (Hicks 2007). This is further exacerbated in a casualised academic workforce, where such activity is not usually reimbursed, so that a 'whole of course' perspective on unit design and pedagogy is less likely to be prioritised.

Academic Workloads

Academic workloads and managerialist demands in tertiary education operated as constraints in the design and enactment stages of the project. Workload arrangement and pressures were manifested in the time and attention available for preparing, implementing and reflecting on quality teaching and learning in the case study. For example, the levels of teaching proportionate to other academic activity in the case study (based on the university's Enterprise Agreement) were relatively high. The ALL educator commented, in her interview in the second cycle, that for the discipline lecturer/researcher, five hours of lecturing and tutoring (one lecture repeated), with a short break (often interrupted by student enquiries) for two days in a row, with the additional demands of unit coordination, impacted on the energy for teaching toward the end of the second afternoon. In response to the question about what aspects of the institutional context were constraining, she said:

> ALL educator (second cycle): *Well I am thinking of you having to deliver two lectures in a row …leading up to the tutorial…made you very exhausted.*

This was an accurate observation which, beyond the reality of academic workloads, was at least partially exacerbated by the uncertainty of a significant University restructure in the year of the research, directly impacting on me. This restructure was one of several sustained in the preceding years with unremitting regularity. Such restructures are a familiar feature of the 'corporatised' university (Kirk 2014; Tuchman 2009; Deem & Brehony 2005) and can deplete energy and time from core teaching activities and innovation. The central Learning and Teaching area (where I was employed at the time, while seconded to teach in social work for .4 time fraction) was being totally restructured in semester one of 2013. Most staff had to apply for their positions, be redeployed or apply for redundancies. This was destabilising, devaluing and demoralising; valued colleagues were leaving and the associated uncertainties

were debilitating at times. These realities were evident in extracts from the researcher's field journal:

> Field journal entry (1st cycle) 17/4/2013: *In preparing for the lecture this week, I thought, it is all I can do to think about content and how to teach that, let al.one anything on literacies. Feeling time and work pressures…University restructure meant that I had to apply for five jobs this week and consider the prospect of interviews.*

I was fortunate to retain a position in the central Teaching and Learning unit, and later be offered a position as a Social Work academic, which I accepted. This meant that the context of the project in the second cycle was industrially more stable. However, the net effect was that I coordinated and taught for the first time five Social Work subjects in 18 months (one repeated in intensive form), two of which were linked to my doctoral thesis. The time and pedagogic labour necessarily dedicated to content when teaching units for the first time was challenging, especially when attempting to step back from content and consider literacies pedagogically in the planning and enactments stages:

> Researcher field journal, (planning stages) Oct 2012: *Teaching [a Social Work subject] last semester [prior to the project] – it was the first time I had taught it - so less familiar with the subject matter – took so much time to read, research and absorb the current material and then think about how to break it down (for teaching); whilst at the same time thinking about being explicit about the academic skills with the ALL educator who was co-teaching.*

I grappled with how best to balance content and literacies in discipline subjects in the early stages of the curriculum design (before the ALL educator's direct involvement):

> Researcher/lecturer field journal (design stage) Oct 2012: *I tend to agree with Sophie Arkoudis (2012) when she recently reported on her OLT project, "we all agree that embedding language and literacy works, but we're not really sure*

how to do it (well)". As we know, there is a continuum of embedding models and I'm exploring one end of that continuum. Other models with an adjunct (literacies) unit feel like a luxury that I don't have in this project.

Although other researchers and practitioners had gone before in enacting embedded academic literacies into disciplines, I still had to work out what a dual focus on content and literacies, and considering FoL as pedagogic assets, meant in *this* context, with *these* subjects and for *these* students. Such pedagogic labour in the design and enactment stages was challenged in the fluid and uncertain context in which we were operating and constricted the changing of pedagogic practices. These field journal entries pick up on some of these early tensions:

> Field journal 6.12.2012: *In summary, I feel as though I'm trying to explore the enactment to teaching in a tight discipline space, with various levels of ambiguity in that space – my recent re-entry into the discipline; some uncertainty in the literature and practice around how 'embedding' in a discipline unit is actually done well; the high investment of colleagues in the discipline; the natural orientation to traditional ways of teaching; my anxiety about students' experience in the unit and instability in my 'place' in the organisation.*

And in the enactment phase:

> Field journal (second cycle) 6.6.2013: *Time tight, given had to take on all the teaching in semester 1. Lots of reading just to prepare the new Unit Guide for Intro to Social Work (eg, references/readings), so easy to be focused on content. Lots of administration.*

This anxiety gradually eased in the second cycle, partly because the industrial uncertainty was resolved, the ALL educator and I were more relaxed working out our mutual roles, the content of the unit in the second cycle was less dense and we had more student contact time. However, this early experience underscored the grounded

realities of academics seeking to balance demanding workloads, in a managerialist context, with increased student numbers in widening participation, the latter of which arguably requires closer attention to learning and teaching of newer students and more critical appraisal of traditional pedagogies (Hénard & Roseveare 2012). Morrow (1994) maintains that educators at all levels of academic practice are responsible for collaborative processes that encourage the participation of students unfamiliar with tertiary education. Boughey (2005 p240) asserts that 'epistemological access' (Morrow 1993) involves building a bridge between 'the respective worlds students and lecturers draw on'. Such collaborations and pedagogic attention belie traditional university education models and require academics' commitment, involving thoughtful consideration, time and reflection.

Bexley *et al.* (2011) have researched the academic profession as universities try to do 'more with less', in an environment of increased student numbers, more complex student needs, and managerialist impositions. Their research findings indicate that, in the wake of widening participation, academic work has diversified and will continue to diversify, and Australian academics are struggling to manage existing workloads. They found that less than one third of Australian academics believe their workload is manageable and just under half indicated that their workload is not manageable (pxi). The changing nature of academic work is among the features of a corporatised university, outlined by Kirk (2014 p323). These include hierarchical arrangements – rather than the previously collegial, and 'flexible' forms of working practices – to reduce the cost of academic work. It became apparent how these structural conditions and institutional arrangements were influencing our practice and incorporating us – and ultimately our students – as discussed below.

Sessional Academic Tutors

Central to the enactment of the pedagogies was the teaching team involved in the project. Apart from the discipline lecturer/unit coordinator (the researcher) and the ALL

educator, discipline tutors were teaching smaller groups of students in all the units in the project. Discipline tutors were generally sessional academics, with one seconded from another area of the University. They were briefed and supported throughout the project by the Unit Coordinator (researcher). However, the complexities of implementing pedagogic innovation within current academic work practices, and the associated constraints on the pedagogies in the case study, are discussed in this section.

The use of sessional academics is common practice in Australian universities. Dobson (2014 p3) points out that the massification of higher education has recently led to an increase of about 40% in the number of students attending tertiary institutions, but only about 20% in the number of Effective Full time (EFT) permanent and contract teaching staff. This shortfall has been taken up by casual/sessional academic staff with precarious and short-term employment conditions, entailing 'a supervisory headache for the regular staff'. Byers and Tani (2014 p13) cite Australian government statistics which report that, among the staff responsible for the provision of university teaching in Australia, over 26% were employed on casual (predominantly sessional) contracts in 2011. They argue however, that this underestimates the reality of casuals' contribution, which has been estimated at approximately 50% of student teaching across the sector (Percy, Scoufis, Parry, Goody, Hicks, Macdonald, Martinez, Szorenyi-Reischl, Ryan, Wills & Sheridan 2008; Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure & Meek, 2009; Coates & Goegebuure 2010, cited in Byers & Tani 2014 p13). In the project, tensions about how much tutor preparation time was 'enough', and whether tutors should attend lectures (which did not count as paid time) in order to synchronise tutorials and lectures, surfaced in the second cycle. One discipline tutor in the interview briefly quipped:

DT1 (second cycle): *I didn't attend all lectures; I'm not paid for that (with a smile…)*.

A second discipline tutor was more direct:

DT2 (second cycle): *…we had an early sort of debate about, given we don't get paid for development …I would rather the university paid differently you know.*

The precarious and under resourcing of sessional teachers in tertiary education is well documented (Bexley *et al.* 2011; Rea 2012; Rothengater & Hil 2013). The Bradley Review (2008) officially acknowledged the need for an increase in public funding to reduce casualisation in tertiary education, pointing out that academic sessional staff 'experience income insecurity, workloads beyond their paid hours, and feelings of isolation from the university community' (Bradley 2008, cited in Brown, Goodman & Yasukawa 2010, p171). Casual academic tutors (sessionals) are contracted by the hour from semester to semester with no guarantee of further employment. Although academic sessional tutors' pay rate includes some development time (and the University in the case study provided additional time for marking and the researcher provided optional 'Tutorial Guides'), the responses in the tutor interviews allude to the expectation on tutors to undertake work beyond their recompensed hours. This creates practical and ideological tensions for unit coordinators. Wanting to privilege quality teaching for students, unit coordinators can have implicit expectations that are pedagogically reasonable (for example, the requisite reading and research, responding to student enquiries, and planning and preparation) but might go beyond the federal award stipulation that each contact hour of teaching requires two hours of preparation and 'associated duties' (Brown *et al.* 2010 p174). Given that unit coordinators generally determine who tutors in their units, the precarious employment relations of the sessional tutors make it difficult to challenge these expectations. Brown *et al.* (2010) suggest that such casualisation has created a 'class divide' between casual academics and tenured staff.

In the case study, not all tutors had the benefit of an ALL educator with them (only the researcher did), so the important tutorial work of attending to both discipline content and literacies was not equally privileged, although all students could access the

allocated ALL educator in their own time, and were exposed to some of her input in lectures and through the online learning system. This discrepancy in resourcing became apparent when some students from a tutorial group without the ALL educator indicated to me that they had had insufficient guidance for assessments. It was also expressed by students in the focus group who did not have the ALL educator in their tutorials:

> Student FG (second cycle): *She* [the ALL educator] *was very good but - for us not having her in the tutorial - you needed to kind of be proactive in asking her…to see her outside of class which I am not sure a lot of people would have bothered to do …I think it depends on the student whether they like to seek that out or not.*

In the second cycle, it became apparent that one of the discipline tutors hadn't used the ALL educators' online resources in tutorials, partly because she was unsure about how to use the electronics in the classroom; instead, she had directed students to the online resources. It would seem that she had some discomfort in asking for assistance, which impacted on the students' experience of the curricular project. Although all the tutors were briefed about the research project and given written information before the semester started in both cycles, it became apparent in the same tutor's interview that she was unclear about the underlying intent of the project. In the interview (which was post-teaching) she sought understanding of the term 'multiple literacies':

> DT2 (second cycle): *The title of the study didn't mean anything to me…what is multiple literacies?...Can you define for me literacy as you are using it?*

These questions were re-clarified in the interview, albeit too late. This illustrates the challenges of working closely with tutors and keeping communication clear and open; and it suggests power dimensions inherent in employment relations that might inhibit

timely questioning. The same tutor referred to a lack of confidence and clarity around the expectations of tutors:

> DT2 (second cycle): *It took me a while to get some confidence about …the leeway that a tutor has* [pedagogically]…*and I think there could be a bit more clarity* [from the University].

Despite good intentions by all involved, this lack of clarity and inadequate recompense is echoed in other qualitative studies of university academic sessional experience (Jones *et al.* 2010) and highlights how sessional staff can become lost in the dynamics and demands of the teaching environment, ultimately impacting on pedagogy.

At the same time, the unit coordinator (researcher) experienced some of the 'supervisory head-aches' referred to by Dobson (2014 p3) when juggling these conflicted realities and aiming to meaningfully orient and support sessional staff to ensure quality teaching. Whilst the workload formula in operation at this University gives some acknowledgement of administration involved in coordinating units, it does not reflect the actual workload, which is much greater than allocated and ultimately detracts from attention to pedagogy and curriculum design. For example, in the first cycle in the case study after recruiting sessional staff, the researcher spent many hours orienting new tutors to the student management system to access resources and mark student work (all student assignments were submitted electronically through this system) as well as moderating marking, responding to queries, debriefing tutors when required, preparing brief tutorial guides and maintaining regular feedback and communication. When one tutor became ill and returned to her country of origin (mid unit) in the first cycle, the process began again, almost doubling my workload.

These resource realities combined to put pressure on the enactment of the curriculum and pedagogy in the AR and undermined its impact to some extent. It highlighted the central role of the university educator in supporting 'non-traditional' students' navigation of multiple texts and their existing and new literacies. It is

educators who are sanctioned to loosen the boundaries between the literacies of 'non-traditional' students and the discipline. In this porous, 'hybrid' teaching space, students' diverse FoL are mediated through an attendant discourse that 'must occur in the right places, the right times and the right ways' to position 'non-traditional' students as experts of related and applicable knowledges (and literacies), and generate the scaffold to new literacies (Barton & Tan 2009 p52). However, this requires expertise and commitment from university educators in a resource-stretched system that has historically entrenched ways of operating. In a casualised workforce with conditions that do not invite such commitment nor necessarily expect or develop such expertise, this educative opportunity is compromised.

