Formations of Gender and Higher Education Pedagogies (GaP)
Final Report
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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Project Team consisted of the following members:

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project makes a unique contribution to the development of higher education (HE) pedagogies by exploring their relationship to complex identity formations of gender, and other social identities and inequalities. Through this exploration, the project also makes an important contribution to broader widening participation policy agendas, paying close attention to pedagogical issues beyond ‘raising aspirations’ and ‘fair access’. Connected to this, and with consideration of the recent panic about men’s HE participation (HEPI, 2009; HEFCE, 2005), the project provides a qualitative account of gendered experiences of higher education practices and relations, with attention to the complex formations of masculinities and femininities in pedagogical relations and practices.

The project took a participatory methodological approach, which involved methods of qualitative data collection about HE teachers’ and students’
experiences and perspectives of HE pedagogies (through in-depth and detailed interviews) and of their practices (through observations of classroom practice). Additionally, the project sought to enhance participation in consideration of pedagogical relations, experiences and practices through a range of participatory methods including workshops, forums, seminars and discussions. The research was designed to create dialogic spaces of reflexivity in which HE teachers and students critically discussed and reflected on their pedagogical experiences and practices in a wider social context that explored the relationship between HE pedagogies, complex inequalities and exclusions at the micro-level of classroom experiences and the significance of identity formations in shaping HE pedagogies and spaces.

Key findings of the research are:

1) Students tend to articulate discourses of equal opportunities and individual agency when asked about gender in their experiences of higher education, yet their responses often also reflect perceptions of the genders as behaving differently in HE contexts.

2) There is often a disjuncture between the pedagogic intentions of academic staff and how students experience these pedagogies.

3) While exercised by the need to develop inclusive pedagogies for diverse student cohorts, academic staff are often reluctant to ask for support, are sometimes nervous about their professional role and often feel as if they are under surveillance by the university.

4) Pedagogical relations and experiences are tied to complex power relations and gendered identity formations (and intersections with other social differences, for example class, ethnicity and race). These complex relations often reinforce the subtle workings of power, exclusion and inequality in higher education pedagogical spaces such as lectures and seminars.

5) Lecturers understand ‘student participation’ largely in terms of ‘voice’ and ‘silence’ and the performance of hegemonic dispositions and subjectivities in the classroom. Thus participation is tied to unequal power relations of class, gender and race. Students often expressed a strong sense of anxiety about the forms of participation expected, which led to feelings of marginalisation.

6) Students’ gendered, classed and racialised antagonisms remain unchallenged by their university pedagogic experience.

7) Some pedagogical practices fail to engage students who display at times forms of resistance to or alienation from the learning experience. This is concerning given the potential issues with retention of working class and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students. It also has implications with regard to masculinities.

8) Students themselves place a strong emphasis on the importance of friendships and the social aspects of university life, which impacts on their
‘formal’ pedagogical experience. Such friendships act as ‘coping mechanisms’ and support structures, and can help students to feel that they ‘belong’ at university.

9) The ability to make friends and feel comfortable in the social environment of the university is affected by power relations, tensions and lines of division centred around identity positionings such as social class, gender, age/maturity and ‘race’.

GaP makes the following key recommendations:

1) It is imperative, particularly in terms of the widening participation agenda, to provide support and resources for lecturers in understanding the ways pedagogical relations are profoundly shaped by inequalities of gender, class and race. This might be in the form of continuing professional development CPD programmes, participatory research opportunities and the provision of forums or meeting spaces to discuss the significant challenges around developing inclusive pedagogies in HE.

2) It is valuable to develop Communities of Practice in order to create the space and opportunities whereby lecturers can collaboratively develop critical and inclusive pedagogies, contributing to a form of awareness-raising about the intricacies of the impact and implications of social inequalities.

3) Policy-makers and senior managers must take seriously the responsibility to provide a structured framework to tackle issues of pedagogical exclusions and inequalities. The individualist approach, which only focuses on the performance of individual lecturers and students, must be challenged as it is unable to address the complexity of social inequalities and identities in relation to pedagogical practices and relations.

4) To embed in the HE curriculum detailed and critical attention to the implications of gender, class and race in order to develop nuanced understanding and sensitivity of: the formation of identities, challenging inequalities, and understanding the complex ways that exclusions and marginalisation takes place.

5) Through this curriculum to provide the opportunity for staff and students to deconstruct masculinised and feminised forms of identity and practice which often have oppressive effects.

6) To enable staff and students to reflect critically on and interrogate their own perspectives of and relationships to cultural, social and political forms of marginalisation and exclusion.

7) For campus universities to look closely at the type and variety of provision of opportunities for students who live off-campus, in order to maximise chances for such students to mix with fellow students and feel a sense of ‘belonging’ to the wider social community of the university.
To look closely at the form and variety of social events arranged by HEIs and Student Unions for their students, in regards to inclusivity and equality in relation to gender, social class, ‘race’/ethnicity and so on. For example, in the range of music themes of events offered or in the promotion of a social culture that values respect and diversity. Social events should be cautious to never deem acceptable those practices and behaviours that promote stereotypes and prejudices around aspects of identity such as gender, social class and ethnicity/’race’.

3. BACKGROUND

The Widening Participation (WP) agenda has raised questions about HE pedagogies (see below Section 3.2 for further explanation) and the ways they might be further developed to address issues of inclusion, equity, participation and diversity (David et al, 2008). Further, concerns with WP have drawn attention to a gender gap in HE participation, with women now outnumbering men in a range of subject areas (see ECU, 2008, 2009). This has led to claims of the feminisation of HE, including the feminisation of teaching and learning (HEPI, 2009). Feminist scholars have critiqued such claims, highlighting the dangers of an oversimplification of gender and inequalities in higher education, and emphasising the need for nuanced research that draws out the complexities of gendered formations, learner identities and pedagogical experiences (Burke and Jackson, 2007; Leathwood and Read, 2009). This research builds on the body of literature on HE pedagogies, widening participation and social identity formation to develop a detailed understanding of the relationship between formations of gender, and its intersections with other social identities, and pedagogical practices and experiences.

3.1. Gender and Higher Educational Participation

Recent attention to men’s decreasing levels of higher education (HE) participation (HEPI, 2009; ECU, 2008, 2009; HEFCE, 2005, 2010) has led to overly simplistic analyses that men are the new disadvantaged sex and the ‘feminisation thesis’ (Leathwood and Read, 2009: 20). This often leads to the homogenizing of men and women, posing them as two groups with competing interests and ignoring the complex ways that gender intersects with other social differences, including class, ethnicity and race. The concept of ‘intersectionality’ ‘emphasises that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands’ (Brah and Phoenix, 2004: 76), and provides a framework to analyse the heterogeneity and complexity of the formations of gender. The moral panic that has emerged about women’s increasing levels of HE participation is connected with a wider cultural anxiety about changing gender roles, which is seen to affect pedagogy as well as other dimensions of university and social life. Although these debates have been given much attention over recent years, there has been little research that explores the relationship between gender, pedagogical experience and practice and inequities in higher educational participation.
Research has drawn attention to the important interconnections between the formations of masculinity, femininity and other social, generational and cultural differences, which profoundly shape student dispositions to and experiences of learning (Archer, 2003; HEA, 2008). For example, academic practices, such as writing, speaking and communication skills, tend to privilege those traits traditionally associated with masculinity, including boldness, competitiveness and individualism (Francis, et al, 2003; Leathwood and Read 2009: 144). However, when some male students encounter challenges with academic forms of literacy and communication, they might avoid asking for support, as being seen as ‘needy’ is often perceived to run counter to hegemonic masculinity (Leathwood and Read, 2009). Furthermore, academic literacy is detached from subject-specific pedagogies and is usually taught as an additional set of skills, separate from the epistemological and methodological frameworks underpinning the subject or discipline being studied. This is particularly problematic for students from traditionally under-represented backgrounds, who might not have access to the resources and capitals that facilitate the decoding of the academic literacy practices of the particular subject area they are studying (Lillis, 2001). Furthermore, qualitative research has revealed how undergraduate experiences differ according to gender, with male students dominating seminar discussions and space (Sternglanz & Lyberger-Ficek, 1977; Sommers & Lawrence, 1992); lecturers holding distinct perceptions of undergraduate writing according to gender (Martin, 1997; Read et al, 2001; Francis et al, 2003); and gender impacting student and lecturer identity and confidence (Acker, 1982; Dyhouse, 2006; Leathwood and Read, 2009; Burke and Jackson, 2007). Moreover, the very culture of academe, its epistemology and working practices, have been argued as being masculinist (Acker, 1982; Harding, 1990, 1991; Leathwood and Read, 2009).

Women have often been seen as a ‘danger to the men’ in higher education (Mirza, 2009: 116), and struggles over access often re-cast the gaze on women as threatening to the status quo. Yet women’s recent success in accessing higher education (in certain parts of the world) is over-represented by women from privileged class and privileged ethnic backgrounds. It is the case that it is mainly women from middle-class, white backgrounds who have benefitted from ‘massification’ policies over the twentieth, and into the twenty-first, century. Before this, women from middle and upper class backgrounds struggled hard for their right to higher education. In 1992, for the first time more women than men began undergraduate study in the UK and this trend has continued into recent years (Leathwood and Read, 2010).

While concern has previously centred on the lower numbers of women students gaining first class degrees, more recently debate has been over the lower numbers of male students that achieve a ‘good’ degree (HEPI, 2010; Woodfield, 2011). For example, across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, male students were more likely to obtain a lower second class or third class honours degree than female students (ECU, 2011a). However, in England and Scotland, male students are more likely to achieve a first class honours degree than female students. Additionally, gendered patterns of participation continue across different subject areas. Engineering,
technology, computer science, mathematics and sciences subjects were constituted of a predominately male student body during the academic year 2009/10, with engineering/technology being 83.7% male; computer science being 81.7% male, and math sciences being 60.4% male (ECU, 2011a). Subjects allied to medicine, veterinary science, education, creative arts/design, languages and social studies subjects were constituted of a predominately female student body during the academic year 2009/10. For example, subjects allied to medicine were 80.6% female, veterinary science was 76.6% female, education was 75.4% female, creative arts and design was 60.9% female, languages were 67.1% female and social studies were 62.9% female (ECU, 2011a). On a global scale, women represent less than a quarter of students on average in engineering, manufacturing and construction, and only about a third of students in agriculture and science (UNESCO 2008, cited in Leathwood and Read 2009). Furthermore, modes of study are gendered with 61.3% of all female undergraduates studying part time in the academic year 2009/10, compared with 38.7% of male undergraduates (ECU, 2011a).

The gendered constitution of academic staff in the UK exposes further complexities in relation to the men in crisis discourse. Although women now make up 44% of academic staff, only 19.1% of professors are women. Men comprise 55.7% of academic staff in non-manager roles and 72.0% of academic staff in senior management roles. 67.1% of part-time staff are comprised of women. The median salary of female staff was £29,853 compared with £35,646 for male staff, an overall median pay gap of 16.3%. The mean salary of female staff was £31,116 compared with £39,021 for male staff, an overall mean pay gap of 20.3% (ECU, 2011b).

3.2. Theorising Pedagogies in Higher Education

Bernstein (2000, p. 78) describes pedagogy as:

>a sustained process whereby somebody(s) acquires a new form or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria from somebody (s) or something deemed to be an appropriate provider and evaluator – appropriate either from the point of view of the acquirer or by some other body(s) or both.

In examining the difference between teaching and pedagogy Alexander (2009) describes teaching as an act and pedagogy as both an act and a discourse. ‘Pedagogy connects the apparently self-contained act of teaching with culture, structure and the mechanisms of social control’ (Alexander 2009 p3) and thus it takes the learner into account as much as the teacher. A large body of work has established some consensus around the existence of a number of conceptions of pedagogic practice on a scale between transmission and facilitation / student learning through listening to student learning through exploration and collaboration (Entwistle et al., 2002; Kember and Kwan, 2002; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999).
We understand pedagogies as lived, relational and embodied practices in higher education. Although hegemonic discourses at play in higher education policy construct largely instrumentalised notions of teaching and learning, the dynamics, relations and experiences of teaching and learning are intimately tied to the re/production of particular identity formations and ways of being a university student or teacher. Discourses of teaching and learning frame teacher and student experiences and identities largely in terms of ‘styles’, ‘provision’, ‘needs’ and ‘delivery’ and such language tends to be couched in a market-oriented perspective that often constructs teachers as service-providers and students as consumers. Although some attention might be paid to issues of power, this is often framed in terms of simplistic notions of student ‘voice’ and ‘empowerment’. Concerns with ‘diversity’ are often tied to the perceived need for ‘personalized’, ‘differentiated’ and/or ‘independent’ learning (Burke, 2012).

Power is not seen as monolithic within such theoretical perspectives of pedagogies; power is understood as re/shaping pedagogical relations and experiences in and across changing social, cultural, spatial and (micro) political contexts. Power is not an oppositional force that predictably benefits one group above the other but rather moves fluidly across and between differently positioned subjects. The teacher is not seen to ‘have the power’ to give to the students but rather power is generated, exercised and struggled over within lived social spaces such as classrooms and lecture theatres. Furthermore, power is not tied to one single source, but is interconnected to multiple dynamics, including space, place, time, context, identity and inequality. Power shapes pedagogical relations in profound and unexpected ways and this is inextricably tied to questions of knowledge, authority and representation. As such, pedagogy, curriculum and assessment are not separate entities but overlapping and intersecting dimensions of educational practice in which power plays out in different ways, depending on context, relations and identities. Pedagogies are thus profoundly shaped by the different power relations at play, the changing contexts in which teaching and learning takes place and the identities and relations of teachers and students. Simultaneously, pedagogies are constitutive of identity formations through the discursive practices and regimes of truth at play in particular pedagogic relations and spaces. Pedagogies both shape and are shaped by complex identity formations, epistemological frameworks and processes of recognition, as well as notions of ‘right’ to participate in higher education. Pedagogies do not simply reflect the classed, gendered and racialised identities of teachers and students but pedagogies themselves are classed, gendered and racialised, intimately bound up with historical and masculinised ways of being and doing within higher education spaces. Pedagogical relations are thus deeply implicated in the processes and politics of identity, recognition and misrecognition (Burke and Jackson, 2007).