Attrition statistics suggest that such compromises could impact on students' successful participation in universities. One third of students enrolled in Australian universities do not graduate and many withdraw in the first year of their studies (Meuleman *et al.* 2014 p1). Stallman and Hurst's (2011) Australian research indicates that more than half of all university students report levels of stress in the clinical range (considered indicative of mental health problems), risking disruption of students' studies. The additional adjustment stressors of diverse and 'non-traditional' students, and the life turbulence and structural barriers they often experience (e.g. financial pressures, lack of social support), make them more vulnerable in this area (Ivanič *et al.* 2009 p39; Meuleman *et al.* 2014). Research indicates that the availability of free, short-term counselling services at universities has not resulted in their increased use (Stallman 2010 p250). For some 'non-traditional' students, formal teaching and learning practices may constitute their only university experience because of their study mode, part time work and family commitments, which is true of many contemporary students (Thies *et al.* 2014 p44). This means that the formal learning and teaching occurrences in tertiary education potentially carry greater import in this environment, highlighting the importance of inclusive and explicit curricular and pedagogic practices. Curriculum that supports 'non-traditional' students through integrating literacies, building resonances

with their experience and life-worlds, and /or integrating resilience-building (Stallman 2011) becomes more central to their successful participation.

In the case study, a number of dimensions to students' stresses and impacts on their studies were identified. A student in the focus group (second cycle) was explicit about some stresses she experienced in the education process. She began by commenting that an interactive lecture on self-care in the ISW unit helped her navigate stresses associated with her Social Work studies:

> Student FG1 (second cycle) Participant 2: *I think the last session on self-care…was really important…speaking with people that I know, they were like, "that is really impressive that you have had that time to reflect". And the discussion we had with picking our strengths and weaknesses was just fantastic. It was really invaluable.*

This session intersected with discipline content and was designed for students to identify the personal and cultural strengths they brought to their Social Work studies, and how these might serve them in their ongoing learning and in the development of areas that needed further work. Students' own resiliencies and additional strategies to prepare them for the demands of study and their professional lives beyond graduation were identified and shared amongst their peers (Stallman 2011; Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2012). The student elaborated:

> *There were a lot of things that were really close to home that got brought up and I was sort of really struggling … with one particular essay…I just couldn't get going on it because it was just too close to home…I am too upset and I just want to …vent all this anger and frustration... and I was struggling to get into academic mode because I am just too passionate about it, it is making me too angry. And just be able to have maybe some ideas around how to deal with those feelings…I think people know that there's a Student Counsellor available,*

but there is still that bit of a stigma…you shouldn't go unless you are really

falling apart. Whereas probably we could all in some way benefit from that

interaction.

The student illustrates the stress levels that were activated as she was ontologically engaged with her studies ('a lot of things that were really close to home') and was wrestling with the different literacies required for this engagement ('I was struggling to get into academic mode'). It highlights the very real tensions of moving between various literacies and genres as she engages in her studies. She is quite explicit about the general reluctance of students to access counselling support services in the university. Stallman (2010) suggests that this is perhaps more so for 'non-traditional' students, who may feel less of a sense of entitlement.

Such findings in the case study and other related research highlight the importance of careful attention to curriculum and pedagogy in widening participation. It underscores the importance of sufficient resourcing and/or mentoring of team educators so that pedagogic interventions are more supportive of all students and 'non-traditional' students in particular. Without these investments in educators and related resources, universities' capacities to offer 'non-traditional' students a viable and constructive education experience are seriously curtailed. This illustrates how practice architectures hold practices in place at the site where they occur, constituting both the pre-conditions for introducing different practices, and the systemic consolidations that stand in the way (Kemmis *et al.* 2014 p55). Unless the 'sayings' of practice (for example, the value of investing pedagogically in 'non-traditional' students), the 'doings' of practice (providing the necessary resources to do so) and the 'relatings' of practice (having policies and leadership to support this) are negotiated and changed as required, new practices are less likely to take hold.

Prescribed Pedagogic Structures – Time, Space and Institutional Norms

Designing curricular times and spaces for a better 'pedagogic fit' were not negotiable in this project, partly due to the complexities of limited resources and the hazards of negotiating in the context of a large bureaucracy. We worked with or around existing structures as best we could, learning as we went. Dialogic pedagogies and explicit attention to multiple literacies require time and space that often felt constrained; this was particularly acute in the first cycle, when there was less contact time with students. Opportunities to undertake the necessary dialogic work for sound pedagogy were lost, partly due to external curricular structures driven by large student numbers, constrained resources and the weight of historical norms (large group lectures and time-tabling), which Tyack and Tobin (1994) refer to as institutional 'grammars'. Within these pedagogic structures, we were aware of our own histories in conventional pedagogy constraining our curricular choices at times. In the first cycle of the AR, the researcher's Journal indicates my grappling with this:

>Researcher/lecturer field journal (October 19th, 2012): *Struggling with integrating FoK into curriculum design. Already feeling the constraints of lecture tutorial structure that's the 'space' designated for the unit – over 12 weeks. Given the dialogic approach of FoK, a 60 minute lecture and 60 minute tutorial seems short – also the physical layout of the room. In lecture style makes it hard to form small groups, as students tease out the new knowledge or their experience...Feeling that FoK are getting 'lip service' a bit in the curriculum design ... Wanting to foreground the student voice, but this is quite foreign – perhaps especially in a theory based unit. It feels foreign and challenging.*

In the enactment stages, time constraints were repeatedly expressed in the ALL educator's interview (first cycle) and the researcher's field journal:

>ALL educator interview (first cycle): *Time was very constraining and the rooms in which to teach did not always facilitate student interaction and group work*

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because of their lecture style or small tutorial spaces. We had very little control

over these.

Researcher/lecturer field journal (first cycle) 25/2/2013: *I'll need to reduce time*

in [Cuseo's] 'getting to know you' task in only one hour's lecture. Time, time,

time and the lack of it is the enemy of innovation!

Researcher/lecturer field journal (first cycle) 23/4/13: *I prepared a lecture that*

included the role of language in constructing social reality and implications for

practice – this was an excellent segue into language and literacies…richer

exploration of this was constrained by limited time in the lecture and

presentations in tutorials.

Researcher/lecturer field journal (first cycle) Week 11: *Lectured for half of the*

hour and then interviewed a practitioner on ethics. Again we could have had

longer to tease out ideas. Felt rushed and could have drawn out the rich

resources of the practitioner – exploring theory with her examples, if we had

have had longer.

Students also expressed their awareness that more time was needed in the first-cycle

class. In the student questionnaires (first cycle) several students commented on the

lack of time in response to the question, 'What would you change to better meet your

learning needs?'

Student questionnaire (first cycle): *Longer tutorial time…the tutorial time should*

be 1.5 hours…most of the time we were just running out of time.

Another student: *longer lectures needed*!

In the focus group (first cycle) one of the students responded to the question about how

we could better teach the unit, she replied:

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More time…the lectures and tutorials were too short.

Contact time with students in university education has been gradually eroded through diminished public funding and expanded student numbers. Digital technology has created flexibility and pedagogic options that hope to reduce student-educator contact time, but these require significant design labour and digital 'presence' (teacher time in response) to be educationally effective (Brabazon 2002), which is not usually recognised by university administrators. Dual sector universities have had further declines in their funding sources through State Government policies that have diminished the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector (Buchanan 2012; Buchanan, Marginson & Wheelahan 2009).

University management and the academic teaching staff have to negotiate the realities of this reduced funding in a massified tertiary system, as well as the time-paucity and consumer dispositions of contemporary students. Reduction in contact time - supplemented with online and student support services - perhaps mediates this complexity. While it could be said that the pedagogic approaches in the study used too much of the available time, the findings from the second cycle suggest that the academic community can become accustomed to these reduced conditions and the new norms they create. In the processtheir capacities to register and contest the erosion of essential pedagogies can be dimmed and the consequences for more vulnerable 'non-traditional' students can be overlooked. Even when educators are aware of these possibilities, the effort to change them in cumbersome governance systems, a climate of managerialist impositions and reduced academic autonomy are significant disincentives. More local conditions, such as the researcher's low sense of 'agency', possibly contributed in this case study. I moved from an outsider (seconded) role in teaching the social work unit in the first cycle to a new 'insider' in a tenured role within the social work team in the second cycle. If I had been a longer-term member of the team with more established teaching and research background and associated

credibility established over time, I might have had a greater sense of agency in negotiating some of these pedagogic conditions.

Prescribed pedagogic times and spaces constrained our responsiveness to 'non-traditional' students', particularly the anxieties that emerged in the AR as students entered the unfamiliar university world. Such anxiety required curricular time and pedagogic attention to settle, so that the students could more effectively engage in learning the discipline. A discipline tutor interview (second cycle) commented on the limitations of a large lecture in the light of these anxieties. She noted that invitations to students to contribute in early lectures met with stunned silence from the students. The discipline tutor attributed this to the large lecture format and a fault in the early curricular design:

> DT2 interview (second cycle): *I think there are some reasons (for students' lack of engagement in early lectures) that are out of your control …a big room full of people that you don't know…. in your efforts in the early lectures there was like deadly silence. Now that was partly a lot of new people, feeling unsure, a very big room full of a lot of people they didn't know, people fearful, knowing that they are being judged in a way that they are not used to being judged. Just a whole range of other factors… people take a while to find their feet with multiple new experiences. And I think …the big room was the problem in the lecture format.*

The inhibiting effect of a large lecture group (early in a course, in the second cycle) on student participation and dialogue was very apparent. We enacted some corrective strategies (rapidly increasing small group activities and experiential exercises) after the early weeks of the unit, which were more possible with moveable seats in the lecture room (but harder in fixed seating lecture spaces, as in the first cycle). Careful attention to dialogue and getting to know students in tutorials helped the students to relax and contribute more fully as the second cycle unit progressed. Barnett and Coat (2005

p143) discuss the need for tertiary curriculum to have sufficient time to do its educative work:

> A curriculum…has to have time in which to work. It has to have time to give students space to come into themselves. It has to have time for the students in a class or cohort to come to know each other and to develop relationships of trust. It has to have time for the convivial pedagogical relationships to break away from the formal relationships of power and judgement that are often present (Illich 1973)…Time has to do its work.

It takes time for sufficient trust to develop for 'non-traditional' students to 'break away from the formal relationships of power' and to reveal life-worlds that feel alien to the university world, and then for educators to draw on these to make pedagogic connections for students to 'form new understandings, new capabilities and a new sense of self' (Barnett & Coat 2005 p143). The time constraints we experienced in both cycles, but more so in the first, limited the impact of our curricular and pedagogic intentions and practices. We had experienced the temptation to rush in the interests of content in the first cycle, later learning that time and attention to getting to know our students facilitated a much richer pedagogy and ultimately enabled a closer attention to the dual focus on content and literacies, and identifying FoL. In response to the interview question, **'**In what ways do you think (the second unit) engaged with student's multiple literacies?, the ALL tutor replied:

> ALL educator interview (second cycle): *I think that the merging of the two*
>
> *discipline areas and the way we handled it. It is hard to measure but I imagine it*
>
> *led to a richer learning experience for us, but definitely also for the students. But*
>
> *as I said …how we can measure it? Perhaps you could evaluate it by looking at*
>
> *the different levels or literacy levels that we offered in the class for students to*
>
> *grapple with the themes. So there was a lot of verbal and spoken interaction.*
>
> *There was less talking at the students, it was more joined; meaning-making*
>
> *going on in both the lectures and then in particular in the tutorials. There was a*
>
> *stronger focus on reading and putting reading into their own words by having*

> *those small reading discussions at the start of each tute. And just by observing,*
> *I thought that students were really engaging with this, not just they all prepared*
> *really well for it, but also the people in the group …learnt a lot in how to give*
> *feedback to the presenter. How to ask questions, how to carry on discussions.*
> *Yeah, there was a lot of again, meaning-making negotiation just in that little*
> *task.*

This extract indicates the many levels on which education was taking place in a rich, multi-literacies environment integrated with discipline content, with careful pedagogic attention to connecting with students and participatory tasks in curriculum design. Drawing on students' FoL took place spontaneously in this 'connected space', as illustrated in the previous chapter. Learning from our experience in the first cycle and adapting curriculum, we were becoming more confident in connecting with students and attending to these multiple dimensions. We had the benefit of more time in the tutorials and lectures in the second cycle, which was essential. Additional time would have given us even more scope. Without the necessary time and space, such pedagogies are curtailed.