Using a sociocultural view of pedagogy allows us to see how participants in different pedagogic situations will make assumptions in their choices of practice on the basis of their pedagogical constructs. These assumptions may or may not be shared by all participants; they are likely to remain implicit; and they may exert significant constraint over what it is possible to do in the
particular learning and teaching context (Mann 2005; Fanghanell 2007). For example, academic practices, such as seminars, essays and lectures, and the norms which govern these, are taken to be natural practices in higher education that are not open to challenge. Students and lecturers participate and perform in them according to unexamined assumptions about what is normatively appropriate in these different contexts. In this way, according to Grant (1997), the institution exerts a regulatory control over the communicative practices of students and lecturers. The concept of alienation can be helpful here for understanding the student’s experience in traditional face-to-face higher education contexts (see, for example, Bennett, 2003; Mann, 2001, 2003c; Read et al., 2003). Mann (2001: 8) explains that the experience of alienation within the learning environment may be defined as 'the estrangement of the learner from what they should be engaged in, namely the subject and process of study itself'.

In seeking to avoid some of the difficulties encountered by the social aspects of learning, for example identity, inclusion/exclusion and conflict, Breen (2001) suggests that: ‘learners jointly conspire with teachers in creating and maintaining a manageable working harmony through the particular routines and procedures of the surface text of lessons’ (p. 315). However, Breen points out that this can be a potentially alienating process, as it can lead some learners to inhibit their potential and capacity to fully engage: ‘some learners’ perceptions of the established social relationships in some classrooms may actually encourage them to underachieve’ (p. 316). In Habermasian terms, we could say that the unexamined assumptions upon which classroom processes are based constitute the ‘lifeworld.’ That is, they constitute: ‘the unreflective background consensus which constitutes a necessary frame for social interaction’ (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 84). Although this ‘lifeworld’ makes it possible for the classroom to operate smoothly, by remaining unexamined it potentially closes down the possibility for change and foregrounds the potential for an alienated relationship between teacher and learners. From a Habermasian perspective, the way out of this would be to engage teachers and learners in authentic communication towards mutual understanding and action. However, Usher et al (1997) warn us that those traditions that make much of empowering the individual:

have shown themselves to be open to hijacking by an individual and instrumental ethic. The psychologism and individualism of humanistic discourse presented as a concern for the ‘person’ can lead ultimately and paradoxically to a dehumanisation through the substitution of covert for overt regulation under the guise of ‘being human,’ enabling learners to ‘open up’ and provide access to their ‘inner world (p 980).

In relation to concerns with alienation, regulation and dehumanisation, it is important to explore formations of academic identity. Archer (2008) notes:

that the current “new times” are disrupting notions of professionalism, what constitutes academic work and what it means (or what it should mean) to be an academic, resulting in a shifting conception of academics’ sense of their professional identity (p. 388).
Ball (2009) has described academic staff as ‘public sector technicians’ increasingly alienated from students and losing any creative control over what is taught and in what way. He also describes the way in which institutional agendas dominate, resulting in academic staff re-imagining and representing themselves as agendas shift. The practices adopted by lecturers directly affect the development of the students’ identities as learners and of learners in that particular discipline. Boaler and Greeno (2000) suggest that learning environments are crucial in determining the development of students’ identities as learners. Within the classroom, it might be possible to explore positionality not only to consider or problematize who we are or how we are positioned in relation to race, gender, class and so on ‘but to explore multiple stories around each of these categories with a view to opening up new relations of power and authority’ (Chappell et al. 2003). However we need to be alert to scenarios where students, while encouraged to be active subjects, may become disempowered by accompanying self-regulation in line with university assessment requirements and other forms of institutional regulation.

3.3. Inclusive Higher Education Pedagogies

Research concerned with improving HE pedagogies must take into account that HE is a diverse, complex and differentiated system, in which contested ontologies and epistemologies play out across and within different disciplinary fields (Burke and Jackson, 2007; Crozier et al, 2008). For example, research by Hockings et al (2008) illustrates that the development of ‘inclusive classrooms’ and pedagogies must be sensitive to the complexities of diversity, as well as draw on a range of student-centred practices. Their research focused on the ways in which teachers’ and students’ identities might influence ‘academic engagement’ in the classroom, and explored teachers and students’ conceptions of themselves and each other, of learning and teaching, of subject knowledge, conceptions of knowledge generation and the possible influences of social and cultural backgrounds, education and work experiences in the shaping of these.

Jary and Shah (2009) argue that teaching and learning must take into account personal, as well as academic, outcomes, to acknowledge the different experiences of learning that students draw on in the formal HE learning environment (see also Crozier and Reay, 2008b). Research by McLean, Abbas and Ashwin (2011) aimed to theorise the quality of undergraduate pedagogy and curriculum to incorporate indicators of social inclusion and justice. They argue that good teaching is multidimensional and subtle and they found strong correlations between students’ perceptions of good teaching and the extent to which they engaged in academic knowledge. Anderson (2010) uses the metaphor of ‘imagination’ to demonstrate how the links between learners and knowledge can be strengthened and better understood, by encouraging students to think about their own emotional responses, individual experience and judgement in relation to the course materials explored. She argues that an increasingly diverse student body brings with it a range of conflicting priorities that need to be considered and managed, including the ways that ‘independent learning’ might be
experienced as isolating by some ‘non-traditional’ students. Similarly, Leathwood (2006) critiques the notion of the ‘independent learner’ by demonstrating how it is a gendered construction and inappropriate for the majority of students, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Cumming (2010) argues that learning is a dynamic exercise that primarily involves doing, as well as thinking, reflecting and refining, in a particular social context. Research by Leese (2010) raises questions as to whether HE needs to be redesigned with students’ social and cultural background in mind and in what way the HE learning environment might accommodate these adjustments. Shaw (2009) uncovers evidence to suggest that an inclusive and diverse approach to HE may support specific organisations and professions who subsequently need to address diversity. She concludes by considering the paradox of diversity by observing that enrolling a diverse student body alone is not enough and that in order to create multicultural environments in which all students feel welcomed, inclusive attitudes must shape HE policies, curricula, pedagogy and student services. Hockings, Cooke et al (2009) utilise Wenger’s (1998) concept of identity as ‘nexus of multi-membership’ as a lens through which to explore how university teachers negotiate and reconcile the different or conflicting demands of subject positions, discourses and institutional pressures (e.g. managerial, cultural, personal, etc.). They observe how these socially circulating discourses influence pedagogic ideas and practices, especially attitudes towards widening participation, inclusion and diversity in teaching. Their research demonstrates how social and cultural background strongly influences how university teachers approach pedagogy and develop lesson plans and teaching resources.

These studies emphasise the significance of student identity on pedagogical processes and experiences and place issues of inclusion as a key concern. However, although there has been a growing body of research focusing on the relation between student identity, inclusion and higher education pedagogy (Crozier et al, 2008; Hockings et al, 2008; David, 2009), there has been a dearth of research that has specifically addressed the complex relationship between formations of gender, and its intersections with other social differences and inequalities, and pedagogical relations, experiences and practices. This research develops an understanding of how students engage and disengage with HE pedagogies (Hockings et al, 2008) across different disciplinary practices with particular attention dedicated to understanding the impact of gender on student experiences and pedagogical practices. The research draws and builds on Freire’s theory of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; 2004) to engage with the challenges of developing inclusive pedagogies in higher education and to disrupt persistent inequalities and exclusions.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

This project was led by Professor Penny Jane Burke with the support of the Project Administrator, Carolyn Gallop. The Project Team met regularly, both
for formal meetings and for informal meetings, which focused on developing the research instruments, developing the analytical framework including identifying NVivo nodes and planning outputs and dissemination events, including the CPD resource pack. Professor Louise Archer took forward the creation and organisation of the GaP workshops, held for HE teachers and students across the country at King’s College London. The workshop discussions were audio recorded and transcribed and served to support the core data collection and analysis as a form of triangulation, to ‘check out’ our interpretations and findings.

Four Steering Group meetings were held throughout the course of the project. The Steering Group members played a key advisory role in the project development providing insightful and timely guidance.

Further details about the process of developing the design and methodology are included in Section 5 below.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research Aims and Questions

This research project focuses on the ways higher education students and teachers engage with different pedagogical approaches in relation to formations of gender and other intersecting identities, including class, ethnicity and race. The research aims to develop gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogies in higher education, which address issues of in/equality and diversity.

The key research questions are:

1) How (if at all) do current HE pedagogical practices address issues of diversity, difference and power raised by the WP agenda?

2) How do students and teachers engage with, resist and experience the different pedagogical practices being used on their courses? How is this different across different disciplinary fields? In what ways do gender and other aspects of identity (age, class, ethnicity and race) shape and/or constrain pedagogical relations, experiences and practices?

3) How do students understand and articulate their needs, experiences and expectations of HE pedagogies and in what ways is this specifically shaped by formations of gender?

4) How do HE teachers understand and articulate their students’ needs and learning in relation to gender and in the wider context of diversity? What are the assumptions and aims that they bring to their teaching practices in relation to addressing the needs of male and female students? How might this differ across different disciplinary fields?
5.2. Participatory Methodology

This two year qualitative study was designed to engage HE students and teachers in critical and reflexive considerations about the relationships between social identities, pedagogical practices and experiences. A multi-method, case study approach was taken, first to collect in-depth data about pedagogical practices, experiences and relations and complex formations of identity. These include individual and group interviews and observations. Taking a participatory methodological approach, further methods aiming to create spaces of reflexivity and dialogue with the research participants included student seminars and forums, meetings with programme teams, workshops and student film clips. Sixty-four students across six subject areas were individually interviewed with a smaller group of Executive Student Consultants participating more intensively in the project across a range of methods and project activities. HE teachers from the six subject areas participated in focus group discussions and observations of their pedagogical practices with reflective meetings as a follow-up. Students and staff from additional HEIs across the country participated in an intensive series of workshops and discussions. The research team reflects the participatory methodological framework in that we aim to explicitly bring together theory and practice and so we have members from a learning and teaching unit as well as academic researchers.

This two-year qualitative project involved student cohorts, across six disciplinary programmes of study, at one case study institution, with a second partner institution selected to increase the opportunities for student and teacher engagement in a different university context. In addition, students who were active as Programme Representatives in the case study institution were invited to participate. The case study approach has been specifically selected to: 1) support the aim to work intensively with the students and teachers participating in the project to ensure there is direct benefit to their pedagogical experiences and understanding, 2) facilitate access to participants and 3) improve the chances of sustaining participant commitment throughout the life of the project. The selected programmes involved vocational and academic subjects with diverse representation of male and female students from different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, including: Classics and History, Business Studies and Management, Creative Writing, Dance, Sports Science and Philosophy. These different disciplines have been selected to represent diversity in their nature, epistemology, and pedagogical and assessment practices; as well as student representation.

Riverside University (pseudonym) has a college system comprising four colleges – (pseudonyms) Eliot, Pankhurst, Luxembourg and Parks. They are situated across four distinct and bounded areas of the campus. Each college hosts specific subject areas: Luxembourg: Business and Social Sciences; Pankhurst: Life Sciences and Sports Studies and Psychology/Psychotherapy; Parks: the Humanities; Eliot: Education, Dance, and Drama. Recruitment of students from ‘low socio-economic classes’ at Riverside was above the national average in 2010 with 35% compared to 30.7% nationally; but
regarding ‘Low Participation Neighbourhoods’, whilst Riverside’s average was 6.8% the national average was 10.7%.

Seventy-five percent of students are female although subjects still tend to be gendered, for example women dominate Dance and Education; men dominate certain aspects of Sports Science such as Coaching (100% men), and women (89%) dominate Nutrition; in the Business School there is a similar pattern of more male students although some subjects are more evenly gender mixed whereas Computing (single honours) is 75% male and Computing (Combined honours) is 100% female. Ethnicity varies across subjects and programmes; white students are in the majority overall and in most subjects.

5.4. Access, Consent and Sample

Six programme areas were selected, which represented both academic and vocational subjects/disciplines and the diverse representation of male and female students from a range of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, including: Classics and History, Business Studies and Management, Creative Writing, Sports Science, Dance and Philosophy, as well as academic and vocationally-oriented programmes of study. These different programme areas represent diversity in their nature, epistemology, and pedagogical and assessment practices; as well as student representation.

The project followed the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association. After gaining the ethical approval granted by University of Roehampton, the Programme Convener of each of these programme areas was contacted and a meeting was requested between the Programme team and a member of the research team. During the meeting, the research was introduced to the programme team, giving opportunity for questions to be raised and discussion about the importance of the study to be explored. During the meeting, ethical guidelines were discussed and information sheets about the nature of the project were provided, including a consent form. Each individual member of the programme team who wished to take part in the study signed the consent form. A convenient date was identified for a member of the research team to attend a programme session in order for the research to be similarly introduced and explained to second and third year students undertaking the programme. A similar process was followed when meeting with the students; information sheets were provided following discussion about the research and its aims, and consent forms were offered to all students who wished to participate.

Following the collection of the consent forms, the GaP Research Project Administrator, Carolyn Gallop, contacted individual students to arrange a convenient time for individual interviews to take place. There were some difficulties in recruiting the number of students we planned to interview and after some discussion amongst the research team and the Steering Group committee, we decided to also include students who acted as Programme Representatives in the case study institution. These students were particularly enthusiastic about participating in the study, and through their experiences as
programme representatives had valuable experience to bring to the interview accounts about pedagogical issues on their programmes and were in a stronger position to actively feedback key issues emerging from the research through their role as Programme representative. 16 out of the 64 students interviewed were programme representatives.

The constitution of staff participants is as follows: Classics and History (3 women, 2 men), Sports Science (1 woman, 2 men), Philosophy (3 women, 1 man), Business Studies and Management (2 women, 3 men), English & Creative Writing (3 women, 1 man), Dance (2 women).

**Summary of Staff Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Total Number of Staff Participants</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classics and History</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Science</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Studies and Management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Creative Writing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.5. Methods of Data Collection**

A range of methods of data collection was used in order to collect rich and detailed accounts of teachers’ and students’ pedagogical experiences, practices and relations. The methods were also used to elicit data about participants’ gendered identities and the ways this intersects with other social identities of age, class, ethnicity, race and nationality.

**5.5.1. Individual and Group Interviews with Students**

We carried out two sets of interviews with students in their second and third year of undergraduate study at the case study university. In total 64 students participated in qualitative interviews and then these were followed up by 4 focus groups interviews with 14 students.

The initial individual interviews were on average 45 minutes in length, although some were shorter and some were significantly longer, with the longest interview being 120 minutes in length. The individual interview
schedule was designed to elicit data across seven overarching themes, 1) initial experiences of higher education; 2) experiences of teaching and learning; 3) learning approaches and strategies; 4) articulating needs and interests; 5) relationships with peers; 6) relationship with teachers; 7) student identity. Questions and sub-questions were formulated to guide the interview but not to structure it rigidly in order to enable the participants’ responses to also shape the direction of the interview. The interviews were designed to create a space for critical reflection for the students about their pedagogical identities and experiences, as well as their relationships with others during the pedagogical encounters they experienced at university. Dr Barbara Read, Jo Peat, Julie Hall, Professor Gill Crozier and Professor Penny Jane Burke conducted the 64 individual interviews. The students were either undertaking courses under the six main programme areas and/or were Programme Representatives. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The students were reminded of the ethical guidelines, of which they had already become familiar through the recruiting and consent process. All of the students were given pseudonyms and their subject of study is not included in the data extracts to help ensure anonymity.

The focus groups were undertaken at the start of the following academic year (between Sept 2011 and January 2012) with the Executive Student Consultants (see Section 5.6.1.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group Interviews</th>
<th>Number of student participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. English &amp; Creative Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sports Science</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. History/Business/Philosophy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Programme Representatives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 GROUP INTERVIEWS</strong></td>
<td><strong>14 STUDENT PARTICIPANTS</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the focus groups the students were provided with extracts from the data and a set of questions to stimulate discussion. The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The students were again reminded of the ethical guidelines before the discussion commenced. Julie Hall, Dr Barbara Read, Professor Gill Crozier and Professor Penny Jane Burke each conducted one focus group discussion, acting as a facilitator for the discussion. The discussion was largely student-led and the questions were provided to support rather than direct the discussion.

### 5.5.2. Focus Group Discussions with Staff

Twelve focus groups were conducted with staff across the six programme areas. All of the programme teams, except for Dance, participated in two focus group discussions. The Dance programme team was unable to find a time to meet again as one of the key members was away on sick leave. The focus group discussions were facilitated by a member of the team but designed to be interactive and not too rigidly structured, enabling the perspectives of the participants to influence the shape the discussion took. However, the focus group discussions were supported by material emerging
from the project to stimulate discussion in relation to the key research questions. The first set of discussions was supported by data extracts from the individual interviews with students, as well as questions formulated to help generate a discussion. The second set of focus group interviews consisted of data extracts from their first discussion, so that they had the opportunity to critically reflect on their original contributions and also to build further on that discussion. Below is a summary of the number of focus group discussions that took place (NB: an additional focus group discussion was held with Business Studies staff to ensure that as many of the team could participate in a discussion as possible).

### SUMMARY OF STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUPS HELD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classics &amp; History</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Science</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Studies &amp; Management</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Creative Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 FOCUS GROUPS HELD</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.3. Observations of Classroom Practices

We conducted 20 observations of classroom practice to deepen our data in relation to the aim to gain a detailed understanding of pedagogical practices and relations and the ways these might be gendered. We developed an observation schedule, which aided the focus of the observations in relation to our key research questions. Key themes guiding the observations included: 1) teaching space and context; 2) pedagogical practices; 3) pedagogical relations; 4) formations of gender, with more detailed prompts also included in the schedule to help focus the observation process. Jo Peat, Dr Barbara Read, Professor Gill Crozier, Julie Hall and Professor Penny Jane Burke, conducted the observations. Hand-written notes were taken by the observer against the observation schedule and then typed up. A summary of the observations is included below:

### SUMMARY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STAFF OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports Science</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Studies &amp; Management</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics &amp; History</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Creative Writing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>20 STAFF OBSERVATIONS CARRIED OUT</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6. Methods to Enhance Participation

As described above, a key aim of the research was to create a reflexive space for participants to discuss and exchange their experiences, ideas and recommendations for developing inclusive pedagogies and considering the ways social identities shape pedagogical experiences, practices and relations.

5.6.1. Executive Student Consultants

In order to enhance student participation in the project and develop a closer relationship with our student participants, we identified a smaller group of Executive Student Consultants (ESCs). The ESCs were drawn from our group of 64 student participants and were selected in relation to the following criteria: 1) they were able and willing to participate actively in the second stage of the research and 2) they represented the diversity of the student group particularly in terms of programme of study, gender, social class and ethnicity. In order to induct the ESCs, we held a Student Forum on 13 October 2011 and 16 of the 18 chosen students attended this event. During the first part of the session, we explained to them in some detail the different activities they would participate in as ESCs and gave them each an information sheet to further clarify what being an ESC would entail. We also explained the benefits of participation including the receipt of a certificate of participation, extracurricular experience for their CV, experience of taking part in a national research project and contributing to discussions about developing HE pedagogies plus a small voucher as a token of appreciation for their contribution. Following the induction and an overview of the concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘pedagogies’, the students then took part in small group discussions to explore the relationship between gender and pedagogies. From their discussion, they produced posters of their key points and perspectives, which we included as part of the data.

Two additional ESCs, who were unable to attend the student forum, met with the Project Leader for an induction later.

A key activity for some of the ESCs was to take part in the planning, organisation and facilitation of our National Student seminar on HE pedagogies. We also worked with the NUS and the case study university Student Union to encourage their interest and participation in the project – the University Student Union supported and participated in the student forum held in October 2011, and the NUS and Riverside University SU contributed to our National Student seminar event held on 21 February 2012.

Five of the ESCs took responsibility for organising the student seminar, with the support of Carolyn Gallop, Professor Penny Jane Burke and Julie Hall. The ESCs identified a title for the seminar and helped to promote it through their networks. The title of the seminar was ‘Un-I-versity Uncovered’ and the aims of the seminar were to bring students together from across the country to:
• Uncover what it means to be a student in the 21st century
• Share ideas for creating more inclusive higher education
• Contribute to a national research project
• Advise policy-makers how to make a difference to teaching and learning

Further to these aims we also wanted to provide students a space to voice their perspectives and through the GaP project to feed these perspectives to policy-makers, senior managers and HE lecturers. A keynote lecture was given by the Vice President of the National Union of Student, Usman Ali, encouraging students to exercise their right to a voice in higher education.

5.6.2. Enhancing staff participation

Staff were involved in formal and informal discussions throughout the life of the project. In the initial recruiting phase of the project, all staff teaching on the six identified programme areas were invited to attend an informal meeting to hear about the project and its aims and to begin a process of critical dialogue about their own experiences of teaching and learning in higher education in relation to questions of gender and other social identities. The focus group discussions, although a formal part of the data collection for the project, also served to provide staff with a space for critical reflection and discussion about issues not usually explored. A key theme emerging from the data was the significance that staff placed on having such a space which was not normally available but of great value given the continual changing nature of higher education, placing increasing pressure on their time, and the impact of this on pedagogical practice and relations.

Those staff observed were also invited to have an informal follow up meeting with the researcher who carried out the observation. This meeting was not structured but allowed further reflection on pedagogical practice following the experience of being observed for the research. In the section below on findings, we have not included the subject of study affiliated with individual lecturers to help ensure anonymity.

A number of dissemination events have provided further spaces of critical reflection for staff to explore questions about pedagogies and identity formations.

5.6.3. GaP workshops

Two intensive workshops were held at King’s College London, organized by Professor Louise Archer. The workshops sought to develop further the project’s participatory methodological approach by creating reflective spaces for staff and students to engage with emergent findings and data from the main study. The workshops were also designed to enable wider groups of staff and students (from a range of other HEIs and disciplinary backgrounds) to add their voices and experiences to the project and to help contextualise (and contest or substantiate) the main project findings.
The first workshop (with HE teaching staff) was held on 10th February 2012. Twenty two lecturers attended, representing over 10 universities and 11 disciplinary backgrounds (including medicine, sciences, arts, social sciences, business and humanities). The second workshop (with students) was held on 7th March 2012. 17 students attended, representing 6 different types of universities from across England and over 8 disciplinary backgrounds (including Nursing, History, Business, Law, Technology and Classics). A further two National Union of Student representatives also participated in the workshop. Students and lecturers from Riverside were not invited to participate in these workshops, which were designed to extend the project beyond the case study institution and to ‘check’ the data by engaging new participants with it.

Each workshop was structured in three main sections:

1) ‘Changing students, changing pedagogies?’
2) ‘Gender and other identities’ and
3) ‘Developing equitable and effective pedagogies’

Each section reflected a core concern within the project, to enable a focused yet in-depth exploration of the breadth and diversity of participant views. In each section, participants were engaged through interactive and participatory methods and were invited to work with anonymised data extracts and provisional analyses from the main project data set. Participants worked mostly in small groups and all group discussions were recorded (with their formal consent). As such, the sessions not only provided a form of ‘triangulation’ (contextualising the main project findings) but also generated additional original data for the project (about 17 hours of recorded discussions) plus posters.

The sessions aimed to (i) prompt reflection on how HE is changing and how these changes (in structure and identities) shape experiences of teaching, teacher and learner identities and pedagogical relations, (ii) introduce the substantive focus on gender, race, class and stimulate discussion/reflection on these axes (iii) stimulate reflection on how to translate this into pedagogy and change within HE.

The workshops not only generated rich data but also received very positive feedback from staff and student participants. Both groups commented after the workshops that they had found the experience interesting and engaging. They particularly valued the opportunity to reflect on teaching and learning in HE and to share views with peers from other institutions and disciplines.

5.7. Methods of Data Analysis

All the data collected were analysed in relation to the research questions, collaborative reflections with research participants and the research team, drawing on theoretical perspectives from the body of literature on formations of gender and intersections with other aspects of social identity (e.g. Butler,
1990; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Brah, 1996; Francis and Skelton, 2002; Brah and Phoenix, 2004), as well as literature on HE pedagogy, diversity and inclusion (e.g. Ellsworth, 1997; McLean, 2006; Burke and Jackson, 2007; Crozier et al, 2008; 2011; Hockings et al, 2008; Reay et al, 2009, 2010). The data were read and reread, and then discussed in detail in research team analysis meetings. Through this collaborative approach, we looked across the interview transcripts and observation notes and identified key themes emerging from the data. We then used NVivo to facilitate the analytical process, by reducing the data into NVivo nodes, into the key themes we identified collectively. Through our critical and analytical discussions of emergent themes, the analysis embedded a reflexive approach to consider the impact of the research team’s standpoints and identities and the perspectives and values we brought to the research. Each team member was allocated an overarching research theme to explore in more detail in relation to the project research questions and the emergent themes from the data. Drawing on the NVivo data we developed through these preliminary methods, we each developed a working paper on the overarching theme for which we were responsible. This involved developing the initial analysis we had undertaken collectively in relation to the overarching theme being explored and going through a process of data complication, by further conceptualising the themes in relation to our research questions (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

6. OUTPUTS AND FINDINGS

6.1 Outputs

As the team collaboratively developed the analytical framework through informal meetings, in which we exchanged preliminary analysis of data, we identified five key themes for working papers. The themes were:

- Pedagogical practices of staff and students
- Pedagogical relations in higher education: power, identity and positioning
- Gender, social identities and gendered discourses
- Race, ethnicity and social identities, pedagogical relations, experiences and practices
- Social aspects and student identities relating to space, popularity

The themes related explicitly to the research aims and questions (see Section 3 above). The aims of the working papers were a) to significantly build on and deepen our initial analysis around the five key themes and b) to develop our analysis in relation to published outputs, dissemination events and the final report. The sub-sections 6.2 through 6.6 below summarise the key findings for each of the 5 themes.