Co-Teaching with the ALL Educator – the Embedded Model

This section responds to the research question about how the literacy 'outsider' (ALL educator) to the unit and the teaching 'insider' (social work lecturer/researcher) worked together in the AR, and constraints experienced in this process. The ALL educator indicated in both interviews (first and second cycle) that overall the experience of the collaboration between the researcher and herself was very positive, and built on the prior experience of the researcher and ALL educator working together in a previous social work unit before the project:

> ALL educator interview (second cycle): *I think it was a very positive one*
> *[experience] in terms of our collaboration and our approach to the designing,*

planning, also reviewing weekly what we have done...also in terms of student

connections…I felt that we had a very good relationship and atmosphere in

class, in the lectures and the tutorials.

She did refer to the challenge of dealing with the competing demands of content and attention to literacies in lectures and tutorials, and she noted the additional challenge of working with an inherited curriculum in the first cycle:

ALL educator interview (second cycle): *The pedagogic approach was very*

student centred this time (second cycle) compared to our earlier experience

(cycle one) where we were very worried about getting through with the content.

We had a syllabus that wasn't really our own so I think that is also important in

this experience that we created it and owned it (in the second cycle).

In the interview, the researcher elaborated on some of the challenges she experienced in her role in the project, and the ALL educator raised the additional challenges of working with a co-teacher from the Academic Language and Learning discipline:

Interviewer/ Researcher: *Yes, I think we really grappled, well I really struggled*

with inheriting a curriculum…

 … and with my new position, in fact I wasn't even in the Social Work unit at that

time, I was still seconded [from Learning and Teaching Unit]. So I was in a

tenuous position in terms of the team. I was a bit outside and yet suddenly I

needed to prepare this unit…so I found it quite challenging to move into that

role unexpectedly and also then to respect the material that we already had,

and the expectation of the Social Work staff around what is considered a very

integral subject to students' knowledge development [social work theories].

…

ALL educator: *But on top of all that was new for you, you also had to make room for me in there…and this is not something very little to do…I think the reason that we are finally much more relaxed [in the second cycle]…we are clearer about our roles and we are much more relaxed being together in front of the students.*

The importance of a clear and smooth relationship between the ALL and discipline educators, and the value of working on a curriculum together at the outset, is highlighted in this interaction. To negotiate roles and ways of working and find room for both disciplines takes time, good will and understanding, integral to the embedding process (Thies *et al.* 2014; Daddow 2014; Daddow *et al.*, 2013). From the researcher's perspective, I agreed that the embedding of the ALL educator became more effective with growing experience together. I found the co-teaching very supportive and constructive as an educator, and that it significantly contributed to student learning. Reflecting and planning week-by-week with the ALL educator was refreshing and collegial and energised the project, counterbalancing some of the resource constraints already expressed. Her input was highly valued and some of our discussions helped in the efforts to keep focused on the literacies component and our pedagogical intent. Her availability to meet with students about their academic writing needs outside of class time was not only very helpful for them (as expressed in their questionnaires and focus groups), it also reduced my workload; as many of those students would most likely have been seeking assistance from me. This was a significant resource that supported the project that is rarely available in mainstream tertiary teaching, certainly not to this degree. It suggests a collaborative model worth promoting in targeted units in early undergraduate years that could support the discipline educator and their growing capability in educating diverse students. Once the discipline educator is more familiar with the practices, the degree of the collaborative support might gradually be withdrawn, to be less resource intensive.

In the second cycle, with more lecture and tutorial time, we were able to utilise the ALL educator's skills more effectively. For example after the first assignment (reflection), we looked at sections of a couple of students work (with their permission) that was of a high standard, and deconstructed the academic tenor of these, highlighting the shift of 'voices' from the personal (narrative) to drawing on the literature (the third person) and the paragraph structure, moving from the general to the specific. We also carefully unpacked the next essay topic in readiness for the (assessed) essay plan. Such detailed work would have been very helpful in the first cycle, but there was insufficient time in the tutorials. Research undertaken by Devlin and O'Shae (2011) about effective education of 'non-traditional' (low SES) students in higher education found such strategies particularly supportive of their learning (and that of students in general). Yet such detailed teaching does take time and space particularly when combined with eliciting students' experience and vernacular literacies, as part of the co-construction of their learning. While the Social Work discipline privileges eliciting and reflecting on students' experience, as discussed in the previous chapter, this can be undermined by curricular time and space structures that are not congruent with this intent. Prioritising more specific negotiation around curricular structures of times and physical spaces (within resource realities), to maximise the impacts of such pedagogies, is worth more consideration in future pedagogic work of this nature.

The collaboration with the ALL educator illustrates elements of institutional architecture that, if put together well – as in the AR design of this teaching collaboration – can support alternative, more labour-intensive pedagogies. The contribution of scholarship in the ALL field supported the 'sayings' of practice, so that the Academic and Learning Development Unit were ready and well-equipped for embedding academic literacies into the discipline. This supported the 'doings' of practice as the resources were made available for the collaboration to take place. Finally, there was sufficient socio-political will within the university to support and build the necessary 'relatings' to bring the practices into being. This was encouraging for us to experience

amongst some of the challenges to the pedagogies that we encountered within the complexity of the contemporary tertiary environment.

Complexity of the Teaching Space

There were complexities inherent in teaching diverse students (with diverse starting points), the Social Work discipline itself and the broader environment in which tertiary teaching was taking place (increased students numbers and less resources), which contributed to constraints we encountered in the enactment of the pedagogies. The encouragement of students to reflect on their experience (including their experiences of disadvantage or struggle) distinctive to the Social Work discipline, as discussed in the previous chapter, intensified this complexity at times. The contribution of graduates to the social work profession who might share dimensions of the experiences faced by their future clients is important and to be supported (Jones 2006). The rationale for graduates who have shared experience and/or similar vernacular literacies to their clients can find this a powerful tool for building relationships central to social work practice and it encourages diversity within the profession. In this sense, the equipping of diverse students to understand the differential power of language and value their own literacies, while building access to literacies required for knowledge acquisition and professional participation, potentially benefits both students and the profession. As discussed in Chapter Four, students' dark *Funds of Knowledge* offer potential for rich pedagogic opportunities (Zipin 2009). Students' experience, however, needs to be processed educationally, and literacies need to be diversified, as they make the identity shifts associated with participation in universities and the profession. Ensuring students are able to integrate their experiences educationally can add to educators' time outside class and can pose additional challenges within class time. One of the discipline tutors observed this in her interview:

> DT1 interview (second cycle): *Social Work actually is about supporting people around difficulties in their lives which is very human and because we focus so*

much on reflective practice it really triggers people in their own experience…some of them didn't necessarily have the skills yet either to really manage where is personal…where are some of the boundaries. Because … we elicit that kind of stuff…But then also where you put the boundaries … is quite complex I think…

the first tutorial I … talked about raising … issues that for some people might be difficult … and how do we manage … our personal opinion versus the rights of individuals. And issues like abortion, well it meant after the class … some discussion had to be had because just using that word triggered somebody…So it means we have to be prepared that there is a fair bit of pastoral care and … that actually through the content we might actually open things up for people and then we also have to be very aware how we can support them the most appropriately.

The researcher had similar experiences, and the ALL tutor made the following observation in her interview:

ALL educator (second cycle): *They were challenged to look at their beliefs and I think for some students that was really challenging in that it opens up a lot of questions they know they don't have answers for and perhaps some are not ready yet to face those. But others were at a stage where they were more comfortable in asking questions about their own background, about their upbringing and what it means for their later professional practice.*

In these extracts, students' experience - including *dark FoK* - had considerable potential as pedagogical assets, but their complexity and sensitivity required time and space for careful and nuanced teacherly responses, which competed with other workload demands, and which was not necessarily factored into timetabling and geographic spaces in a resource-stretched, massified tertiary education system. The

researcher's journal had entries indicating the realities of finding time to respond to some of the structural injuries that students had experienced, requiring sensitive and timely responses:

> Researcher's field journal, 10.4.2013: *Spent the morning responding to students on email, particularly high demands from one particular student (newly arrived refugee).*

Pastoral responses and administration associated with such interactions were frequent occurrences, not always documented in the researcher's journal.

A further complexity is that students need to negotiate their multifaceted responses to other students' shared revelations (which can include personal struggles or more closely-held beliefs or sensitive experiences). These testimonies do not always resonate with dominant social beliefs or the values of the profession. One student wrote in the student questionnaire that she felt 'punished' by expressing her own views, which were at variance with dominant views in the class:

> Student questionnaire (second cycle): *I felt very isolated, as I felt that I was picked on because of some of the judgements on particular issues.*

Students' reactions to other students' expressed values or experience can be punitive, particularly if these are non-dominant beliefs or values. It needs time to tease this out in a dialogic and respectful way in class and to develop new classroom norms. Sometimes it requires clarification or mediation outside the classroom. It also relies on all staff, including sessional tutors, knowing how to do this well. Such pedagogies have the potential to serve the Social Work profession well, if sufficiently resourced in the educational space.

As previously mentioned, students' experiences of tertiary education and its associated stresses can spill into the educational arena, adding further to this complex space. Increasing articulation and political awareness can generate frictions and shifts

in the personal relationships of students that can have personal repercussions and impact on their study progress. While education can be empowering, it can also be costly in terms of reworking identities and practices, which can impact on everyday life, such as shifting relationships in families or with friends (Jones 2006 p39). In the questionnaire filled out by the student quoted above, her response to the question about what was the most challenging aspect of the unit was:

> Student Questionnaire (first cycle): *Confronting my values, and learning to accept things that go against my religion.*

And to the question, In what ways has the relationship between your world at home and the university world changed during your studies?, she responded:

> *Everything has become more tense and stressful.*

This student was not the only one who referred to tensions in relationships at home specifically due to students' growing awareness through the education process. These tensions can require sensitive and timely responses from academic staff (Jones 2006). Such pastoral responses are not factored into quality assurance measures or workloads, but emerged as an integral part of the Social Work academic's role. This adds additional dimensions to the work of lecturers and unit co-ordinators, as well as tutors who are paid primarily for face-to-face contact time with students (an additional two hours of preparation per hour of face-to-face teaching is built into the rate).

The limited systemic recognition of the complexity of contemporary teaching and learning in tertiary education, and the importance of the concomitant curricular and pedagogic work, can contribute to educators' ambivalence about designing curricula that make cultural connections with students' life-worlds. Ovsienko and Zipin (2006 p1) maintain that teachers who strive to see their students as 'embodying cultural "assets"' (rather than 'deficits') for learning face the 'formidable difficulties of teaching against the grain…of working with learners who do not embody institutionally privileged cultural

capital'. They suggest that the 'emotional labours' of educators who work with students who are from less powerfully positioned families (who can have their own internalised injuries associated with their socio-structural positions), while contending with powerful institutional norms, can be overwhelming. They add that 'it requires critical insight and political-ethical will to "teach against the grain"' (Simon 1992). Such 'emotional labour', and the time involved, was experienced as potential and real constraints when enacting the AR pedagogies of this case study. We were seeking to grow in 'critical insight and political-ethical will' in a time-pressured educational environment. These are qualities not readily supported in the accreted cultural-discursive, material-economic and socio-political arrangements ('practice architectures') of the contemporary university, limiting what openings the AR could create. This contradiction entailed much uncertainty, and the task did feel overwhelming at times.

Challenges in Using *Funds of Literacy* as Assets

This section reports on the constraints experienced in eliciting students' FoL and using them as assets for learning in the AR. To use FoL pedagogically, students need to actively contribute their vernacular literacies to the educational setting. This is not guaranteed. It became evident in the project that students with different cultural perspectives or values to those which predominate in the classroom can be reluctant to express them. Sensing that they do not embody normatively privileged standpoints, students from diverse and less powerful backgrounds can keep their own experience or vernacular literacies hidden (Ovsienko & Zipin 2006). Uncertainty about their own views in relation to dominant views, cultural differences about self-expression, linguistic diffidence, or fears of lecturer or peer rejection or embarrassment can contribute to this reluctance. For FoL to emerge, trust needs to be built over time, as experienced in FoK research (Zipin 2013; Thomson 2002). In the student questionnaires, some students indicated their discomfort around contributing to the class discussions. In response to

the question about what they found most challenging about the unit, one student, who identified himself as speaking a 'tribal' language at home, said:

> Student questionnaire (first cycle): *The most challenging thing was speaking in class.*

Other students shared related issues:

> Student questionnaire (second cycle): *Having to explain and come up with personal difficulties that you may have experienced in the past.*

And another student:

> Student questionnaire (second cycle): *Accepting other people's perspective when they were so astray from your own* (local 21 year old student, with English as first language).

Reticence to express vernacular literacies became evident in one of the student focus groups (first cycle) when an International student in the group made the following observation about a particular Social Work theory:

> Student FG (first cycle) Participant 2: *When the (theory) shifted to, for example, CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy). Like you have to actually interact with the client and see what he thinks and how I can challenge his thoughts and things like that. That is very limited understanding I have got because for example, you know … some culture of some clients they might even have problem with people challenging their irrational thoughts and things like that.*

Such questionings of taught theory, expressed by students from a different cultural perspective, would have been very productive to explore if raised in the tutorial (or lecture). It seems that the students did not have the confidence to express a dissenting perspective in these forums. We might have encouraged students from other cultures

to express their misgivings or to ask questions about particular theories and their enactment, so that these could be educationally explored. However, such questions need time and trust to surface; and probing them with students before trust has been earned can put them uncomfortably on the spot (Brookfield 2006). Consequently, such questions from educators do not always get a spontaneous response from students and sometimes can be hurtful.

The extract quoted above illustrates linguistic challenges for the student, who was expressing insightful comments in halting English. He was grasping central concepts, but still developing his mastery of the spoken discourse. Explicit structures for development in writing discourse were embedded in the unit; however feeling more confident to participate verbally in the tutorials would have added another dimension to his linguistic and Disciplinary literacy development. This student and another participant (both international students, for whom English was an additional language) made some other observations in the focus group in which they participated. When the interviewer asked how students' personal and cultural backgrounds could have been more valued in the unit, his response was:

> Student FG (1st cycle) Participant 2*: I am not sure because it is very complex …
> for example I grew up in a village and um you know in the village it is like a
> patriarchal environment. … women they don't get the land rights, and the men
> … they have the land rights and the other heritage for the family, but … when I
> come here you learn about … other things, … about …how I become myself
> and who I am going to be in the Social Work practice. Have to be very aware of
> … how your cultural background and your own belief - actually some of it they
> can't take into Social Work practice - but some of them you can and that would
> be very valuable if you can take that to practice with a similar cultural
> background … and things like that to understand.*

This extract illustrates the dissonance between the life-world of the international student (from an ethnically different background from the host country) and that of the more Western or "Northern" (Connell 2007) theoretical concepts with which he was grappling in the Social Work unit. This chasm highlights pedagogic challenges posed for us as educators, as we tried to integrate learning assets from students' cultural life-worlds into the educative process in order to make pedagogic connections (Vygotsky 1987). We were developing our own capacities in doing this, and the experience of the first cycle encouraged us to be more alert to the questions we might ask and the climate we might create to encourage FoK and FoL from students' cultural life-worlds to emerge, be valorised and be used as learning assets. Another international student in the same student focus group expressed it a little differently:

> Student participant 3 (1st cycle): *Yeah, I think it is too difficult to value each student's background, take into consideration because not all Australians are from the same background, even in Asia there is a lot of countries. Even for the same country you have also different family backgrounds and education backgrounds. Like for example in China you still have actually the … of the Social Work area, so most of the welfare area or support is just taking control by the government …So when I am talking about Social Work they think it is a very big term so anything can be Social Work … so it is quite different understanding. And in another way because we are living in a Western country and we are going to work in Australia … I think you don't have to just take Eastern or other countries' cultural background into consideration with delivering the course because it is mostly happening in Western countries. So I think even with … cultural … it has conflict or misunderstanding but … mainly we need to focus on and …adapt, not the system will be changed for us and we should adapt [to] the environment.*

The students are grappling with the cross-cultural realities of Western Social Work education, trying to fathom what might be the necessary sifting and reconciling of

(Western) Social Work values with their own cultural identities. The second student is privileging Western and dominant ways of knowing, as preparation for Social Work practised in primarily Western contexts. This raises dilemmas for us as educators. We are educating in postmodern and postcolonial contexts where such privileging of Western paradigms no longer seems fitting. Saleebey and Scanlon (2005 p11) cite Rosaldo (1989 p217) who states:

> Rapidly increasing global inter-dependence has made it clear that neither 'we' or 'they' are as neatly bounded and homogenous as once seemed the case…All of us inhabit an interdependent late-twentieth century world marked by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries that are saturated with inequality, power and domination.

We are educating in the 'borderlands between many cultures', with shifting definitions of who are defined as 'the other' and the importance of 'many voices in the classroom' (Saleebey & Scanlon 2005 p11). We often do not have the dialogic time, nor the participatory contribution of students, to navigate these borderlands as richly as we would like, to tease out these cross-cultural encounters, explore more nuanced perspectives and students' FoL as part of that encounter. Such constraints pose challenges to accessing students' FoL. The unit in the case study was prefaced with the acknowledgement that the Social Work theories to be studied were those primarily from a Western paradigm and perspectives critical of this would be explored in a later unit in the course. Some cross-cultural dimensions were explored in the unit, but a fuller use of cross-cultural scenarios to illustrate Social Work theories might invite more participation from non-dominant social groups. It is likely that diverse students 'hearing' that their ways of knowing and being are valued, and can contribute to the knowledge under discussion, is muted by the demands of grasping new theoretical concepts in a new discursive environment, including internalised power relationships and perhaps contradictory messages between intent and reality in the educational environment.

Internalised Power Relationships

In the AR, we became aware of internalised power relationships that impacted on the enactment of the pedagogies. Efforts to stimulate dialogue are embedded in wider structures and dynamics of classroom life. Teachers and students talk in response to the micro-culture of the classroom - within constraints of space, time and power. Alexander (2008 p97) maintains that classroom transactions are shaped by 'the inherited collective consciousness' of educational settings and suggests how broader contextual forces infuse classroom interactions:

> *the power differential is no longer merely that between teacher and taught, but between teachers and the official keepers and enforcers of the policies that prescribe their teaching. Further, the sanctions that everywhere attend the unequal distribution of power are no longer limited by the rules and customs of the classroom or school but transmit to students their teachers' consciousness of the national apparatus of targets, levels, league tables and inspections.*

The 'porous national and cultural boundaries that are saturated with inequality, power and domination', as articulated by Rosaldo (1989 p217), can infiltrate the power differentials at the institutional level of many contemporary classrooms. It requires vigilance on the part of educators to be mindful of avoiding the reproduction of power relationships in educational spaces, and to respect students' needs sometimes to be silent. The physical positioning of the 'lecturer' at the podium and students in the 'audience' reinforces such power relations, as well as the reality of the power imbalance between student and teacher. The ALL educator, in her interview (second cycle) commented on the difference it made moving chairs into a circle for the tutorial; she felt this considerably encouraged student participation in dialogue. However, even with such physical arrangements, subtle reproduction of power relationships can take place (Brookfield 2006). In the project, a significant number of students in the Cuseo questionnaire reported negative experiences of school, which could undermine their contributions to dialogue. When chatting to students before the first lecture in Social Work theories (first cycle), one mature-age female said that she hadn't been to university for 20 years, and was finding the prospect of the first class 'nerve-wracking'

(afterwards, she commented that it wasn't as difficult as she expected). The anxiety of 'non-traditional' or new students, particularly in large groups, can be under-estimated, as mentioned earlier. In addition, students are often raising families, working full or part-time, and coping with life's expectable difficulties, which Saleebey and Scanlon (2005 p11) suggest limits the degree of energy available in the classroom for discussion, argument, debate, discourse, and imagining, 'even though these stresses may also be the gateway for genuine dialogue about central issues in education and practice'. This suggestion of stresses as a 'gateway to genuine dialogue' supports the pedagogic possibilities of *dark Funds of Knowledge*, but acknowledges that this is labour intensive, and so often not able to compete for time with the demands of a range of educational priorities pressing on both students and educators.

The Privileging of Assessments and Academic Success

The realities of the academic system are such that both students and educators are so focused on assessments that this can detract from an approach seeking to elicit and valorise students' FoL. Mainstream educational culture is typically competitive. Students are encouraged to demonstrate only their 'best abilities', in terms of normative 'standards', and are indeed assessed on these. They therefore can feel they will appear 'foolish', or 'incompetent', or 'ignorant' (Fook & Askeland 2007) – as judged through mainstream lenses – if they manifest vernacularly familiar ways of knowing and expressing. We found ourselves conflicted around this in the project and wondered if we were sending students double messages. The journey from students' 'life-world' ways of knowing and being to that of the university's became such a priority, in limited timeframes, that we struggled to find room for the valuing of their own literacies - especially when some students had quite a distance to travel to acquire the linguistic and conceptual tools necessary for their success. It possibly reflected our anxieties, as educators, to teach the 'codes for success' (Bernstein 1975) in the limited time that we and the students had to prepare them for assessments. Assessments are privileged –

even over curriculum and pedagogy – by universities (and other educational sectors); and it is also more difficult to put in place alternative assessment approaches even than curricular and pedagogic approaches. Thus, much emphasis is given to inducing a shift among students *from* vernacular literacies *to* adoption of academic and professional literacies for assessment success. Students and educators cannot then avoid focussing time on achieving such a shift. As educators ourselves, we have succeeded in a system that valorises elite knowledge as cultural capital. As Osvienko and Zipin (2006 p7) suggest, we have 'the dispositions of having been ''winners'' in the competitive academic curriculum':

> *Negotiating the dissonances across home and school cultures is not easy, creating conflict for teachers between identifying with students' lifeworld funds of knowledge and identity, and the teachers' own habits of identification with the competitive academic curriculum.*

We experienced these conflicts as we sought to negotiate 'the dissonances across home and (education) cultures'. It was challenging to focus on students acquiring elite codes necessary for their success without, in limited time frames, compromising attention to valorising their own life-world literacies. Despite our appreciation of a two-way Vygotskyan scaffolding logic (Moll 2014; Delpit 1995), we experience how our energies were pulled towards the 'one way' of focusing on elite literacies, incited by the students' own concerns to acquire them. Scaffolding between life-world and academic literacies, enabling competency in both and code-switching between, cannot happen if concern about academic literacies pushes work with FoL to the sidelines. Future cycles of AR could explore this tension further, with reflexive attention to how a viable two-way balance might be established and sustained.

We noticed that students were preoccupied with assessments, and with receiving passing or high marks. Some students were quite explicit that they felt inhibited from expressing their opinions - particularly if they differed from lecturers - for fear of recrimination by lecturers, which would reflect badly on their marks. This sentiment was expressed by students in both cycles on different occasions. The

privileging of marks over other learning considerations was also evident in a critical incident in the first cycle, possibly highlighting how a preoccupation with receiving high marks can be in itself an expression of cultural reproduction. An outline of the critical incident drawn from the researcher's field journal is below:

A white, middle class young female student and a male international student (for whom English was an additional language) were allocated to a group preparing for an assessed group presentation. The female student contacted her tutor expressing concern that the international student was not meeting the group-agreed deadlines. As the date loomed for the presentation, her concerns escalated and she was given the option of negotiating with the international student and her tutor (not the researcher) for his component of the presentation to be presented later, individually. This was slightly misinterpreted by the female student who sent a text to the international student, saying that he didn't need to worry about further preparation anymore, because he was no longer in the group (it emerged later that she was concerned at the poor standard of his work). This international student felt aggrieved by this 'exclusion' from the group and felt that the other student had been inflexible; he felt that his need to work and support himself, as well as the challenges of studying in an additional language, required some understanding and negotiation in preparation deadlines (it also emerged that there were other personal struggles that were impacting at the time). As a result, he sent a barrage of text messages, some hostile, to the female student. This student contacted the researcher (as the subject coordinator) from the doctor's surgery, saying that she was too intimidated to do her presentation that afternoon (in the other tutor's class) and the stress was affecting her health. Her mother also spoke to the researcher from the doctor's surgery, complaining about the harassment her daughter had experienced from the male student. At this point the researcher advised the

Social Work professor and, as the situation escalated, it was managed by the Social Work professor. In the process of that management, the international student acknowledged aspects of his behaviour that were not appropriate and apologised. The female student did her presentation with the other member of the group and the international student did a solitary presentation at a later date.