The working papers will be further refined for publication in both academic and professional journals, including Gender and Education, British Journal of Sociology of Education, Teaching in Higher Education, Studies in Higher Education and Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.
In order to maximise the impact of the project, we will produce a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resource pack. This pack will be promoted through our dissemination activities, on our website (see below) and our GaP briefing paper, which will be available and distributed at our dissemination events. This will be designed as an online resource for new and experienced higher education lecturers to engage with questions of gender, identity, equity and widening participation in higher education. The CPD resource pack will be underpinned by a commitment to praxis, ensuring an accessible discussion of key theoretical and conceptual tools, presented as ‘think pieces’ with case studies provided to illuminate key issues. This will shape discussion about the development of inclusive pedagogical practices, offering examples to support the discussion. We have also produced a short and accessible Briefing Paper to circulate to staff and students, made available through the project website and at dissemination events. The CPD resource pack, publications and briefing paper will be available via the project website (http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Research-Centres/Centre-for-Educational-Research-in-Equalities-Policy-and-Pedagogy/Current-Research-Projects/Formations-of-Gender-and-Higher-Education-Pedagogies-(GaP)/).

The project website will be maintained through the University of Roehampton Research Centre (the Centre for Educational Research in Equalities, Policy and Pedagogy) in which it is located.

6.2. Findings

6.2.1. Pedagogical Practices

The participatory methodology which brought teachers and students together to re-examine data as it emerged led to some disquiet amongst academic staff in terms of student experiences of their pedagogic practices. There was a sense of disjuncture between the aims of their pedagogic practices in use, the tacit knowledge and assumptions, which underpinned these practices and how these were experienced on the ground by students. Some academic staff appeared anxious about asking for advice and sharing concerns and constrained by normalising discourses of academic identity, which constructed what an academic should be in particular and sometimes marginalising ways. Pedagogic practices of lecturers was significantly shaped and constrained by such discourses as well as university systems, strategies and procedures. The accounts of academic staff raised questions about the discourses circulated via academic developers of ‘student centred learning’ and the extent that such discourses have resulted in some areas in a tokenistic, surface approach which fails to connect with students’ former experiences, perspectives and/or identities. Yet there are few calls from students in our sample for pedagogic practices which fully engage and motivate them or provide space for ‘identity work’. Many in the sample were fearful of exposing themselves through debate in the classroom and welcomed instead clearly structured and teacher controlled learning spaces, which ensured they were clear about what was expected of them, were engaging and provided some opportunities for discussion. For Mann (2001) pressure and the relationship of power between academics and students do
not allow for formless experience, and thus creativity and the development of an autonomous sense of self. The alternative for the student, is the development of a false self, developed as a means of surviving the loss or lack of a good enough relationship and a good enough learning space. This idea of the false self can easily be recognised in the features identified as characteristic of a surface or achieving orientation to learning.

6. 2.1a. Constraints and collusion in pedagogical practices

An over-riding theme arising from observations and interviews with academic staff was a sense of academic identity and pedagogic practices being constrained at societal, institutional, disciplinary and individual level regardless of academic experience, gender or discipline area even before the new UK funding regime for higher education had been implemented. Constraining forces that impacted on pedagogy included teaching space, institutional agendas, disciplinary norms, age, gender but most commonly, conceptions of the student body.

The institutional focus on retention, student satisfaction and maintaining student numbers encouraged academic staff in the case study to suggest that identity as an academic, intellectual leader or disciplinary expert is valued less, displaced and challenged by an expectation that pedagogic practices are more supportive, more orientated towards student needs and interestingly more gendered, described typically as ‘mothering’, ‘babying’ ‘caring for’ and so on. Most staff found this oppressive and driven by external forces, which reflects Deem’s and Brehony’s work on managerial discourses in HE (Deem and Brehony, 2005). The following quotations illuminate these points and are typical of the accounts of pedagogical practice that emerged:

Part of me thinks it’s not my job to look after them. I have a husband and 2 children at home that I have to look after, I have to get these students through, I’m not their mother, I have no intention of being their mother … and sometimes I get really cross that there is an expectation from the university, from my PC and from society, that I am going to mind these students. (Female lecturer)

I feel because of retention rates and all these systems which are in place when you first … I am expected to be caring, more caring than I actually want to be. (Male lecturer)

I understand we have, to some extent, spoon-feed them for the first year … but I feel that if I have to continue with that in the second and third year, I feel I am not doing my job as a lecturer. (Male lecturer)

What seems to emerge is a perception that the changes being forced upon the institution require a deficit model of pedagogic practice more orientated towards a maternal approach than a notion of higher education learning as challenging and critical. This is underpinned by the ‘feminisation of higher education’ thesis, which sees changes in pedagogical practices as a result of widening participation as about lowering of standards. Further, there is a
suggestion that student identities as higher education learners are not fully formed – that there is some kind of deficit that teachers have to remedy through performing a maternal, nurturing role that they view as inappropriate. However, there is a contradiction to consider in relation to the complexities of teachers’ pedagogical positioning and the perspectives of those teachers’ practices. It is notable that some of the teachers who have explicitly positioned themselves by drawing on feminised and maternalistic strategies are highly regarded and appreciated by the students. This approach seems to contribute to the personalisation of teaching which the students want and value and enhances their sense of belonging in the university community, which in turn stimulates greater engagement and positive learning. The feminisation of HE discourse is problematic and often derisory and yet these responses from the students challenge that. However, positioning women in this maternalistic role reinforces a particular gendered stereotype and often exploits the emotional labour of women.

It’s one of these bugbears I have, that students don’t know what a university is, and what it’s for, and what their role as a student is, and what our role is. And they, the perception is it’s a bit like school, but not quite, so they come with a certain attitude. (Female lecturer).

The lecturers expressed a concern with the ways multiple expectations and demands, including wider policy discourses about teaching in HE, as well as their pedagogic practices, amongst other sets of issues, contributed to the instrumental approach to learning they had earlier described. In this way individual histories and multiple identities came to provide conditions for the emergence of deeper understanding of practice. Some expressed a concern that they might be complicit in a pedagogic practice that positioned the students as passive recipients of higher education teaching:

… we are giving them too much and so therefore they don’t feel they need to listen, and they don’t feel they need to engage, because they know they are getting it all anyway. (Male Lecturer).

It’s perhaps fear of taking initiative … is it fear … have we created that perhaps a bit? (Male lecturer).

There’s something about some courses that’s feeding into that passivity, this kind of ‘I’ll just stand at the front and talk and you’ll just listen’. (Female Lecturer)

6.2.1b. Student diversity and changing practices

The above suggests that the University context and individual experiences of this in relation to pedagogical practices and experiences led many of those in our sample to feel constrained. Yet, in terms of academic identity a more complex relationship emerged later in focus group discussions and observations. For example, some individuals expressed the benefits of working with a diverse student body and the pedagogic practices they employed to make this happen.
The fact that you have a kind of range of age groups often, in the class, people from different social backgrounds and so on can be quite an advantage … And increasingly I’ve found that I absent myself from discussions in seminars, either not talking or actually just going off. (Male lecturer).

I would like to push the students more and unattach myself. (Female lecturer).

When the technology breaks down … you just have to give an ad-libbed 50-minute lecture, it turns out the students really like that. (Male lecturer).

Observations of lectures and seminars provided an opportunity to consider the ways in which such constraints might play out in practice and reflective diaries provided academic staff with other opportunities for critically exploring on their practice. While articulating a frustration that students seemed unable or reluctant to engage critically with academic knowledge, observations of both lectures and seminar sessions indicated a limited range of pedagogic practices with most involving more ‘teacher talk’ than student participation. The more student centred learning that was observed regularly resulted in rather bland discussions and limited engagement. In many cases student interaction was fairly limited with many students remaining quiet.

6.2.1c. Academic identities, performativity and displacement

The accounts generated through the research expressed contradictory sensibilities about professional and academic identities in higher education. This is framed by wider regulatory discourses of what is expected of an academic in contemporary higher education, mediated by the subject or disciplinary area. The individual academic is caught up in the complex sets of competing demands and expectations of the specific disciplinary context, the overarching and standardising frameworks of research excellence and quality assurance and the ethos, missions and strategic plans of different institutions with unequal status. This affects all academics but in different ways in a highly stratified and competitive sector.

Female Lecturer (FL) 1: I think of myself as an accidental academic.
FL2: Yes, me too.
FL3: I refuse to define myself as an academic. The day that I say I’m an academic…
FL2: I never tell people I’m an academic.
FL3: …feels like I will have lost the battle, I will have lost the balance in my life. However I did find myself the last couple of days, last couple of years, you know, you sit next to somebody on a plane and they ask you what you do, and the other day I heard myself saying I’m a teacher. I thought no, no, no, no, that’s horrible.
FL2: Because I feel, you know, on the research, that I’m a disappointment to them, I don’t, I am not an academic, because I am not.
FL1: You are not doing academic things.
FL2: I’m a lecturer, I’m a teacher, fine.
\textit{FL1:} I suppose that’s what I mean when I say I am an academic. I mean some people put teachers in university, that’s kind of really what I mean by that (Staff focus group discussion).

In another staff focus group an increased awareness emerged of the ways in which the collaborative discourses which underpinned the programme’s design were actually at odds with the isolated, individualised approaches to pedagogic practice some individuals experienced. Some members of the programme team felt that a solitary and competitive existence lay at the centre of the identity as a researcher in academia. A number of staff described the isolation experienced because of the way teaching and research was organised. Far from feeling part of a disciplinary or pedagogic community and perhaps developing an identity from shared practices and dialogue, one young female member of staff described her existence as solitary and described her work as causing her to feel ‘in a cage…; (female lecturer). The respondent described the ‘professional bubble’ she had created within which she works with her students and ‘survives.’ Academic staff in the GaP study expressed complex contradictory feelings about the extent to which they could share concerns about their pedagogic practices with their colleagues.

Staff were particularly conscious of the way in which past professional experience, their gender and age impacted upon their relations with students, for example:

\textit{If I go off at a tangent, they are going to be very feminine things that have happened in my life, so I’m very mindful that the boys are not interested in hearing about a make-up ethics story. They would much rather hear about a football ethics story. (Female lecturer)}

While relishing the opportunity afforded by the research project to share experiences and ideas and consider more deeply the effect of practices on issues of student identity and learning, many academic staff agreed that they rarely felt able to do this as part of their professional role. The participatory methodology of the project created the space for the exchange of experiences, challenges and ideas and for critical reflection of taken-for-granted practices, which was highly valued by participants. They felt this supported the development of more inclusive pedagogical practices.

The demands of developing inclusive pedagogies were constrained by time factors and these external imperatives. The lecturers were sometimes nervous or even fearful to admit they needed advice, reflecting similar anxieties to the students in the sample.

\textit{But it’s impossible to educate, you know, in the sense that we don’t have time to sit down and navel gaze about how we can engage these people better in order to do this, that and the other or do we look right back at our admissions criteria and say, ‘ok, we only choose the ones who are like us.’? (Female lecturer)}
Maybe it’s an identity thing. I don’t think many people would feel comfortable coming down and saying, ‘This happened today, what can I do about it? Everyone please give me advice.’ Maybe we are a bit protective of our classroom space because this always comes up with observations. (Female lecturer)

6.2.1d. Contradictory discourses of pedagogical practices

In the same way that academic staff feel constrained by university and policy systems, students too were frustrated by some of their pedagogic experiences, which at times they felt did not meet their needs or were inadequate. There were examples of students not feeling engaged or supported, or they expressed a kind of disconnect.

He was just so … bad lecturer. I mean, I think it’s obvious if a person … they are teaching at university, he must be smart … but he was so horrible. I actually tried to listen to what he was saying, but some of his sentences were 5 minutes long! So basically he would just go into this conversation with himself, although he was talking at the class for such a long time. (Andrew, Male, middle class, first generation student)

So if I asked her for some help she would be so vague. Like I’ve asked her for help this term about how to write a blog which is part of our assignment and she is annoyed with everyone because no-one is putting up their blogs but she is not giving us any advice about it so how are we meant to write it? She hasn’t given us any examples. She doesn’t really help. She’s just like ‘read other people’s and say what they say’.. So I’m going to probably fail this module because I just haven’t got the confidence in her – any confidence in her. (Mary, Female, middle class student)

On the other hand, students also gave examples of pedagogic practice that they valued and that they felt inspired by.

It’s more like a class so we are always contributing when we want to and asking questions and that’s really nice and she has slides up so she is actually showing you something and you are engaging with that. And you are coming up with your own ideas and everything. (Quelin, Female, working class, first generation student)

He has like a specific flow in his lectures. It doesn’t feel like a bouncing ball. It rolls all the way. If the lecture is actually structured properly you will receive it in the way he structured it. And the way he structures it is really easy to understand. (Marc, Male, working class, first generation student)

Students welcomed the tutors who displayed passion for their subject, which in turn engendered passionate identifications from the students for their learning in the subject area.

I am very very very passionate about it. It’s something I’ve always since year 10 I’ve very much enjoyed studying it. I had a fantastic History teacher at school who completely sort of inspired me to do it. That’s the reason why I did History at university. And then the first lecture we had at university one of my favourite lecturers was on Medieval Europe and completely inspired me again
to study. ... I adore talking about History. It’s what I love doing at the museum as well. At the moment I’m a volunteer sort of a front of house volunteer so I’m talking to the visitors. When I do my internship this summer, I will be immersed in people of a similar interest to me who happily talk about History for a long time. So it’s something I’m massively passionate about.