There were a number of complexities to this interaction, including inter-cultural differences, gender relations, and appropriate boundaries and behaviours of students. Both students were left bruised and feeling aggrieved. However, the difference in levels of privilege between these two students was apparent. The focus became the male international student's inappropriate behaviour (which needed addressing), but the quick jump of the female student to exclude the international student from the group presentation seemed to be obscured; both aspects could perhaps have benefited from more critical exploration. This incident left the researcher uneasy, but unclear if and how this might have been used pedagogically. It represented a number of teachably significant complexities; but there was not the time needed to tease then out sensitively and raise consciousness to power-structural dynamics. Follow-up conversations (individually) to explore how the students' socio-structural and cultural positioning may have influenced the values and meanings given to the situation (from both parties) and exploration of alternative ways of viewing it were not taken up. This is possibly because of the gender sensitivities, health issues (and legal ramifications) and because the incident was raw (for students and educators); but I suggest that, largely, it wasn't taken up because it would absorb scarce time and energy, which create anxiety for everyone. The incident further highlights how privileging of assessments intersects with dominant socio-cultural power relations, adding complexity that requires time and energy to interrogate; and how these power dynamics can overwhelm our practices in the demanding contextual realities of educating diverse students (Brookfield 2006; Delpit 1995). The emotional and practical labour required for the pedagogic practices

we were aiming to implement ran up against powerful constraints to their enactment in the time-space and other structures that configured the institutional practice architectures.

Challenges to a Critical Frame

The critical incident discussed above touches on some of the challenges for educators (and students) when seeking opportunities to educate from a more critical frame and integrate the critical literacies component of Social Work discipline education. Time pressures can inhibit the necessary dialogic work, the teasing out of differences and the privileging of the student voice required for critical orientations. Saleebey and Scanlon (2005 p 11) maintain that

> *Critical pedagogy celebrates the value of difference, and the process of helping difference to be articulated safely through dialogue. Thus classroom discussions become a place where differences–both in the intellectual and identity sense–can be articulated and analysed.*

The explicit philosophical perspective of the BSW course in the case study was from the critical tradition, so such conversations were welcomed in the program context. These early units were part of a more coherent critical orientation that underpinned the whole course. This gave permission for the exploration of critical themes in tutorials; however constraints encountered in practice were formidable. As previously expressed, the need for time and space for the nuanced dialogic work required to interrogate broader socio-cultural norms in the complex teaching space was not always available.

The broader context of consumer-oriented tertiary education, where 'satisfying consumers' becomes integrated into the pedagogic discourse, can inhibit educators' inclination to interrogate students' attitudes and assumptions (Barnett & Coate 2005; Napier & George 2001). It has been observed that challenging students, through questioning and critical analysis of prevailing values and attitudes, is at odds with a consumer oriented education system that prioritises pleasing and satisfying

'consumers'; the two can become incompatible (Saleebey & Scanlon 2005). Freire (1998 pp101-102) spoke to this compellingly:

> *The freedom that moves us, that makes us take risks, is being subjugated to a process of standardization of formulas and models in relation to which we are evaluated.*

Potential conflict and sanctions, in response to risk-taking in the contemporary education environment, creates disincentives to explore critically questions in a dialogic process. Students' evaluations of teaching are often used to measure 'quality'. These can reflect on educators' career prospects and perhaps indirectly silence educators in the questioning of students' values and attitudes. This was not explicitly evident in the research findings in the project, but it is possible that there were subtle influences of which we were unaware. Future cycles of AR might give more analytical attention to this dimension.

Critical perspectives can pose pedagogical demands and challenges not only for educators but also students. Fook and Askeland (2007 p527) discuss the demands of critical reflection on students, particularly in more traditional classrooms, where 'rational' and 'intellectual' norms of teaching-and-learning often see emotions as inappropriate, inhibiting their expression (Feminist critics have argued that 'critical pedagogy' is itself often guilty of a kind of 'masculinist' privileging of 'reason' over 'emotion'):

> *Critical reflection, however, relies on being open to consciously or unconsciously*
>
> *disclosing to others what is not understood in order to learn from it. To thrive,*
>
> *critical reflection therefore requires quite a different climate from the generally*
>
> *accepted educational culture.*

Pitner and Sakamoto (2005 p688) argue that the development of critical consciousness necessarily requires a challenge 'to the ways we perceive ourselves and culturally different others'. These challenges can get close to students' self-esteem and can evoke emotions such as fear, anger, anxiety, and hostility, all of which need to be processed educationally and supported in the educational context. Students' (and

educators') anxieties can block such processes and engagement with associated learning challenges, as illustrated in the critical incident above.

Compounding the challenges to maintaining a critical frame, and working with associated anxieties, the Social Work profession has changed significantly in the wake of the undermining of the Australian `welfare state' in recent decades (Napier & George 2001). Prevailing managerialist ideologies have veered social work away from universal welfare provision towards mutual social obligation, and privatisation of responsibility and core services in the interests of economic efficiency (McDonald & Reisch 2008; Ferguson 2008). Fook and Askeland (2007 p526) argue that managerialism has altered what the industry is looking for in qualified social workers. They are not alone in critiquing how demands for economic efficiency, outcome measurement, performance indicators, multiskilling and flexibility have supported and infused the discursive centrality of 'the client', 'economic efficiency' and 'certainties' about what knowledge and skills identify the professional role (Wallace & Pease 2011). Social Work has faced pressures in recent years to be increasingly technical in its focus and geared to an administrative managerial framework, resulting in an emphasis on procedures rather than on developing critical thinking and critical consciousness (Fook & Askeland 2007).

Conclusion

In the AR of this case study, we were examining alternative and critical educational knowledge as we sought to design and enact curricular and pedagogic practices at some variance with established institutional arrangements and prevailing ideologies, in a complex and uncertain tertiary environment. As we did so, we encountered practice architectures that operated to enable and/or constrain our preferred pedagogic practices (Kemmis *et al.* 2014). Practitioner AR made this encounter, and the enlightenments it afforded, possible as we experienced institutional 'architectures' from inside the gritty realities of practice. Our awareness of the institutional 'sayings',

'doings' and 'relatings', and their direct and indirect influences on our practice, was heightened when we reflected during and after AR cycles. At the same time, we discovered how easy it was to lose awareness of these influences and/or to become complicit in them.

The University's resourcing of the AR project, particularly the embedded ALL educator, was promising as recognition of the value of finding pedagogies responsive to newer university students, and particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. In that sense, the University's practice architectures - including 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' - supported our pedagogic practices, particularly in the area of integrating academic literacies into disciplinary learning. This was gratifying to experience.

However we also encountered elements of practice architecture that constrained the responsive pedagogies we sought to enact. We found that elite 'socio-spatial structures' steeped in time-honoured traditions, controlled 'the distribution of financial, cultural and pedagogical resources 'on the ground'', as Teese (2007 p2) expresses it. Ideologies and policies at the 'macro' level infiltrated 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' at the institutional 'meso' level, constituting practice-architectural features that hampered our pedagogic efforts. At the same time, we grappled with our own more-or-less tacit inscription in these habit-forming practice architectures.

The pedagogic tensions arising from these encounters continually challenge academics and their students in tertiary education. Students have internalised a range of expectations, associated with dominant practice-architectural features and translating into university practices, that can compound their efforts to negotiate the multiple responsibilities of employment, family and cultural and linguistic differences (and sometimes dissonances), as they encounter the complex literacies of university education. Academics have numerous and diverse students for limited contact times and/or digital engagements that compete with many other demands. 'Non-traditional' students, for whom many of these tensions and differences are magnified, can easily fall through the cracks in such a system.

Pedagogies that are more responsive to students' cultural life-world literacies, and that simultaneously make elite codes explicit (when they are most often left implicit; see Delpit 1995), can significantly address these tensions for students and educators, and close the cracks for 'non-traditional' students. These pedagogies do, however, present their own levels of risk and uncertainty. In writing about the 'third space' of intercultural connections between more powerful knowledge spaces and those of lesser status (in this case, Indigenous knowledges), Dudgeon and Fielder (2006 p407) write:

> The third space unsettles. To use Bhabha's (1993) terms, it is 'neither one nor the other'. There is not a single third space—they are many and varied, they shift, they are spaces rather than places. They're often risky, unsettling spaces - where the security and familiarity of our own place of belonging has to be left behind. We have to be prepared to shift, to be open, to listen, to change.

As 'non-traditional' students enter universities, the security and familiarity of their 'place of belonging' is left behind. In a sense, universities expect 'non-traditional/ students to 'shift, to be open, to listen, to change' as they participate in new literacies and cultural exchanges in tertiary education. However, while students are thus unsettled, this is not in the sense of Bhabha's 'third spaces', which requires the university as well 'to shift, to be open, to listen, to change'. It is too 'one way' (rather than 'two-way' that creates a 'third'). A more socially just and educationally effective university response is to take whole-of-institution responsibility – across managers, educators and students – to change curricula, pedagogies *and (most difficult of all) assessments*; to rethink these three 'message systems' (Bernstein 1975) toward a more genuine 'third space' of knowledge exchange. Academics are more likely to do this if they are supported by the practice architectures in which their curriculum and pedagogies operate. The AR pedagogies in the case study took us and our students into a 'productive tension' that was not always comfortable for them or for us; but it was a tension that sought mutual willingness 'to shift, to be open, to listen, to change' on our part, and an acknowledgement that we still have much to learn in this space.

Tyack and Tobin's (1994 p454) sobering words, cited in chapter two of this thesis, caution that change in educational institutions is inevitably selective, given the internal and external political realities of institutional change. In spite of these obstacles, analytical reflection on the pedagogic efforts of practices designed and trialled in this project's AR suggest that engaged and rich learning took place for the students, as well as the educators. 'Pragmatic blueprints' towards more respectful and inclusive educational practices for 'non-traditional' students in Australia's diverse tertiary education system emerge in the AR of this research (Tyack & Tobin 1994 p478). The learning from the two cycles of this small project highlights important areas for further investigation in subsequent AR cycles, the elaboration of which is the subject of Chapter Six.

Chapter Six – Pedagogies that Work Against the Currents in Turbulent Seas

At a pivotal time in the history of Australian tertiary education - with its unprecedented massification in a knowledge-driven global economy - universities have struggled to keep pace with the cultural, linguistic, educational and economic diversity of newer university students and the complex realities of their life-worlds. Government policies, emerging within global trends and macro-economic pressures on Western universities, have loosened the boundaries between universities and surrounding contexts, tipping the levers of accountability toward governments and varied external forces, undermining universities' relative autonomy, particularly those of lower status (Naidoo & Williams 2014 p5). Universities increasingly juggle the expectations of multiple stakeholders (ministries, politicians, funding agencies, employers, students, parents, etc.) with associated economic, political and aspirational agendas (Hénard & Roseveare 2012 p8). More recent funding policies have put universities under pressure to generate additional income amid increased competition, exposing them to forces for commodification (Kirk 2014; Marginson 2012; Bretag 2007). This challenges the rationale for universities as a public good with intrinsic value, instead enforcing a logic of 'product and process specifically for its "exchange" … value' (Naidoo & Williams 2014 p5). Many argue that this has reshaped the values operating in academic practice, as tertiary education becomes more vocationally oriented to meet demands of employers and markets, weakening emphasis on citizenship and social critique (Star & Hammer 2008 p237; Kirk 2014; Ball 2007; Carter & O'Neill 1995).

This corporatised, accountability-driven and fiscally challenged environment has coincided with newly emerging educational needs, as diverse students enter university through policies of widening participation and global markets. With larger and more diverse classrooms there are greater expectations on academics in a consumer-driven learning and teaching environment (Hénard & Roseveare 2012). Along with

corporatisation, universities have generally met the confluence of these recent changes with inflexible institutional arrangements, managerialism, conservative academic values, and selectively limited curricular, pedagogic and assessment practices, which can be oblivious and antithetical to the educational needs of 'non-traditional' students (Sheridan 2011; Haggis 2006; Thomas 2002; Reay 2001). This has generated systemic inequities for 'non-traditional' students, and left academics with pedagogic uncertainty when educating diverse and newer students. Those seeking to redress this inequity and uncertainty can be left in an intractable bind.

More contemporary conceptions of 'literacy' as social practice, and *Academic Literacies* scholarship, have drawn attention to the multiple literacies that tertiary students are required to negotiate in these times - made more acute with contemporary global and digital connectivity - as they seek to acquire academic, discipline and professional literacies in tertiary education (Kalantzis & Cope 2012; Murray 2010; Lea & Street 2006). Complicating this negotiation is the differential power associated with students' diverse literacy inheritances, depending on the social-structural position in which they are situated (Ivanič *et al.* 2009; Lillis 2003). This thesis has argued that the negotiation of multiple literacies within university regimes that select for elite literacy practices, has contributed to educational barriers and inequities for newer university students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. Educational theories (Socio-cultural theories of learning; *New Literacies Studies*; *critical pedagogy*) and research outside and/or alongside tertiary education (*Academic Literacies*; *Funds of Knowledge*) have highlighted curricular and pedagogic approaches more commensurate with the educational needs of diverse and 'non-traditional' (power-marginalised) students, but these have received minimal prior implementation and research within disciplinary learning in tertiary education (Rios-Aguilar & Marquez Kiyama 2012; Van Niel 2010; Lea 2008).

The aim of this thesis was to use Action Research to put into practice, and examine, curricular and pedagogic alternatives that better support the education of

'non-traditional' students in an undergraduate program in an Australian university, in the process gaining critical-analytical insight into how such approaches might be more substantively employed in Australian tertiary education, including what kinds of constraints currently inhibit their use and possibilities. The integration of academic literacies and discipline learning has been an emerging 'marriage' in *Academic Literacies* debates (Gunn *et al.* 2011; Lea 2008; Percy & Skillen 2000). Attention to literacies has not often been explicitly linked to, and articulated within, tertiary disciplinary pedagogy (Theis *et al.* 2014; Baik & Greig 2009). *Funds of Knowledge* approaches (Moll *et al.* 1992; Gonzalez *et al.* 2005) have focussed on compulsory schooling years and largely been absent from tertiary curricula (Van Neil 2010). This thesis has ventured into this lacuna, seeking to translate these promising pedagogies into tertiary teaching and learning, and, in so doing, to redress the differential power of elite university literacy practices that exclude 'non-traditional' students, and enable more effective learning for all students. Examples of growth, development and reflection by the students have been provided, indicating effective learning for a range of students, including 'non-traditional'.

Drawing on these theoretical traditions, this thesis project sought to make the codes of multiple literacy practices required for success in tertiary education and professional practice explicit, as well vernacular literacies; and, from the latter, to elicit students' rich funds of literacy as pedagogic assets for learning. The associated pedagogies sought to create a bridge to acquire the literacy codes that dominate in university disciplinary knowledge, and to more effectively resource all students for the linguistic and global realities of professional learning and life in the 21st century. The aim was to help enable 'non-traditional' students to participate successfully in multiple literacy practices of contemporary university and professional worlds, without assimilating them into elite and dominant cultural practices of universities at the cost of losing connection to life-world literacies and identities.

In seeking to answer the major research question – *What possibilities and constraints emerge when enacting pedagogic approaches that acknowledge and build on the literacies of 'non-traditional' students in undergraduate programs in an Australian University?* – an Action Research methodology provided a close-grained examination of the design, enactment and rationale of the preferred curricular and pedagogic approaches in a case study, located in an undergraduate Bachelor of Social Work program in an Australian university. The methodology provided a vehicle for initiating changes to tertiary curriculum and pedagogy in the case study, contributing to the researcher-educator's professional learning and highlighting possibilities for broader changes toward more socially just education. This final chapter draws together the research findings as they relate to the research questions and identifies the study's limitations and areas for further research. It also discusses the contributions from these findings that traverse the scholarship of tertiary curriculum and pedagogy, Social Work education and *Academic Literacies*.

The Research Findings

Possibilities of the Pedagogies

- **Explicit Attention to Multiple Literacies in Discipline Curriculum**

There were compelling indications in the research findings that the dual focus on literacy and curriculum, with an explicit attention to multiple literacies and their differences and codes, supported the 'epistemological access' (Morrow 1993) of diverse students in the two units. Significantly, students (particularly in focus groups) and staff in the project testified that integrating explicit attention to literacy differences and codes worked well in the curriculum, particularly when it was connected to students' own motivations and interests (which in the case study were focused on professional practice), and when time and space for this attention was prioritised by the educators in the timetabled spaces available. A range of pedagogies supported this

dual curricular focus, which appeared to enhance both disciplinary learning and students' understanding about language and how it works. This was particularly evident in student focus groups where students were able to articulate how language is used differentially according to context, and highlight the relationship of language to power, while considering implications for social work practice. This was also evident in students' written assessments, as they applied some of the explicit teaching about assessment expectations and genre differences to their assessment tasks.

The intricate connection between discipline learning and literacy development – operational, cultural and critical – as argued by Green (1988) and *Academic Literacies* scholars, was evident as students demonstrated progress across the three literacy domains, and some began to 'code-switch' as they negotiated multiple literacies. For example, students were moving between every-day, academic and professional literacies with increased ease, while demonstrating a good understanding of core disciplinary concepts. There were instances when students' growing awareness about language and its differential power and use in various contexts appeared to support the significant shifts that 'non-traditional' students need to navigate in order to acquire identities related to their discipline, academia and the profession of Social Work. For example in the focus groups and class room discussions, students made explicit connections between their life experience and resonances with new disciplinary concepts, which generated rich educative discussions, and supported students' learning and identity shifts. One student compared her learning in the unit with that of a friend's at another institution, suggesting that his adoption of new disciplinary (Social Work) discourse appeared 'arrogant' and was alienating to others. She was suggesting that he had not had the benefit of more explicit understanding of language and how it works. The new disciplinary Discourse he was encountering appeared to be less integrated into his identity, and perhaps constrained the differential and appropriate use of language in his personal life-world, potentially impacting on his relating to clients in his professional practice.

Finally, there was evidence in the research findings – through classroom interactions and in focus groups – of students' growing critical approach to language, texts and broader social discourses. Students explicitly noted how they were increasingly looking beyond the surface of what they were hearing or reading in their every-day and academic lives, to consider underlying agendas and power relationships.

The Social Work discipline, and the critical orientation of the BSW course in the case study, was conducive to finding points in the curriculum of the two units that intersected with this research project's literacy priorities, including development of a critical orientation toward texts and discourses. However, even with this affordance, there were often uneasy tensions, most significantly contextualised by limited time-frames, and expressed in highly-charged discussions where differences needed to be respectfully explored, prevailing values and norms unmasked, and dissension and questioning encouraged. In the first cycle (Social Work theories) this tension was more pronounced, as less student contact was afforded in the timetabling. The research confirmed that pedagogic practices that reduced students' anxiety - particularly 'non-traditional' students - resulted in richer pedagogic dialogue that encouraged productive meaning-making for all students and enhanced disciplinary learning. These pedagogic practices were underpinned by respectful dialogue; getting to know students well; making unfamiliar assumptions, values and expectations explicit; developing interactive exercises that built on students' experience; developing exercises that promoted an analytical and critical view of texts and discourses; and valorising students' own literacy practices and life-worlds. These pedagogies were central to reducing students' anxieties and enhancing their learning, which was frequently expressed in student focus group discussions and questionnaire responses. When the pedagogies were undermined by our own concerns with curriculum content (or we forgot how anxious new students could be), students' anxiety became apparent (through silence and/or misunderstanding) and their learning was diminished. We learnt from both cycles of the

AR how significantly these pedagogic approaches supported all students – and particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds – encouraging us to give the practices more due time throughout the second cycle (assisted by more timetabled time). These practices reflected Bruner's (1996) primary concern for education, which was to enable students to 'experience various modes of meaning-making and communicating, and …create a community in which multiple ways of learning take place' (Takaya 2008 p2). Such approaches were affirmed in the AR.

Data from students and educators indicated that embedding the ALL educator into the discipline content teaching effectively supported our efforts to make unfamiliar academic and disciplinary assumptions, values and expectations explicit - particularly in assessments - and enhanced student learning. The research indicated that academic genres and discipline and professional discourses became less intimidating for students when they could recognise their codes and, over time and through their own intellectual labour, learn to apply them in different genres. This was significant for 'non-traditional' students who were making multiple transitions (in terms of social class, language and culture) in a university system that subordinated their values, culture and literacy practices to dominant and elite norms.

- **How the ALL 'Outsider' and the Discipline 'Insider' Worked Together**

The ALL educator and I reported on the success of this collaboration from our perspectives in the research. We had worked together for a semester before the project, which facilitated our collegial relationship and supported the negotiation of our mutual roles. Theis (2012 p2) points out that in such collaborative endeavours 'developing a shared vocabulary around the nature of academic literacies is an important precursor to [collaborative] curriculum development'. This was borne out in our experience. The role clarity and the established and respectful relationship were important to enable the two disciplines to interact effectively, and then inform and enrich each other's practice in the project. Significant for the ways in which we worked

together was our shared purpose, both in the practice and the investigation of the project. The ALL educator was an active agent, participating in weekly planning and reflections, contributing to the classroom teaching, providing online resources and individual student support. This meant that she had co-ownership and agency in the curricula and pedagogies. Her presence in the classroom enabled her to be an excellent 'critical friend' to me, providing valuable input into our reflections, planning and changes throughout the AR. Her collaboration steered and sustained the curricular focus on literacies, especially when this threatened to become lost in the normative focus on the discipline. She was supportive to me as the discipline academic, while developing my capacity to integrate literacies with the curriculum content. This developmental support has important possibilities in diverse tertiary classrooms; particularly given that academics' expertise is most commonly discipline-specific rather than pedagogic or knowledgeable about literacies.

The discipline tutors did not have the ALL educator in their classrooms, but were potentially able to benefit from her role through the curriculum design (tutorial guides), online resources, and their students' access to her individual consultations. The research indicated that students and tutors did not draw as fully on the ALL resource, when she was not actively present in the classroom through the co-teaching. This suggests the important value of having such literacy expertise and support directly embedded in the discipline teaching.

The successful embedding of the ALL educator into the discipline signals possibilities for using a collaborative model to integrate academic literacies into disciplinary learning more broadly in tertiary education. The embedding was a resource-intensive initiative, but a vital dimension of the pedagogy of this project's AR, militating against more commonly experienced resource and pedagogic reductions, in a massified tertiary education system. Consideration of targeting this resource toward challenging subjects and early years in the curriculum is thus to be recommended to maximise the impact of this precious resource.

- **Pedagogic Possibilities in Using FoL as Assets for Learning**

Using students' FoL as assets was incorporated in week-by week planning, but often surfaced more spontaneously as students volunteered their vernacular literacies in safe and conducive learning environments, in which educators were alert to the emergence of cultural assets for learning use. It was apparent that, as students' less privileged lifeworld literacies were invited into the educational space, and connections to the new disciplinary learning were made, learning was activated on many levels. The research findings identified these opportunities, which were living illustrations of Vygotsky's (1987) educational advice to use the 'spontaneous' concepts in students every-day life-worlds as the 'conceptual fabric' for scaffolded acquisition of the systematised conceptual formations that disciplinary knowledge provides (see Moll 2014 p35). The research highlighted rich examples of the cultural practices and spontaneous 'systems' inhering in students' life-worlds, and their use for mediating the development of disciplinary and professional understandings, as well as supporting the gradual build-up of capacities to code-shift and identity-shift. There was affirmation of the pedagogic merit of using raw and unexamined experiences and values from students' literacies - including 'dark funds of knowledge' (Zipin 2009) - even when these presented sensitive challenges for educators and students. The discipline of Social Work provided a natural alliance with this approach, as students' experience and histories are woven into who they become as Social Work professionals, and therefore become curricular in Social Work education. Even so, supporting students' FoL can compete with the normative focus on discipline content, and the institution's established norms and practices, which were sometimes contrary to such curricular aims.

- **Preparing 'Non-traditional' Students to Succeed in their Academic, Professional and Life-world Contexts**

The asset-based pedagogic practices in the case study seemed to support the success of 'non-traditional' students, as attested to by students in questionnaires and focus groups. Almost all students passed both units and there was less student attrition in Social Work Theories than in the previous year (a continuing unit, whereas Introduction to Social Work was a new unit in 2013). Data from student focus groups, questionnaires and class room discussions indicate increasing student confidence in their disciplinary knowledge, levels of engagement, reflection and analysis. There was evidence of progress in students' writing in assessments throughout the units, but more specific and detailed analysis of student writing, beyond the scope of this study, is recommended for future research. Conclusive claims about academic success are difficult to make when so many domains of practice and factors, external to the study, can contribute to student academic success. However, the research findings are sufficiently compelling to encourage further research beyond the scope of this small AR case study, particularly more focused qualitative and quantitative studies, as discussed below.

Constraints on the Pedagogies

The practitioner Action Research of this case study was strategic in both illuminating and influencing practice architectures that constrained and enabled practice change (Kemmis *et al.* 2014). We became conscious of how directly these practice architectures - expressed in the material-economic, cultural-discursive and socio-political arrangements in which our teaching practices were situated – interacted with our practice decisions. We were operating in a cultural-discursive and socio-political environment where prescribed pedagogic times and spaces - lectures, timetables and class sizes – were significant elements of institutional grammar configuring our

practices, whether they were supportive of our pedagogic intentions or not. What we *did* in practice (the 'doings') was not always based on our preferred pedagogic choices, but the availability and compulsions of material resources and historic and established pedagogic structures and practices, in which we were often complicit. Resources and pedagogic decisions were at various times influenced by heavy academic workloads, amplified by accountability requirements, administrative demands, pastoral responsibilities and a casualised workforce (Bexley *et al.* 2011; Anderson 2008). The way we related to these practice architectures and broader systems ('relatings' of practice) reflected our limited sense of agency in a large bureaucracy; particularly myself as a newcomer to the discipline and introducing pedagogies that went 'against the grain' of established pedagogic practices (Simon 1992). We were hesitant to negotiate some aspects of the practice architectures that might have made our pedagogic practices more effective, and became more acutely aware of aspects of these architectures that would require future negotiation, throughout the process of the AR.