[Talking of the lecturer’s inspiration] It’s initially it’s their excitement about what they’re teaching. If they’re, I mean it does you know, there’s two sides to it. Firstly there’s actually them as a person. If they have an interesting voice, - very superficial things. If they have an interesting voice that you can listen to, if they write interesting power point presentations, if they can relate so the student by being quite in touch with what we’re interested in and making interesting comparisons. One lecture we had with this lecturer. We were looking at medieval mapping and he related one type of medieval map to a London tube map which is a connection we would never have made but because it’s something so relevant to us because we’re on the tube all the time, it makes it a lot more interesting. The fact that a) it was just a very good module that he was teaching. Something that I hadn’t studied before in the slightest because before this I liked 20th century and then he converted me to Medieval. But a lot of the time it can be very superficial things. And also then how approachable they are. If in the first lecture they introduce themselves by their first name or they say Dr whoever, if when you are in your first year and you’re panicing about your first assessment you have to hand in, if they will see you countless times to answer pretty much the same questions over and over again. So it’s you know things like that which make them a very good lecturer. And then I’ve had this lecturer, I had him twice for two modules last year. I had him – did I have him last term? I don’t think I had him last term. But I’ve got him this term as well and I will have him next year as well. He’s like a secondary Personal Tutor to me. I can go and see him about any of my assessments. He doesn’t mind at all. So it’s just generally making themselves not a friend to the students ‘cause you know I wouldn’t say that I have a friendship with any of my lecturers but as much of a friendship as a lecturer / student should have. (Ria, White, middle class, first generation student)

6.2.1e. Disciplinary Differences: Pedagogic Identities and Practices

We found that disciplinary differences in pedagogic identities and practices were most evident in the lecturers’ accounts. The students do not explicitly report different ways of teaching in the disciplines although a disciplinary discourse from the academics suggests otherwise. It is important to note that we have not made reference in the rest of the report to the specific subject or discipline of the research participants we cite for reasons of ethics and protecting the participants’ anonymity.

Philosophy lecturers emphasise the intellectual and academic nature of the discipline and their high aspirations for their students. There is a strong sense in the lecturers’ accounts of ‘othering’ of the other disciplines particularly through a discourse of ‘them and us’. ‘Them’ applies to other disciplines and
to the institution itself. The philosophy academics portray themselves as misunderstood, stymied in their attempts to do good work with their students. They see themselves as the ‘keepers of standards’ and take a Socratic approach to study. They suggest that non-traditional pedagogies are connected to ‘dumbing down’ of higher education and that such practices may be fitting for other disciplines but not for Philosophy. Non-traditional pedagogies might be any teaching and learning approaches that deviate from the traditional lecture, seminar or tutorial. However, the women Philosophy lecturers are concerned about the numbers and status of women in Philosophy and encouraging their female students to pursue a future in Philosophy.

Female Lecturer: I think of myself as quite typically like a philosopher, in the sense of being argumentative, and opinionated, and all the rest of it, but maybe there is some case to be made for, for instance it may be that female students have done perhaps more humanities type A levels, where they’ve been told to say, to be very aware of all the different sides, and they tend to write nice balanced conclusions, and there may be some kind of correlation there, I don’t know, but I don’t think particularly that in that way the subject needs to change. I think we do need to support more women continuing in philosophy, but not through changing the content, or style of the subject, particularly.

Creative Writing lecturers see themselves as creative, and tend to construct themselves primarily as ‘writers’ rather than ‘teachers’ or ‘academics’, although they claim that their students want them primarily to be ‘teachers’:

Female lecturer: It’s kind of they need to know that we are writers who, because they also talk about that, how they are convinced by us, because they know that we are writers. But they don’t want that to be the kind of primary way that we have a relationship.

They talk about being misunderstood in the institution and as misrecognised by others as being English Literature’s poor, un-academic cousin. There is a lot of talk around being creative with and within the space in which they teach. For example:

Female Lecturer: Also when they are writing, so there are periods of times, this is not when there is a formal lecture, but I’ve asked them to write something, I’ve also given them the opportunity to leave the room if they want to. Or I say to people, provided there are no health and safety issues, you can lie on the floor if you like. I’ve done so to give them permission to do so. You know, I’ve sat on the floor and said I am going to do the exercise with you, this is my easiest position to write, you can get into yours, so long as you are not getting in anyone else’s way or whatever.

There is significant emphasis in their focus groups on the emotional side of learning and teaching. At times their gaze becomes very introspective and they seem to situate themselves at the centre of their teaching although they claim to embrace student-centred pedagogies.
Sports Science position themselves as science academics, beset by the problems of students who do not appreciate the scientific nature of the discipline. Again there is much talk of the institution as some powerful and fairly malign force that makes unreasonable demands and impositions on them. They strongly position themselves as researchers who teach.

Female Lecturer: I think there is an enormous pressure on us to become school teachers, and we can’t be school teachers and researchers and administrators and all of those sort of things, and I think it would be a disaster if you became a teacher, and other people were researchers. We are very lucky in this university that that doesn’t happen, that the researchers are teachers, and we are expected to bring our research into our teaching, and our teaching into our research.

They also express though a sense of being beleaguered by institutional demands as well as by the constant changes in the institution. They strive towards an ideal of collegiality as well as becoming ‘more effective’ teachers, but feel that the pace of change and overall institutional environment constrains these aspirations. There is much more talk about pedagogy here: they are conscious about the impact their approaches will have on the students, but do not have the time to pursue this and, when they do, express their frustration that the students seem to just want ‘spoonfeeding’ rather than being encouraged towards independent learning.

Female lecturer: When I started lecturing, as I said, you could assume that they’d get it, and now we have to work so hard, and we do some students an enormous disservice, because I’m standing up there telling them that F equals mass times acceleration, means if you know the force, and you know the mass, you can work out the acceleration, this is how you do that maths. And there are people there just thinking this is ridiculous, I knew this when I was twelve. And then there are people there going I don’t know what she’s doing. I have no idea, there are numbers flying around on the board and they might as well be airplanes, I have no clue, you know. And so that’s what I have found, I feel that I am being pulled in a number of different directions, and I’m pulling myself in a number of different directions. And I don’t want you to think that I just stand up there and don’t reflect, I do reflect, and often my reflection puts me into such a spin of crisis that the best thing to do is to stop reflecting and to just keep going, until, also until it’s all settled, but it will never settle, because it’s like everything around, you know, it goes around in cycles doesn’t it?

Business Studies lecturers display reflexivity in their focus group discussions, analysing the gendered nature of the subject, which ‘has been written by men’ and favours masculine-oriented characteristics and activities. They spend time deeply reflecting on pedagogy in relation to power relations and the impact they, as teachers, can have. They question whether they are
the ones creating the silence and the fear they observe their students experiencing. Despite this, however, they still seem bound by very traditional modes of teaching. They see themselves as having a harder task than other disciplines as they are an amalgam of different subjects, e.g. Marketing, Human Resources, Accounting and so on and in this way they suggest that Business Studies and its demands are less clear cut to the students. They talk about the challenges they face in teaching diverse groups of students, and the difficult process of developing particular pedagogical skills:

Female Lecturer: Yes, and I think it is a skill that you develop, and some colleagues don’t, you know, I have a particular colleague who is teaching the third year and is really struggling to manage their behaviour, and manage the sensitivity you have to pick up in the group, and encouragement and just largely being unaware that all this is going on, but getting really upset and frustrated. And the problem, I can’t be there to hold her hand in that situation, you know, I’m moderating the module but you know, it’s something that you…you can learn, but you have to develop.

History and Classics is quite varied in terms of the kinds of identities the lecturers construct and practices they reflect on in the focus groups. They present themselves as highly academic and yet there is a lot of talk around shocking the students, for example with talk of phalluses. The lecturers also take up the discourses of student deficit as posing a major problem for their pedagogical practices.

Female Lecturer: I think a fundamental problem lies, but that’s one of these bugbears I have, that students don’t know what a university is, and what it’s for, and what their role as a student is, and what our role is. And they, the perception is it’s a bit like school, but not quite, so they come with a certain attitude. They come, also, increasingly, understandably, with a consumer attitude, they want so and so many PowerPoints and so many hours contact, blah blah blah. But the particular kind of learning that should go on in universities is not fully understood. It is not about learning what has been every golden word we utter, but it’s about thinking and thinking for themselves. And this is a painful process at times, it’s not transmitted, because as soon as painful they don’t like it, and then we jump, because they complain. So I think there is quite an unhealthy relationship between the purpose of what they are doing and the expectations of students, their lack of understanding of it.

They also suggest that within the wider expectations and demands of the institution, they often have to go against their professional judgment and knowledge. Some of the staff engage in deep reflection about their pedagogical identities and practice, pointing to the benefits that could come from letting go of the reins of control, but there is no explicit talk of pursuing this further.

Female Lecturer: One of the things I say every week in my, well, I keep coming back to Gender and Sexuality, because that’s the one that was observed and filmed and everything for this project, it’s a second year course,
and they were able to choose their own essay topics, but I kept stressing that they should do that very much in discussion with me. And every week I’d say thank you to those who’d been in touch with me. Because there were some people who got in touch from week one. Sometimes I sort of, maybe they might have taken from it that more people had got in touch with me than actually had, it might only be two, but then I could use plural. And so some students would get in touch with an idea, vague, over precise, whatever. I’d get them to come to find an initial bibliography, and then rather than just giving them a list of five, ten, whatever, titles. So the initiative would come with them and I’d build on that with them, and that was very exciting. But other students, they just would not take that step. But I wanted it to come from them first. Or there were general bibliographies.

Dance lecturers have embraced the insights of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and attempt to put this into practice. Their identities as teachers are invested in critical pedagogical approaches. In drawing on such insights, the lecturers have a strong sense of the relationship between identity and pedagogy, and talk about the relationship between their own personal histories and perspectives and their pedagogical practices:

Female Lecturer: In dance we have a lot of assumptions about what dancers are, and their relationship with their teacher, and it used to be a very matriarchal kind of world, the training world, and for us to be in academia there there was a lot of thinking, clinical thinking around our roles, so we don’t necessarily want to think of ourselves as mothers, teachers, in that sense. But there are moments where I think it is important to consider my biography, and the biography of my students, and I have found that these are the moments you take a risk, you might make a link that might motivate the student, might make them more aware of themselves and their own relationships, but I have also felt that there is a risk there, there is a risk for me, maybe, you know, not having boundaries as a, pedagogical boundaries and professional boundaries, maybe imposing my own understanding of what motherhood, what independence is. But I definitely think that there is, the two should be explored, and they come up organically in class, in conversations, and yeah, that’s a recent experience that we had.

In conducting the observations, it was striking that Dance as a disciplinary framework presented opportunities for the lecturers to teach differently in higher education spaces, and the critical pedagogic framework that shaped the Dance team’s approaches at the case study institution supported this. For example, the students were invited to lead different sections of their session and were encouraged to engage in reflexive discussions. Furthermore, the physical space, which included a spacious dance floor, provided a symbolic openness in which the dance students positioned their bodies through movement across space and this disrupted any hierarchical positioning of either the students or the two dance teachers. When the dance teachers presented ideas, they did this in short bursts, then opened up to the whole group for student contributions to develop and build on these ideas. The students observed were all female and White but they were physically and
generationally diverse, displaying different levels of dance technique, without any sense of hierarchical ordering. This provided an overall sense of inclusion and of encouragement to creatively express individual differences in what appeared to be a supportive environment.

6.2.2. Pedagogical relations, participation and gendered identities

As we have shown, the research was centrally concerned with examining how students engage and disengage with HE pedagogies (Hockings et al, 2008) across different disciplinary and subject spaces with particular attention to the impact of social identities on pedagogical relations in HE classrooms. Although concerns to develop inclusive practices in higher education are connected to policies of widening participation, there has been little explicit attention to concepts of ‘participation’ in research or policy. This section draws attention to the competing discourses of participation in the accounts of the research participants and the ways these discourses shape pedagogical identities, relations and experiences.

6.2.2a. Silence and participation

The data showed that teachers are reflexive about their approaches and critical of the gendered power relations at play in their classrooms, although this does not necessarily translate directly into inclusive practices. The teachers seem to be aware of the complexities of unequal power relations and describe the particular issues and dilemmas they face as higher education teachers. Their accounts support the theoretical assertion that not only are student and teacher identities gendered but so are subject/disciplines and their associated practices.

But a lot of Business language is around football, male sports, moving the goal post, team player, all this rubbish and I just wonder if you know it’s largely written by men, a lot of the Business Management literature and it’s very geared towards the systems type learning as well that maybe women, female students are excluded to a certain extent and a sort of silent lecture until the questions at the end. I thought of that word silent, the bit of research I did with students about women’s ways of knowing. Basically silence being the lowest level of engagement and you know by doing a lecture, we are imposing that silence but in the next minute, we’re saying, - let’s have a discussion about this and let’s engage but we’re controlling that as opposed to them really critically engaging. So I think there may be something wrong there in terms of imposing silence on the people. I mean I’m finding it more and more –they’re just not able to engage. They don’t take the risk and my group this year, there’s only about one or two that would participate. Whereas previously it would be a really good dynamic - engaged. (Male Lecturer)

The interview account above suggests that silence is seen as the ‘lowest level of engagement’. There are anxieties expressed in relation to silence and the powerful positioning of the teacher in controlling discussion, and expecting (vocalised forms of) participation and/or imposing silence. There is reference
to ability in relation to participation, but it is unclear if this is about (the teacher’s constructed sense of) student ability or about particular power relations. Overall, participation is presented as risky for students.

In another account of participation and pedagogical practices, students who remain silent are constructed as ‘passive’. The lecturers describe silence as ‘intolerable’ and ‘tortuous’. Certain strategies to combat silence are used by the lecturers and the notion of teaching and learning as play is introduced. As described in the above section, a maternalistic feminised positioning of the (female) teacher is strongly invoked. Teaching is constructed as about bringing students out as people, resonant of birthing, nurturing and caring. The teacher’s role is presented in the below account as “connecting”, which can be achieved through active forms of student participation. Participation is strongly signalled by student voice.