The extent to which practice architectures were governing our practices was an important aspect of our learning. The 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' of the practice architectures sometimes enabled the practices in the case study. A clear example of this was the ways in which the scholarship of the ALL field had taken root in the cultural-discursive foundations of the Academic Language and Learning Development centre, which facilitated the university's commitment to ALL resources and relationships, and resulted in very real resources to the project, supporting important aspects of the pedagogies. At other times, institutional 'sayings' doings' and 'relatings' at the site of practice drove us to compromise our designs, and subtly drew us into the safety of the known and familiar - finding us complicit in these practices – which induced us to miss curricular and pedagogic opportunities.

As Kemmis *et al.* (2014) suggest, and as applied to this case study if the language inhering in students' *Funds of Knowledge* (i.e. their *Funds of Literacy)* is not

frequently and pervasively spoken at the practice site, the practice of pedagogies that build on students' FoK are less likely to take hold. If there are insufficient material resources, in the forms of time, place, texts, and expertise, the practices are less likely to be sustained. If the appropriate social relationships, for example, between educators, discipline teams, ALL educators and governance personnel are not in place, the practices are less likely to adhere. Further AR cycles could help to further the new language and attitudinal dispositions of the FoL pedagogies and making elite codes explicit, to infiltrate the cultural-discursive and material-economic dimensions of the practice environment, and, with the commensurate socio-political change, strengthen the pedagogies' potentials in tertiary education.

Constraining the pedagogies to some degree were the students' own demands and anxieties in the case study as they juggled multiple roles to fund their studies, often entering tertiary education at different stages of their life-cycle with associated loads. The research found that in some cases it was foreign for students (and their educators) to value their own literacies and 'codes' (Delpit 1988) even if encouraged to do so, as they and their educators (including myself) were so oriented to the new (academic) codes for success. Also, there was often sensitivity about exposing cultural 'otherness' to public attention. This was compounded by the pressures of limited timeframes, graded assessments and internalised anxiety about these, and our own need to develop expertise in the pedagogies. These factors competed for time and pedagogic attention to develop sufficient trust for 'non-traditional' students to reveal life-worlds that they sensed were alien to the university world. However in spite of these challenges, students responded well on many occasions to invitation to bridge between their own literacies and those of the discipline, as it deepened their disciplinary learning and valorised their own cultural heritages and literacies.

The Aims of the Action Research

The project met the aims of AR as articulated by Kemmis (2009 p464) - to change practitioners' *practices, understandings* and the *conditions* in which they practise. I initially went into the project as a career academic in Learning and Teaching and moved into the role of an academic within the Social Work discipline. The AR exposed me to realities of disciplinary teaching and illuminated what was possible to achieve, even with the challenges of those realities. After two cycles in a brief and small-scale study, my understanding, and that of my colleagues, has deepened and my own practices have changed. My educative attention is more focused on the *process* of education - cultivating the relationships and negotiating conditions to maximise the effectiveness of this process – as much as on the discipline content. I remain alert to students' life-worlds as assets and am resolved to keep wrestling with the issues illuminated in this project into the future, both as a practitioner and a scholar. I have become experientially much more aware of the conditions in which we practise - the 'sayings, doings and relatings' of practice - which has enabled ongoing consideration of how these might be negotiated for sustainable change. Already I have negotiated different arrangements (time and place) for teaching in some of my subjects to create the necessary conditions to enact pedagogies that work.

Eliciting the multiple perspectives of the stakeholders in the case study through the interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and field journal was important for *democratic validity* (Herr & Anderson 2005 p53) and provided optimal opportunity to learn about the impact of the introduced pedagogies on students and educators. This delivered thick-descriptive data to maximise learning from the project, and validate observations through *triangulation* across different stakeholders (Cresswell 2013; Stake 1994). *Dialogic validity* - consulting with colleagues across the Social Work and Language and Learning disciplines - enabled shared expertise and encouraged mutual learning in and from the project (Herr & Anderson 2005 p53). Opportunity was given for

all participants to deepen their understanding of the issues under study, and to instigate change - achieving *catalytic validity* (ibid) - through written and verbal information and their consent and invitation to participate in the study. Discipline tutors accessed this opportunity when they were able and within the constraints of their roles, but all the educators in the project expressed the value of having time to consider their practices and reflect on those under particular scrutiny. The ALL educator continues to collaborate with me and other discipline educators and build her expertise and scholarship from her perspective. The AR has confirmed aspects of our existing practices, changed others and alerted us to practice architectures of which we were previously unaware or had tacitly accepted as 'given' or 'unchangeable'. We have learnt a lot.

Limitations of the Study

Human enquiry, like any other human activity, is complex and inevitably incomplete (Elliot 2005; Carr & Kemmis 1986). It is not possible to isolate all the influences and multiple dimensions in natural settings. The methodology therefore relies heavily on participants' perceptions, through their own subjective lenses, some of which might be influenced by inherent power relationships in the educational setting, in spite of the researcher's efforts to minimise the impact of these through raised consciousness to them. The numbers in student focus groups were quite low. Small material incentives could have increased the numbers, but this would need to avoid coercion. Subjective mediation and negotiations of power relationships are in the nature of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln 2005) and need to be managed by transparency to the degree possible, by validity criteria, and by integrity in the research, as this project sought to do. As the sole researcher, all the sources of data were interpreted through the one lens, which could be seen as a limitation of the study. Multiple voices were represented through the data, with direct quotes significant in the data reporting to minimise researcher partiality.

The findings in the study were limited to the particular University and the Social Work discipline in the case study, which influenced the enactment of the curriculum and pedagogy in ways not necessarily similar to other disciplines or universities. The Social Work discipline supported aspects of the curriculum and pedagogy, which might not be as readily applicable in other disciplines. The embedding of the ALL educator was quite central to the study, but was a resource seldom available to other educators and universities. The nature of AR is such that it has a focus on change at the site of study, so critics challenge its transferability (Herr & Anderson 2005). The AR in the project did not intend to provide definitive outcomes assumed as directly transferable to other contexts. Rather it sought to change practitioners' *practices, understandings* and the *conditions* in which they practised (Kemmis 2009) and to gain significant insights in the direction of problem resolution which may have application to other sites in tertiary education. At the same time, this study provided ample analysis and reflection on this process, such that scholars in other disciplines and universities could give consideration to the principle of integrating literacies with disciplinary teaching and making elite and multiple literacy codes explicit, even if differently enacted. Encouraging such exploration in other tertiary contexts is warranted, given its success in this small case study. Research efforts toward parallel curricular and pedagogic approaches in a range of disciplines and universities would yield further insights and support changes in tertiary pedagogic practices more widely.

In the project, identifying students' FoL was limited to on campus activity through student interactions and writing. More extensive research of students' FoL, including engaging with their life-worlds outside the university (as researchers of FoK for school curriculum often do; see Moll 2014; Moll *et al.* 1992) would offer potential more richly to inform curricula and pedagogies in such an AR project. When researching FoK in tertiary education in America, Van Niel (2010) designed a questionnaire to identify students' FoK in relation to the natural science subject in the study. A questionnaire did

not seem as natural a fit for social science, particularly a theory subject, but could be given further consideration in future research.

The educators in the research project were learners in the design and enactment of the pedagogies, relatively new to higher education teaching, and operating in a long-established system with the weight of history. Early FoK research had a team of experts in the pedagogies working with the practitioner educators (Moll *et al.* 1992). This study could have benefited from such a team, although informal consultations were sought within the institution, including my supervisors who have school-based FoK research expertise. Reflection and discussion on the pedagogies in the project were often undertaken among practitioners and with my supervisors, within the busy momentum of the teaching semester. If the AR were to take place over more than one year, with additional cycles, it could potentially develop greater expertise among the practitioners and provide ongoing and more extensive analysis. Another limitation was the difficulty of not being able to do a lot with assessments. In the project, assessments proved to outweigh curriculum and pedagogy as the 'message system' that held innovation in check. Efforts to change assessment warrant consideration for the future direction of research.

Significance of the Study

At this pivotal time in Australian tertiary education history, this study has demonstrated curricular and pedagogic practices that effectively respond to the educational needs of contemporary and diverse university students, and support the participation of 'non-traditional' students who have more recently gained access into its corridors. The literature attests that pedagogic practices in universities have changed minimally in response to complex new challenges of widening participation (Marr *et al.* 2014; Armstrong & Cairnduff 2012; Arkoudis & Tran 2010; Gorard *et al.* 2006; Ryan & Carroll 2005) and generally range from seeing diverse students as being in 'deficit' (problems in achievement lie within the students and their cultures) to supporting those unfamiliar

with university literacies through centralised support services; both of which tend to try to 'assimilate' or 'acculturate' students into the existing values, assumptions and literacy practices of the university (Haggis 2006; Delpit 1995). This has been problematised by scholars who recognise that the elite codes of traditional education practices and systems serve to exclude those who do not embody the *cultural capital* (Bourdieu 1977) for sufficient familiarity with, and performance of, these predominantly tacit codes (Devlin 2013; Wheelahan 2010; Delpit 1995).

This study was initiated through the lived experience of this educational problem in my tertiary education practice, and the project sought to make practice changes toward its resolution in contemporary disciplinary learning. The findings from the project have 1) addressed the scarcity of the literature on curricular and pedagogic responses to diverse and 'non-traditional' students in disciplinary learning and teaching in the tertiary context (Naylor *et al.* 2013; Gale and Parker 2013); 2) made connections across *Academic Literacies* and disciplinary learning literature, which have been more tenuous from the discipline perspective, adding to *Academic Literacies* scholarship; 3) introduced FoK pedagogies into tertiary curricula through FoL, previously absent from tertiary learning and teaching scholarship; and 4) addressed a scarcity of literature in Social Work education on pedagogies that support the education of diverse learners, and that prepare them for the multiple literacy environments of academia, professional practice and colloquial engagement with future clients. The significances of these contributions are discussed below.

Disciplinary Learning: Curriculum and Pedagogy in Tertiary Education

In the new frontiers of widening participation and internationalisation of tertiary education, the findings from this study are timely as universities struggle to adjust to new student cohorts while public pressure to support students' educational success, but economic pressure to do so 'cheaply', with current funding models tied to student choice and retention. Both newer students and their educators grapple with competing

priorities in this globalised, corporatised and complex contextual environment, putting pressure on effective and socially just curricula and pedagogies, particularly for 'non-traditional' students (Thomas 2014; Gale & Parker 2013; Devlin 2013). This study has located the role of multiple literacies as a significant 'solution' in terms of retention and success (but which also runs against the grains of many limiting pressures), and confirms its importance in disciplinary learning acquisition, as universities teach culturally, linguistically and educationally diverse students, and prepare them for multiple textual and global life-world contexts in the 21st century. The study's findings demonstrate how curricula and pedagogies that make multiple literacies explicit within discipline curricula – including their differential power – and valorise students' FoL by using them as assets for learning, can support diverse students in acquiring disciplinary and professional knowledge. Moreover, these approaches prepare students for academic success while counteracting current tendencies for acculturation or assimilation into dominant university literacy practices (which succeed with few rather than many). While the claims of this small case study are modest, it has ventured into and illuminated challenging areas, highlighting possibilities for further collegial discussion, research and ongoing scholarship.

Academic Literacies Scholarship

This study has been informed by, and contributes to, *Academic Literacies* scholarship. *Academic Literacies* scholars - recognising that literacy practices can serve to maintain unequal power relationships (New London Group 1996) - have pointed out that disciplinary learning is served well when the tacit assumptions and values of the university's academic and disciplinary literacy practices are made explicit within disciplinary learning. Their contributions have richly informed Academic Language and Literacy scholarship and practitioners, but have not been translated into curricula and pedagogies in disciplinary education (Baik & Greig 2009; Lea 2008). This case study contributes to the translation of this scholarship into the discipline arena, and

demonstrates the rich pedagogic possibilities of such collaboration from the discipline perspective. The research shows what can be done – even by a new and inexperienced academic in disciplinary teaching – when explicit work with literacies is embedded into discipline curricula and pedagogies. The research has also identified significant challenges that can beset such work. The findings have attested to the value of embedding academic literacies into the discipline, receiving almost universal acclaim from participants in the research. This is of value to *Academic Literacies* scholarship in its ongoing endeavour to build both practice and scholarship for inform wider pedagogic efforts in universities to support 'non-traditional' students toward academic success.

Applying FoK Research in Tertiary Curricula and Introducing FoL

Typically missing in the tertiary education landscape are curricular and pedagogic perspectives that address what Gale and Tranter (2011 p42) call 'recognitive' justice – the recognition of students' cultural knowledge and identities in curriculum and pedagogy. They write:

> Australian higher education policy and practice is yet to be fully informed by a recognitive social justice. Yet, as more and diverse groups of people gain access to and participate in higher education, the silence with respect to who these students are and what they have to contribute cannot be justified in social justice terms…In a context of higher education for the masses, recognitive justice requires a deeper understanding of the knowledges, values and understandings that all students bring to university. And this necessarily implies creating spaces for them, not simply creating more places (p43).

This case study has spoken into this 'silence' and addressed this gap. To do so, it has drawn on FoK research, and applied this in terms of FoL, in new ways in tertiary curricula and pedagogy. It has constructed the term 'FoL' from FoK approaches, to reflect the focus of this study on the multiple *literacies* that tertiary students need to navigate for successful participation in life-world, academic and professional social spaces. This study examined *how* FoL inclusion in curricula and pedagogies could be developed and enacted in tertiary disciplinary learning, and what it might take to make

them work in these times, not previously undertaken in tertiary education. Although small in scale, the case study demonstrates that it is possible, although not easy - in a particular discipline, in a particular kind of university – to integrate FoL pedagogies to support effective disciplinary learning and educational support of 'non-traditional' students, even in the efforts of a relative new-comer to the discipline. Efforts to access students' FoL as assets for learning yielded rich pedagogic experiences for both students and educators, extending students capacities to make meaning of disciplinary content while continuing to value their own literacies, cultures and traditions. There were affirmations of the approaches as well as numerous barriers, as we sought to create spaces where 'multiple knowledges could co-exist in the Western academy' (Sefa Dei 2008 p6) and to make these more central in tertiary curricula and pedagogies. The implications of the study suggest that there is merit in these pedagogies becoming more sharply focused in tertiary education, through further practice efforts and ongoing scholarship.

Social Work Education

The findings contribute to social work education by encouraging students to value their cultural and familial origins while – from this place of strength – supporting capacities to shift between identities and so build professional identities as Social Work practitioners. As the Social Work profession has a strong tradition of 'strength-based' approaches to practice (Saleebey 2013), even 'traditional' curricula and pedagogies that have some congruence with approaches that aim to use students' own life-worlds and literacies as assets, rather than deficits. The approaches pursued in this study offer potentially powerful experiential models in the social work discipline. The AR pedagogical work modelled culturally respectful practices, preparing students for complex realities of linguistic and cultural diversity in their professional worlds. The benefits of such pedagogies would be more keenly felt if engaged more broadly across the course curriculum, rather than in two units. The case study findings suggest the value of

investing, through professional development, in building expertise in such pedagogies, and in capacities to engage the 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' of institutionalised practice architectures – among a broader number and range of academics.

The pedagogies that made academic literacies explicit in this case study – with the benefit of the collaboration and embedding of the ALL educator – seemed to progress the Social Work students' preparation for multiple writing genres in the complexity of Social Work practice. Again, this progress would benefit form a 'whole of course' approach to the pedagogies. Healy and Mulholland (2007) suggest that writing skills development has not been well addressed in Social Work education, even though it is an important area of students' preparation for the profession. The AR's explicit attention to the codes, values and forms of literacies that students encountered at university reduced their anxiety and supported their negotiation of them, seeming to capacitate their writing skills across different genres. This is significant in addressing the increasing recognition that diverse students are struggling to meet the writing demands of the profession during professional placements and after graduation, given the limited attention this has received in Social Work education to date (Nelson & Weatherald 2014; Grise-Owens & Crum 2012).

The study demonstrated that the 'multiliteracies pedagogy' of the New London Group (2000) – with its inclusion of 'critical framing' and 'transformed practice' - supported the students' growing critical appraisal of texts and discourses. Incorporating critical framing into the curriculum design and pedagogic interactions was facilitated by the Social Work discipline, particularly with a critical theoretical orientation as in this case study. The evidence of the study is that students' growing critical awareness prepared them for deeper extensions of critical perspective throughout the remainder of the Social Work course and into professional practice. This dimension of the pedagogies would require focused attention for differential application in other disciplines.

This small case study has ventured into the vital and vexing dimensions of contemporary tertiary curricula and pedagogy and Social Work education, which many universities and academics experience as, at best, perplexing and, at worst, intractable. It has taken up the strengths of educational theories, FoK research and *Academic Literacies* to penetrate these challenging areas and demonstrate change in curricular and pedagogic practices, against many challenging grains, thus affirming the potentials of such pedagogic practices to offer more socially just and effective ways to support 'non-traditional' students in their educational endeavours. The study has encouraged us, and hopefully others, to pursue these pedagogies that have worked, even in the turbulent waters of current tertiary education, and negotiate practice architectures to further their workability into the future.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are a number of areas that would benefit from further research beyond the scope of this study. The enactment of the pedagogies across a broader range of programs and disciplines in tertiary education could further inform their specific and general value. A wider analysis over time of students' writing, and quantitative data on assessment results, could support the case for broader application in tertiary education. This flags room for future research, where the academic results and retention rates of the same units (with the same educators) are compared after such curricular and pedagogic interventions in one of the units. Close attention to students' writing developments among higher numbers of students is another area for further research. A closer examination of how students' FoL could be given more space in the complex and often crowded curriculum - and the contradictory need to slow down pedagogic engagement to authentically draw on students' FoL as assets – would benefit from future research. The potentials of working, slowly and sensitively, with 'darker' FoL has also been highlighted for further research. More specific focus on ways forward in negotiating *practice architectures* to change university pedagogic

practices in the interests of students, addressing constraints and context (Kemmis *et al.* 2014), would be a valuable contribution to future scholarship.

Multiple cycles within the same unit, rather than across two different units, would likely yield clearer analysis of the effects of reflection between actions. The enactment and reflection on further cycles could provide more sustained and accumulative analysis, particularly in the area of student writing. Such analysis would contribute to *outcome validity*: the extent to which outcomes of the research lead to the resolution of the problem that provoked the study (Herr & Anderson 2005 p53).

Concluding Comments

This thesis commenced with the story of a mature-aged African student, newly settled in Australia after many years in a refugee camp, wanting to use the vehicle of tertiary education to contribute to his local community and Australian society. His education was at risk of letting him - and many others - down. Policy efforts to open universities' doors to students who have not been traditionally represented will continue to be undermined unless government policies, university governance structures, systems and educators invest equivalent efforts toward 'epistemological equity' (Gale & Tranter 2011). This thesis has sought to contribute towards that end, to generate more stories, with analysis, of 'non-traditional' students successfully participating in tertiary education and graduating, to make their civic contribution to our global society. It is difficult not to be aware of the magnitude of this challenge in the turbulent waters of tertiary education, with values and norms that seem highly resistant to the sensitivity and commitment required to achieve such ideals.

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ALL Educator and Discipline Tutors - Semi-Structured Interview

Unit: *Social Work Theories / Introduction to Social Work*   (circle which unit)

Tutor / ALL Educator (circle who being interviewed)

1. What was your overall experience of the design and pedagogic approach of the unit?

2. In what ways do you think it engaged with the students' 'multiple literacies'?

3. What did you notice about student learning and responses to the unit?

4. How effective was the unit in raising students' consciousness about, and capacity in, the multiple literacies required for disciplinary, academic and practice knowledge?

5. What changes would you recommend to the unit and its approach?

6. What aspects of the institutional context assisted the design and enactment of the curricular and pedagogic approaches?

7. What aspects of the institutional context constrained the design and enactment of the curricular and pedagogic approach?

8. Any further comments?

This questionnaire relates to your learning experience in the Unit:

 Social Work Theories / Introduction to Social Work   _(please circle the unit in which you are enrolled)._

Age........   Gender...............

Language spoken at home....................

Local student ☐   International student ☐   (please tick which applies to you)

Post code............

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your thoughtful answers to these questions will help us in designing and teaching more effectively in the Bachelor of Social Work and tertiary education.

1. What aspects of this unit were most interesting to you? Why?

2. What was most challenging? Please explain as best you can.

3.   What range of approaches to teaching and learning did you notice in this unit?

      -did you notice any differences from other units?

4. In what ways (if any) do you think the approaches in the unit helped your learning?

5. In what ways did you apply or use what you learnt in this unit, in other units that you are currently studying?

6. What would you change in the design and teaching of the unit to better meet your learning needs, or those of others in the unit?

7. What broader university systems helped your transition to learning at the university?

8. What could the university do/provide to be more helpful to your learning?

9. How do you see the material and approach in this unit as contributing to your understanding of social work as a profession, and to your understanding of your own background and its relevance to your professional field ?

10. In what ways does the 'familiar literacy' that you use at home (what you read, do, listen to, discuss, and write about) relate to your studies at university?

11. In what ways has the relationship (between your world at home and the university world) changed during your studies (if at all)?

12. In what ways do you think that the attention to 'multiple literacies' in this unit has influenced:

  - Your academic development and results?

  - Your communication with students and staff on campus?

  - Your academic writing?

13. Please add any further comments you would like to make on the unit.

Appendix C – Student Focus Group Questions

Social Work Theories / Introduction to Social Work   (circle the unit).

1. **What explicit attention to literacies (for example, academic literacies, professional literacies, personal and cultural literacies) were you aware of during the course?**

   - What language did we use to draw attention to this in the subject, eg. 'discourse' and how discourse forms and shapes identity; the social construction of language; induction into the profession and 'professional practices'…
   - What did you understand as the role of the language and support person in the subject?
   - In what ways did this subject help to prepare you for the assessment tasks that you needed to complete it? Other assessment tasks in the course?

2. **In what ways were you aware of this subject deepening your understanding of your own background and how it might contribute to the social work profession?**

   - What questions and conversations do you remember about how your language changes in different contexts and how this relates to your personal and professional identity?
   - To what extent were you aware of discussions that linked language with identity?
   - What topics in the subject do you remember relating to this?

3. **What have you noticed about how academic discourse links to you shifting into new identities – both academic and professional?**
   - How could we have made these connections clearer whilst teaching the subject?
   - Have you been aware of how you might 'code-switch' between the various discourses and 'literacies' you have and will encounter in your social work course and in the profession?

4. **Is there anything else you would like to add to help us understand how we could better teach you in this unit?**

   - Is it difficult to grasp the relationship between language - academic, professional and personal?
   - When did I get this across?
   - What might have helped me to do this more? (eg. longer tutorials, covering course content versus going deeper into these areas)

Appendix D – Cuseo (2011) Student Information Sheet (adapted)

Your *name* (as you prefer to be called)?

1. Place of *birth*? Places *lived*? …………………………………….

2. Presently commuting from where? ....

3. Why did you choose *Victoria University*? (What brought you here?)
   ....
   ....
   ....

4. Have you attended any *other universities*? (If yes, where and when?)
   ....

5. Will you be working or volunteering *this term*? If so, how many *hours per week*? *On* or *off campus*?
   ....
   ....

6. Will you have *family responsibilities* this term?
   ....

7. Has anyone in your *immediate family* (parents or siblings) *graduated from university*? ....

8. What are you really *good* at? What comes *easily* or *naturally* to you?
   ....
   ....
   ....

9. What would you say has been your greatest *accomplishment*, *achievement*, or *success story* in your life thus far?

   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

10. What *three words* do you think *best* describe *you*?
    ....
    ....

11. What would your *best friend(s)* say is your *most likable quality*?
    ....
    ....

12. What personal areas you would like to *work on* or *improve*?
    ....

....
....

13. What would you say have been your *most* enjoyable & *least* enjoyable learning experiences?

   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……
   …………………………

14. How do you *relax and unwind*?

   ……
   …

15. What do you like to *read*?

   ....

16. When you open a *newspaper*, what *section* of it do you turn to *first*?

   ....

17. What's your favorite *movie and/or TV program* (if any)?

   ....

18. What's your favorite *music* or *musical artist(s)*?

   ....

19. What's very *important* to you?")(What *matters* to you the most?)(What is something you really *care* about?)

   ……
   ……
   ……
   ………………………

20. Is there a *motto*, *quote*, *song*, *symbol*, or *bumper sticker* that represents something you stand for or believe in?

   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

21. How would you define *success*? (What does *"being successful"* mean to you?)

   ....
   ....
   ....
   ....

22. Do you have any *heroes*? Is there anyone you *admire, look up to*, or feel has *set an example worth following*? (Why?)

....

....

....

23. Who or what would you say has had the *greatest influence on your life* thus far? (In what way?)

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

………………

24. Is there anything else about the course, or about yourself, that I haven't asked, but you think would be interesting or useful for me to know?