Because I tell you, if in doubt I start playing. I either go what’s the matter babies, tell me, or I start playing. Because I can’t bear silence, lack of engagement, I can’t bear it, so…it’s also partly because there is this shared belief, I think I’m right in saying, underneath, that students need to connect with themselves, and they need to connect with one another, in order to write well…So it’s essential that we bring them out as people, that’s part of our job. We are not just teaching a subject. You have to take part or you are not learning. I think that’s what we believe. (Female Lecturer)

Gender and its relation to power is suggested in this account, as the teacher draws on feminised positionings to ‘play’ the students. Similar perhaps to parenting, teaching is presented as a form of coercion, and the teacher is seen as able to draw on her gendered and generational authority as teacher. Thus, a strong maternalistic position is presented as a form of power in the classroom space. As explained above, the students responded well to such positions, although it is also important to note that the exploitation of women’s emotional labour has been discussed in detail in feminist research and literature (see for example, Burke and Jackson, 2007). Therefore, this feminised approach to teaching can be both an important and generative form of inclusive pedagogic practice whilst also problematic in the way it positions women lecturers across gendered divisions.

Interviewer: You said the day everybody was tired you put everybody in a circle and you said you did the maternal thing of OK, what’s going on, what’s the matter? So do you actively draw on that, to get people engaged?
Lecturer: I’m aware I’m doing that. I think I’ve just always done it. I think the older I’ve become the more I do it actually. It was, I actually will explicitly refer to myself as Auntie occasionally. Not in the initial classes, but as we all get to know each other, I will often…maybe not often, but often enough, kind of coerce people into saying things, or taking part, on the basis of because Auntie knows so and so and so and so. (Female Lecturer).

Yet, in the students’ accounts, giving voice in the classroom space often raises significant levels of anxiety. One student talks about her experiences of being forced to read out loud in the classroom, despite her disability.
Although, she believes that her lecturers are aware that she is dyslexic, she is still forced into this kind of participation. This raises particular challenges to assumptions about voice and participation as a form of empowerment.

**Student:** also I generally don’t like speaking in front of class ‘cause I get very nervous. And because of my dyslexia I feel - they ask us to read stuff – I find it very difficult to read something loud in front of someone. But they’re not really supposed to ask me that but they still do and I just get, I get so nervous and I focus so hard on reading that I don’t get the context or contents or anything. I just read it and focus on not stumbling through.

**Int:** Are they aware of that – you’re teachers?

**Student:** They should be. I find the person who does this most is actually my Personal Tutor and he’s the one who knows most about it. (Agda, Female, middle class student).

The student seems to suggest that formal pedagogical space makes it risky to speak, when she explains that in other contexts she is “good at speaking to people”. Many of the students express these kinds of anxieties about being seen and heard in case they might be read off as an illegitimate subject of the HE space or (mis)recognised as not belonging at university.

**Int:** And you’ve given an account of feeling quite anxious when you’re having to read because of your dyslexia. Are there any other times when you remember feeling particularly anxious about your studies?

**Student:** Well I basically feel anxious if I have to like, like I don’t like, I think it’s just because I’m scared of being stupid like I don’t like if I want to say something and I know that what I want to say is right and if I don’t say it, the tutor points it out. So I should have said it to show how clever I was but I didn’t and no-one did. But I’m just too scared to put up my arm or just to say it. And sometimes I even feel nauseous - I like I want to be sick just from having to say a sentence. And it’s not because like I sometimes I got good stuff up there as well but it’s just scary to say it. And I’m not shy – I’m not a shy person. I get in contact with people quite easily and I’m good at speaking to people I think but I’m just very nervous. (Agda, Female, middle class student).

Some students also talked of hiding behind friends since they were too inhibited to discuss in the seminar. Importantly, this anxiety is not in the abstract but is often said to be in relation to other students. Some students expressed the view that: “ it’s the students that are scary not the lecturers” and talk of trauma and mistrust. Seminars and related expectations about participation paradoxically create uncomfortable and disempowering spaces for some students. Assumptions that (certain kinds of) voice is the ‘proper’ form of HE participation makes some students feel ‘stupid’. This participation in HE pedagogies requires displaying the right dispositions, citing the right discourses, embodying the right subjectivities and displaying the right forms of performatives. This highlights the complexity of participation for students who are trying to address a number of competing regulatory discourses on a range of contradictory levels and across shifting power relations.

**Int:** how does it feel in a seminar compared to a lecture?
Student: Well in a lecture you can sit there and you can listen if they are a good lecturer, if they can engage me. And I quite like that as I write down my own notes and make up my own feelings so people contribute what they want if they want to. Whereas seminars you actually like you are meant to be contributing. So I feel like I look stupid because I’m not saying anything but I’ll sound stupid if I do say something so I just don’t really like them. (Diana, Female, middle class, First generation student).

One lecturer points to the contradictory expectations of WP on the HE teacher. She suggests that on the one hand institutional racism is a pernicious force that operates to reproduce inequalities in higher education. Yet, on the other hand, she suggests that institutional racism might be a form of maintaining HE normative values, such as debates about maintaining standards and not ‘dumbing down’. She is trying to grapple with the complexities of challenging structural and historical inequalities as an individual lecturer. She raises the ethical question of who (should be) responsible for inequalities and exclusions.

But again a lot of it comes down to the culture, and the culture of expectation. And, you know, the…what do we expect and what do they expect, and what is acceptable within a culture, and what is not acceptable within a culture? And part of that is about education, us educating ourselves and us educating them. But in…It’s impossible to educate, you know, in the sense that we don’t have time to sit down and navel gaze about how can we engage these people better in order to do this, that and the other, or do we look right back to our admissions criteria and say OK, well, we only choose the ones who are like us. And, you know, it comes down to what’s institutional racism? And I think, I think without question higher education has a tendency to be institutionally racist, but to what extent can I address it and can the university address it, or is it just a societal issue that we have to get over, you know? (Female Lecturer).

6.2.2b. Peer Pressure and Losing face

Students’ with poor school experiences (most often working class and B&ME students) frequently come to university with vulnerable learner identities (Crozier et al 2009). Moreover, students from working class backgrounds have to struggle to assert their authenticity and their right to be at university at all and they often struggle with their own perceptions of their learner identity; women and black students are faced with further issues (Leathwood and O’Connell 2010). Competitiveness and notions of the good student have an impact on the student’s learning experience.

Knowledge of course is a source of power; Bourdieu implies that gaining entry to university is rather like gaining entry to an exclusive club whereby you have not only to pass various tests to get there but once in and to ensure that the right kind of use is made of this ‘exclusive’ knowledge then a series of other tests are required. These are not the end of module exams but rather an adaptability to or accommodation of what Bourdieu has talked of in terms of
the control exerted over students and learning, such as the “distancing of teachers” through, for example, the organisation of teaching and the “professorial code” (Bourdieu et al 1994). Professorial space is designed to maintain control of what is learnt and how knowledge is imparted and what happens to the knowledge once it is released from the professorial hands. Of course it is not just ‘professorial’ space but control is exerted through all aspects of teaching, learning and indeed assessment. Regulatory control becomes more paramount in a neo-liberal system based on heightened competitiveness. Student success and maintaining student retention are both key performance indicators for universities. This implies the need for tighter controls and less risk-taking in the form of critical pedagogies and an emphasis on outcomes rather than process (Mann 2001). Likewise in this environment, students tend to adapt to conform to the status quo since they too are heavily invested financially but also socially and psychically in the process they find themselves in. The ‘discourse of cleverness’ and the notion of meritocracy – the ‘deserving and undeserving’ student are further aspects of this competitive process and produce mechanisms for ‘disciplining’ binding students in. Bourdieu et al (1994) also talked of the process of ‘distancing’ as reciprocal: condoned by the students themselves as a defence mechanism against what they don’t know and therefore failure/exposure/ridicule but also as a way of maintaining their independence. In some of the subjects in our case study there is a lot of group activity and group work assessment. Students have varying views on this and this practice influences students' views of their peers and their relationships. In other subjects the learning process is more individualistic and the relationship to the lecturer at the exclusion of the peer group seemingly becomes paramount.

I used to think I really like working in a group but since coming here I really hate it. I can’t stand it. And I think it’s also because of me but I like knowing what I am doing. Sort of being organised and I like having exactly what people are doing and knowing that we are ahead of it or whatever. Whereas there are some people – generally I’m a bit of a pushover so... People will say can I be in your group and I will say Yeah OK – even if I don’t really want them in my group. So it puts me under so much pressure then – the fact that – and recently we have had a group work where it just did not work out at all and you think ‘I worked so hard for that and yet we have got this grade’ and like generally because I have to do the whole thing myself I just found... and the way they do it here I’m not really enjoying (Chandana, work class, first generation student)

6.2.2c. Voice and Non-participation

The accounts of teachers also suggest that voice sometimes operates to signal forms of non-participation. Indeed, it appears that some voices are not welcome by teachers, particular those constructed as noisy, disruptive or unruly. Although voice is often seen as the key indicator of participation, the teachers also talk about illegitimate forms of student voice. The teachers are also caught up in regulatory discourses, for example they are compelled it seems to take up a position as controller of student voice, again suggesting
explicit forms of power in teaching in HE. Voices constructed as unruly often are connected to constructions of (excessive) masculinity.

*ML (Male Lecturer) 1:* I can hear blokes. Again I can usually hear their chatter let’s say more acutely more than I can hear some female chatter simply because of the difference in pitch.

*ML2:* I really can’t tolerate talking. It really drives me nuts and I will stop a lecture and they know. Whereas in the old days I used to just get louder and louder and they got louder and it got out of control. But I think you learn as a lecturer how to control a group. And if they’re too quiet you…

*FL1:* I think after 20 minutes you put a question to them. It gives them an opportunity to talk to each other otherwise I know that their attention span is not all that great so it’s best to give them a bit of a breathing space.

*ML3:* Actually my experience is thinking about the power dynamics in business studies as well ‘cause I think we all think, I don’t think any of us would think we have to go in and manage that space because as a lecturer it’s not about allowing silences and not allowing silence and telling them when they can speak and when they can’t. But there is that dynamic about independent learning and reflective learning – probably you go into a situation and you are the manager, if you have power.

*FL1:* The only power they have is to walk out. (Staff Focus Group Discussion)

The lecturers also cite examples of student voice in relation to instances of the student exercising their rights as consumer, and as posing a specific threat to the power of the lecturer. In this case, the ideal student is the disciplined subject of HE pedagogy. Anxiety about the risk of contamination of the (pure/legitimate) HE cultural context is suggested (Morley, 2003), raising key questions about the complex dynamics of pedagogical relations.

...they are the same group who’s actually been making noises - so affecting the students’ hearing, and the problem, sometimes, you find its the same group time and time again. When you warn the first time, come the following week, and exactly the same. So the question we raised as well, before, how far you can go to say OK, enough is enough…I mean I’ve done it, I think, twice or three times, and one of them is going and complain to the boss, you know. But I mean I have nothing to hide, you know. (Male Lecturer).

In this way, diversity might sometimes be seen as a form of contamination of HE culture, particularly when tied to polarising discourses of the “Other” kind of student, implicitly connected to widening participation (WP) agendas (Williams, 1997). The WP subject is constructed as not knowing what is acceptable or understanding the (unspoken) rules of the game. The student associated with WP is constructed in such instances as a threat to HE standards.

As well as tutor anxieties, in the current competitive and economically-driven context, antagonisms surface between students seeking ‘value-for-money’. There are resentments articulated in the research accounts of fellow students
who seemingly do not contribute to the group work or appear to some as disruptive and disrespectful in the lecture hall:

F1: Yeah, it should reach the point that they get sent out. Or they shouldn’t be allowed to come, to give an example of people coming twenty minutes late with their iPod headphones in, and continue listening to their iPod in the back, and, you know, why are you taking it? There’s no point you being here, just get out the class.

M1: The lecturers always stop short of sending them out of the class, and that’s what they should do, if it happened one time where they get sent out straight away without any warning it would never happen again. You might want to try and keep students in the classroom, even if they are being disruptive, because on paper it’s numbers and that’s business. That means you get the money, you get the funding for other lecturers, or you get more funding for areas that you want to do.

M2: When I’ve spoken to students who came here when it was free they say it was a lot more strict. Like you had to sort of be on your tiptoes all the time when it was free to come to university. I was told, a lot of people say that if you did anything wrong you’d just be sent out. Because then you had, it was basically you are not paying anything to be here, if you are not going to play by our rules then get out, because it doesn’t matter.

Interviewer: Why do you think the students are behaving like this, do you know?

M1: Because they are idiots.

M2: It sort of relates to when I was in college, because the same thing happened in college. You’d get people who would come in, not really knowing what they were doing, then sit in the class and just waste time.

Interviewer: But if they are paying all this money…Why are they just throwing it away?

M2: They are not that bright.

(Focus group discussion, all white students, 2 female and 2 male)

Drawing on Sarah Mann (2001), students’ putative disruptive behaviour can be seen as a form of alienation. Mann adopts a Marxist definition of alienation in terms of “alienation from one’s work, from the process of production of one’s work, from one’s self and from others”. Utilising this concept can help to explain the behaviour of some students in terms of coming to lectures late; talking at the back of the lecture theatre; texting throughout, all of which lecturers and students highlighted as problematic. This behaviour could be construed as refusing to adopt the ‘good student’ subjectivity (Grant 1997) but what it actually points to is the need for lecturers to look afresh at teaching styles and the context of learning in which some students are being marginalised. It is increasingly apparent from our research that there are still too many taken for granted assumptions that perpetuate inequalities in pedagogic relations and contribute to particular constructions and positionality of students across gender, class and race.

6.2.3. Gender and higher education pedagogies
This section foregrounds the significance of gender in relation to pedagogical experiences, relations and practices in undergraduate higher education. Importantly, previous research has demonstrated that young people increasingly reject the salience of structural identity variables such as gender, ‘race’ and class on their experiences. Researchers have documented, for example, a trend towards the assumption that we live in a ‘post-feminist’ age, which sees equality of opportunity as already established (Volman & Ten Dam, 1998; McRobbie, 2008). Similarly some research shows that social class and ‘race’ is presented in public statements as less salient, foregrounding agentic discourses of individuality and individual choice (Thomson et al, 2002; Hey, 2010; Cousins, 2012).). While sociologists have scrutinised the neoliberal socio-political environment that generates these individualised discourses (e.g. Rose, 1999; Walkerdine, 2003), others have demanded serious engagement with such expressions as exemplifying a new, ‘super-diverse’ terrain in which ‘old’ structural indicators are less salient to social identities (Vertovec, 2007; Vertovec, 2009; Cousins, 2012; Rampton, 1995; 2005). Some of these theorists have characterised this subjective rejection of identity categories as a crisis for sociology (Rampton, 2005; Cousins, 2012). However, we take the position that social structures, which continue to underpin the formation of gendered, classed and racialised identities, remain a central mechanism of the production and reproduction of social and cultural inequalities. Although it is important to critique categorisations of gender, class and race, and the ways that categorisations might indeed contribute to constructing social groups in problematic ways, it is also important to analyse the effects of structures of gender, class and race on people’s lived experiences and identities and on the practices they take up and engage in. However, it is also important to nuance those categorisations in order to analyse the intricate ways that gendered, and other identities, are formed across and within different social contexts and spaces. This section explores such questions and dilemmas in relation to the participants’ experiences and understanding of gender, with its intersection with other social differences and identities.

6.2.3a. The submersion of structural distinction

Students’ accounts sometimes echoed hegemonic discourses that gender no longer matters in the lives of individuals, who freely exercise their ‘individual choice’. Yet, these discursive practices are bound together with neoliberal, individualised narratives, which tend to position social outcomes as the responsibility of individuals rather than social structures (Rose, 1999; Bauman, 2005). Examples of individualising discourses, underpinned by neoliberal assumptions that in the market of higher education, social differences no longer matter, can be found in many of the students’ account, for example:

*Depends on the person (Pat, male, middle class student).*
Yeah I definitely think it’s just down to the individual. I don’t think it’s male or female. (Erika, female, middle class student)

It’s very individual. I would say it’s the same percentage of mature and younger students who are talking. It’s all about the individual I think, rather than anything else. (Nic, male, social class unknown, student)

And indeed some students further elaborated that all individuals are ‘equal’, submerging difference further:

I tend to work with guys and gals equally. Obviously like my best friend obviously is a girl and I’m always with her but the guys know me just as well. And we all joke about and we all laugh together. In my group is split between three guys and three girls – equal split. (Petra, female, middle class, first generation student).

It is important to recognise these responses as indicative of students’ discursive location within the specific socio-political-historic-economic context from which they speak; and this discursive context has been subject to extensive analysis by political theorists and policy sociologists. However, this discursive response also raises a range of issues. Firstly, with sociological and economic research that demonstrates the continuing impact of structural variables such as gender, ‘race’ and class on social patterns and outcomes (which generated the GaP research). Secondly, the contradictions within student respondents’ own accounts. For example, one of the strongest discourses emerging from students’ interview responses is that of ‘Them and Us’ (Crozier, forthcoming), a discourse we have already alluded to above in terms of judgments made against students constructed as ‘disruptive’.

The discourse of ‘Them and Us’ often emerged as an impassioned denouncement of ‘feckless’ students, the injustice experienced by other students having to endure the ‘bad behaviours’ of these irresponsible peers, and an appeal for meritocracy in treatment. However, as Crozier (forthcoming) elaborates, not only does this discourse emphasize distinction (‘them’ and ‘us’) but also, on probing, structural variables emerge with regard to those students positioned as ‘Them’.

Hence while structural difference was at times submerged in students’ accounts that instead emphasised individuality and the consumerist relation to the HEI (including notions of ‘value for money’), structures of distinction remained, and these structural differences appeared to bubble under the surface, but nonetheless as a key dimension of pedagogical experience. For example, some students began by asserting the primacy of the individual, but then moved to articulate the influence of factors such as age and gender:

I would say obviously a lot of it is down to the individual and that is very obvious. [...] Maybe women students – [of the] younger students - they are a bit better at keeping on top of their work. I would say most problems I have seen from people not doing their work have come from men rather than women. Obviously there is lots of exceptions but generally it comes to
the day before a deadline and you see the men outside smoking two cigarettes at once rather than the women. [Interviewer laughs] They always seem rather relaxed about it. (Nic, male, social class unknown student).

Likewise, Natalie (female, middle class) begins by arguing that “it depends on the individual”, but adds that their individual circumstances can affect outcomes, providing the example of a peer who is a mother, which impacts her modes of study.

At other times structural factors such as gender might appear, only to be re/submerged. For example, Nova (female, white middle class student) maintains that “Some of the guys tend to just not really care [about their work] that much”. However, she goes on to deconstruct this view, re-emphasizing individuality, considering that,

And we’ve got a few girls like that as well, and we’ve got a few mature male students as well, who work really hard. So maybe mature students work a bit harder. But there are some who came straight from school, and they work really hard as well, so I don’t... I think it also depends on how kind of passionate people are about what they are doing, if they are really interested in the course then they tend to work quite hard.

6.2.3b. Articulation of gender distinction

Students tended to reject the notion of gender and/or other social variables impacting on behaviours and outcomes in their undergraduate experience. However, gender did emerge in their accounts; sometimes in relation to direct questions, and sometimes serendipitously in their discussions of student life.

Some students were aware of the gendered patterns informing subject preference and take-up, and the related gender demographics and outcomes on their courses. These accounts frequently reflected essentialised discourses of ‘natural’ gender difference in the skills and interests represented by different subject disciplines:

My own feeling is that women are generally better at writing and some of for example they seem to settle more into the sociological modules whereas I seem to fit in better and really enjoy laboratories. [...] we could pick extra modules to make our credits up and I went for the scientific ones whereas they went for the sociology ones. [...] I think I was getting higher marks in the scientific modules. Physiology, metabolism and things like that whereas they get higher marks in the essay-type courseworks. (Jonathan, male, working class, First generation student).

For others, such narratives were woven with more social-constructionist/ sociological accounts:

A lot of my lectures end up having more boys in them ‘cause I enjoy studying more the - not the male subjects, but the ones which just interest, you know. [...] People can tend to very easily specialise and there
are some things that are stereo-typically more interesting to different genders (Michelle, female, middle class student).

Hence Michelle draws on the concept of gender-stereotyping to explain the patterning on her different modules.

Other students reflected on the impact of such gender patterning in terms of representation and their own experiences on different courses:

*I do feel kind of comfortable in my seminar group and obviously I have friends within the lectures, but I find that it's a different dynamic in Philosophy, because Early Childhood studies unfortunately is a very female orientated subject and therefore it is just naturally a different dynamic in the seminar. There are not any guys in our seminar group* (Adora, female, social class unknown, first generation student).

Adora positions the ‘different dynamics’ between her Philosophy and Early Childhood classes as ‘obviously’ due to differences in the gender constitution of the student group. She also characterises the numeric female-dominance of Early Childhood Studies as ‘unfortunate’, although she does not elaborate why. In turn, Timothy (male, social class unknown) engages a very visceral lament for the lack of ‘boys’ at Riverside. Reflecting that the numeric gender imbalance in favour of females at Riverside impacts his student experience, he claims that this preponderance of women would appear attractive to many male students: “A lot of boys would apply to Riverside for that reason. For obvious reasons.” However, counter to this trope of heterosexual masculinity, Timothy asserts,

*T: But I think in the end a boy needs a boy. You know you can’t if you hang around girls too much; it’s such a headache - no offence. Um.
Int: In what ways in relation to the students here?
T: Um in relation to students here I guess because you are away from your home and you are not going to find -, and if I didn’t have that with a boy who was here, I wouldn’t have anyone to talk to about the football the other day for example. Or talking about the girls in that sort of way. Blah de blah. ‘Cause I wouldn’t have anyone to talk to about that. Obviously I made friends with the girls but it’s just different. It’s a gender thing. There are differences and I couldn’t really put it into words. It was good that I had that boy.

Here Timothy constructs his ‘boy’ friend as almost an island of normalcy/sustenance in a denigrated mass of women. ‘Girls’ are placed in deficit as ‘such a headache’ and unable to meet male needs in terms of topic or nature of conversation. Indeed Timothy’s narrative draws on a narrative of masculinity as deeply essentialised and mythopoeic (see Bly, 1990: “There are differences and I couldn’t really put it into words. It was good that I had that boy.”

Hence in spite of the students’ frequent rejection of the impact of gender as a principle, in their talk and constructions of other students and their lecturers,
gender identity and gender distinction emerged strongly, often in highly traditional ways.

6.2.4. Foregrounding ‘Race’: Social identities, pedagogical relations, experiences and practices

Fitting in and belonging has been a central theme in studies of Widening Participation in HE. Most often it has been discussed with respect to social class and accessing the necessary capitals in order to get to university and progress when there (Read et al 2003). Crozier et al (2008) found that ‘fitting-in’ for working class students had different implications in the social field and academic field depending on their educational histories and learning dispositions and the different social and academic milieu they found themselves in. For Black and Minority Ethnic (B&ME) students in a White dominated setting there are additional issues. Adapting and assimilating are all forms of symbolic violence, which run throughout the evidence from students. The B&ME students in our study respond to these pressures in different ways at different times. Frequently B&ME school students have been accused of not mixing (e.g. Crozier and Davies 2009), rather than White students separating themselves off. There are similar echoes of this from many of the White students at Riverside University. Concerns about cliques amongst students are an on-going theme and typically White students allege that these are based on ethnicity, together with an accusation that “black people stick together”.

We had only a minority of Black & Minority Ethnic students in our sample of student participants and so we do not seek to draw correlations between their experiences and their levels of achievement. However other’s research (e.g. Okon 2005) has shown that B&ME students tend to achieve lower degree classifications than White students and are more likely to drop out of university altogether. Whilst this is also the case at Riverside, there is evidence that the University is beginning to address these trends.

6.2.4a. Fitting in and belonging

Throughout the data there are recurring references to and constructions of the Other, (raced, classed and gendered) as separate, as difficult, as disruptive and, or threatening. However, these identifications are often implicit rather than explicit, identified by default or association. As discussed above, gender differences are frequently denied – it was often said that there are no gender issues in the academic or social sphere, and yet it was also often said that it is the men in Sports Science who are the ‘disruptive’ ones; moreover, our observation data shows that it is the (White) men generally who are the dominant voices in the learning situation.

Social class and ethnicity are made visible only when contrasted to the White middle class norm as explained by this White middle class student:
It might be a private school mentality. I came from private school as well actually, although obviously I don’t have that now, but although I had it when I went to university at eighteen, I was shying away from everyone. I think those who come from a better economic background tend to be a bit more prejudiced. If you are living in [Luxembourg College] you are around people, you know, people [who] greet each other by saying – ‘wa gwan, blud’. It’s different to what they [the White middle class students] are going to be used to. (Stephen).

Although this student went on to say how he loved being in this diverse setting he also, albeit, disconsciously, mocked and exoticised some of his fellow students:

Different cultural backgrounds, they come together, you get different lingo, different culture. I just found it all hilarious and fascinating, I loved it all. I would entertain certain friends, you know, who speak like that, by me doing it, you’ve got this guy coming from [Home Counties, suburbs], saying this language, they found it hilarious, you know. I found them just all lapping it up and not taking it too seriously, not being prejudiced. (Stephen)

Historically the White view of Black people is as exotic and entertaining. In this way Black people are less threatening and can be kept in their place. The Other is both ridiculed “I just found it all hilarious and fascinating, I loved it all. I would entertain certain friends, by me doing it, ..they found it hilarious” and exoticised as entertainment, (“so damn great”).

White middle-class students described being at Riverside as an ‘unreal’ experience as described by a student who likened being at Riverside to being in the television programme, East Enders and describing Black and White working class students in terms of ‘gangs’:

I’m kind of middle class, we’re quite well off. It’s just interesting to see people who aren’t so well off and live in really crowded places. They are all gangs. It’s like the kind of thing you see in East Enders…It’s kind of like the programme ‘How the Other Half Live’...(Daniel, White male middle class, student).

The students at Riverside talk a lot about territoriality and ‘cliques’ but there are undertones of anxiety and a construction and fear of the ‘Other’. The University’s college system in part, gives rise to cliques but there are strong racialised characterisations, which are also gendered.

The visibility of black (male) students at Riverside is dependent on time of day, College location and subject of study. The B&ME students come into the University in the day for their lectures, many if not most apparently living off campus and at home. But seemingly large numbers of black and especially male students draw attention to themselves: “Black bodies out of place” as Puwar (2001) has observed. It is this terrain of difference which marks the albeit implicit tensions and struggles but in these interviews they are articulated in terms of stereotypical perceptions and also territoriality. Black
students are thus demonised as gangsters, bad boys, ‘tearabouts’, threatening and troublesome.

[Luxembourg College] people will generally be recognised as being, I suppose, I don’t know, sort of bad boys on campus, because Riverside University is approximately seventy five per cent female, but in Luxembourg you’ve got pretty much an even gender balance, because Luxembourg is primarily a Business school and a lot of Business students are guys. …So, yeah, there’s something about the business course that seems to attract a certain, certain, you know, mentality, kind of range of guys, and you end up with lots of, you know, [Luxembourg] is madness, you know, after nights out, …(Bradley, White male, middle class)

Luxembourg College is thus characterised as a college dominated by B&ME students with a larger proportion of men. It is also visibly noticeable that there are more B&ME students there than elsewhere where there are more White students. Other students describe Luxembourg as “the ghetto” and where “gangster boys”, and “rebellious or like from a working class background” students dominate. The language of ‘gangstery’, ‘bad boys’ as indicated is racialised and ‘tearabouts’ is a confirmation of the threat they pose veering on to something out of control.

The visibility of ethnic, gendered and possibly class based cliques are in fact arguably a stance at asserting one’s identity and authenticity within those particular parameters but also they are as much if not more likely a source of support, a place of safety and a haven where the outsider can feel more like an insider. These racialised and gendered groupings are manifest in geographic as well as social spaces and in relation to particular subjects of study.

Riverside University is portrayed by students as a multicultural, life enriching experience, whilst simultaneously giving rise to mockery and a sense of anxiety or fear of the Other. This is indicative of the complexity and dynamic of peer relations. Running throughout these perspectives is a strong theme of competitiveness and a series of antagonisms within the formal learning situation. Further the prevalence of ‘racial’ antagonisms, the disquiet over cliques and the apparent ‘fear’ expressed by some of the White students cannot be conducive to a positive and critically engaged learning experience.

6.2.4b. Black Student Marginalisation

Patricia Hill Collins reflecting on the shift in historical imperatives argued that the necessity to maintain control of the Other remains:

Whereas racial segregation was designed to keep blacks as a group or class outside centers of power, surveillance now aims to control black individuals inside centers of power when they enter the white spaces of the public and private spheres. (Hill Collins, 1998).
Hence the importance placed in policy on maintaining assimilation. For Black people, it becomes necessary to adapt, take on white middle class values and ways of being in order to get on or be accepted or avoid blame. Whilst we have shown that many White students found Black students to be highly visible at times, in fact Black students were completely absent in certain spheres. Although as indicated below the African Caribbean Society was an important source of ‘Black representation’, it was disbanded and African, Caribbean heritage students talked of the lack of appeal of Student Union events. In his discussion of moral panics, Sibley (1995: 39) argues that “boundary consciousness” is sharpened in order to exclude and ensure that the ‘Other’ is eliminated or prevented from appropriating such spaces for themselves. The ‘space’ referred to is both physical and ‘cultural’ space here within the university. The struggle for ‘cultural space’ represents a power struggle. The metaphorical struggle that takes place in the universities described here, is to ensure that the ‘dominant culture’ endures. In our data there is evidence of such cultural boundaries, which marginalise and exclude the black students and render them invisible.

I think there’s a lot of especially some of the black people that go to university, they feel that the music isn’t catered for them so they don’t really come out as much. If you came out [at night] you’d see that it’s less black people and more white people. (Simone, female, Black British Caribbean, middle class student).

When they do Freshers’ week. They do a lot of concerts or disco or whatever. It ends up being … for people who like music like rock or pop or things like that. Whereas I am more of an urban black. We like R&B, reggae and we usually we look towards African Caribbean Society to put on events for us to go to. It’s like the university especially the student union isolate not intentionally – the activities that they provide. People from different other ethnic backgrounds are not going to go to it. It does not entice you to go. So I remember like in Freshers’ Week this year, everyone was like ‘are you going?’ And a lot of people were saying ‘no – I’m not going; I’m not going. I’m not going.’ (Simone, female, Black British student)

6.2.5. Pedagogical Relations and Identities Outside the Formal Classroom

An interesting and unexpected finding arising from the data was the importance of pedagogical relations and identities that arose from activities, events and experiences that would normally be seen as existing outside of formal learning environments. Student (non-) engagement in social activities and events on campus, and their feelings and experiences of individual and group friendships, inclusions and exclusions were strong themes arising from the data. Moreover, the dynamics of friendships and group social formations were strongly and inextricably linked to various aspects of identity, including gender, social class, ethnicity/race, age, and residency (on- or off-campus).
All students are engaged in processes of identity making and re-making at university, as they differently take on and move between different constructions of identity at home, university, family and peer group. In our analysis we looked at the various forms of social-pedagogical identities and relationships students construct, negotiate and ‘play out’ at university outside of the formal learning environment of the lecture hall or tutor room – and the complex ways in which these practices work to both reflect and reinforce dominant discourses centred around class, ‘race’ and gender.

Even before students have attended their first lecture or attempted their first essay, they will have begun the process of confronting and negotiating the (largely unwritten) ‘rules of the game’ of university life. The dominant discourses of knowledge, communication and practice in higher education can be seen to vary significantly between countries, between institutions and even between disciplines (see Ballard and Clanchy, 1988; Martin, 1997; Lea and Street, 1998). It is nevertheless possible to speak of these discourses as comprising an academic institutional ‘culture’ that influences (and is influenced by) the ways in which students and lecturers think, act and communicate in the academy (Bartholomae, 1985; Grant, 1997; Lea and Street, 1998).

This culture is not uniformly accessed or experienced. Despite the marked increase in students from working-class and ethnically diverse backgrounds attending university in the last decade, and popular and media conceptions of the university as a ‘feminised’ arena, academic culture continues to predominantly reflect the dominant discourse of the student learner as white, middle-class and male (Mirza, 1995; Grant, 1997; Leathwood and Read, 2009). Whilst financial constraints have been found to have a major impact both on university entry and on the successful completion of degree courses amongst working-class students of diverse ethnic backgrounds, social and cultural factors also have a bearing (Lynch and O’Neill, 1994; Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Crozier et al 2008). As Spurling (1990), Lillis (1997), Tett (2000) and others have pointed out, students from ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds are also disadvantaged by an institutional culture that places them as ‘other’.

A number of writers have discussed the importance of friendship groups in relation to identity formation – particularly in relation to school-age students (see e.g. George 2007; Hey 1997; Weller 2007). As Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz (2007) note, membership of a group at school (or exclusion from it) can greatly inform the construction of ‘who you are’ in terms of identity – both in relation to one’s own self-identity and how others see you. As we also found, those who are accepted as friends with peers who are socially deemed to have high ‘status’ (either within a particular friendship group, or wider collectivities such as school year cohorts) can themselves acquire ‘status’ capital amongst their peer groups.

[The] social thing is probably one of the most important parts [of being at university] really I think. Um ‘cause obviously the work is important but that is to bring you to the end of your degree. Whereas during the time you are here,
Another probably aim is to sort of make as many friends, meet as many people as possible. And it's the sort of thing that gets you through 'cause obviously university is quite a stressful time…'

(Gary, male, 'young' white middle-class, 'home' student)

I definitely think connecting with people on the first couple of weeks of the course really made – you find your buddy or your friend. I've made a group of friends that have definitely kept me going and without them I don't think – uni has been made more bearable in [terms of having a ] coping mechanism.

(Debbie, female, 'mature' white female middle-class, international student)

As Adler, Kless, and Adler (1992) state, 'having someone as a friend is a form of power'. Moreover, the consequences of finding yourself 'unpopular' can be severe, including the threat and the actuality of bullying and violence. The threat of finding oneself labeled as unpopular, for example through being positioned as a 'nerd' or 'boffin', is a common fear amongst both primary and secondary school children (see e.g. Francis, 2009). Such dynamics are under-researched amongst university students, perhaps due to an implicit conception that concerns around friendship, popularity, 'coolness' and belonging/exclusion are left behind at the school gate and abandoned once a person reaches adulthood. However, as studies such as Jackson and Dempster (2009) show, elements of discourses such as the association of studying hard with a lack of 'coolness' and the valorization of 'effortless achievement' are still articulated by some students, relating to particular socially dominant constructions of 'laddish' masculinity.

6.2.5a. Friendship and belonging

Many students, without prompting by interviewers, brought up the importance to their pedagogical experience and identity of issues around friendship, and friendship groups at university. Some students, both mature and of school-leaving age, talked about how friendship specifically acts as a kind of stress relief or 'coping mechanism' to the stresses of studying. Whilst some students discussed the responsibilities of the university in providing events and activities (in freshers week, and during the course of the academic year) for students to meet each other, there was also an identifiable discourse of 'self-reliance' – that it's up to the student her/himself to be confident and independent enough to be able to make friends. For example Diana, a young White British student, said “I had a horrible time last year 'cause I felt so lonely all the time as I was never with anyone […] it's a major thing that you need to make friends […]No-one can help you do that. You have to do that yourself”. Similarly, Michael stated that “You are just left alone [at university], you don’t have your friends that you’ve had for years, through school, and stuff like that. You’ve got to make new friends, you’ve got to show a big personality” (Michael, young, White British, working-class).

However, there are a raft of social as well as psychological factors at play in feeling the confidence and degree of comfort in the social environment of the university in order to make friends and feel like you ‘belong’. For example, one of the most important distinguishing factors amongst student social
groups/identities in the data was whether a student lives on or off-campus. A far greater proportion of mature students with established adult lives live off-campus, and also a higher proportion of working-class students and some minority ethnic students live off-campus as well, having chosen a local university so they can stay living in the family home. Therefore distinctions of residence also have resonances in relation to facets of identity such as age, ethnicity and social class.

6.2.5b. Friendship groups, inclusion and exclusion

The contrast between university life at Riverside for on-campus and off-campus students was repeatedly remarked upon in the data, with participants regularly noting the difference of the social experience for the two groups. Some went further and discussed how off-campus students can feel quite disconnected from university events – for example Kalini, who lives at home, notes “they miss out on making those relationships with other students because we don’t really find out about those events” (Kalini, British Born Asian, young, working-class). Other students living off-campus discussed how they were far more likely to make friends with other off-campus students as they felt that their lives and experience had much less in common with on-campus students.

Whilst some students talked about how friendship groups and cliques at university were far less intense and excluding than those experienced at school, a number of other students talked about how friendship groups could seem excluding at times, and centre around gendered, classed and ‘racialised’ factors similar to that found in primary and secondary schools. Some friendship groupings were seen to form in relation to ‘race’ and ethnicity, as already indicated. Other students also talked about cliques forming similar to the ‘popular’ groups that have been related in school-based studies (see e.g Francis et al., 2010; Read et al., 2011) which are intimately tied up with gendered notions of what are ‘valued’ and ‘appropriate’ masculine and feminine embodied practices and behaviours – such as being ‘pretty’ and heterosexually attractive for girls, and being ‘sporty’ for boys. For example, Jensen, a young British Black Caribbean student, discussed how various groups of boys who played sport – the ‘rugby boys’ and the ‘football boys’ – would hang around together, and those ‘outside’ the group felt them to be quite exclusionary.

Whilst some students do talk about the responsibilities of the university in providing events etc for students to meet each other, there’s also this discourse of ‘self-reliance’ – that it’s up to you to be confident and independent enough to be able to make friends.

The emphasis on making friends down to individual strength of character is repeated by Diana and Simon here below:

You are just left alone [at university], you don’t have your friends that you’ve had for years, through school, and stuff like that. You’ve got to make new friends, you’ve got to show a big personality, where some people didn’t, when
they first went there they were very shy [...] they just would fade away in the background.... (Michael, male, young, White British, working-class student)

6.2.5c. College identities

Another strong theme arising from the data was the importance of college identities for the students – particularly for those living on-campus. Strong college affinities were formed for many students, who saw this aspect of university life as one of the best and most important aspects of their experience in HE. Like the friendship groups discussed above, such college identities had definite gendered, classed and ‘raced’ resonances. For example, Luxembourg College, as already indicated, was discussed by numerous students as being ‘hard’, ‘gangstery’ and the ‘bad boys’ (this latter a deliberate reference to a perceived greater percentage of male students) in contrast to colleges such as Parks (‘artsy’, white, middle-class), and that this is apparently a source of jokes and ‘banter’ amongst students who describe Luxembourg as a “ghetto” in relation to a perceived greater number of B&ME students, see section 6.2.4). College rivalries were enthusiastically played out in annual sporting events and other activities. Interestingly, as well as markers such as College-branded clothing, ‘performances’ of college identities and rivalries included the singing of gendered, sexualised songs or chants. Susy, a young White British student, described the campus/college culture as one that was sexist in what she perceived to be a very dated way, and arose from the disproportionate percentage of female/male students:

The girls get targeted in [chants]....and it’s very sexist at Riverside [....] because the percentage of girls it’s like girls go back to being, living the expectations of like thirty years ago [....] It’s ridiculous, like just feeling like it’s really important that they have a boyfriend, because there are so few guys here, and they just, the guys are just idiots as well, like yeah, they such lads, lads, yeah (Susy, young White British student)

Whilst there was a repeated discourse of ‘inclusivity’ in terms of student life on campus, with numerous students discussing how their own classes, subject areas, or friendship groups contained a diverse range of students who all ‘got on’, a contrasting theme of cliques and exclusionary groups and practices also emerged – often relating to particular forms of social identity such as gender, social class, age/residency and ethnicity. Moreover, whilst many enjoyed the experience of campus social life, it can be argued (and was indeed by a number of participants) that the social ‘culture’ of the university is constructed through, reflects, and helps to reinforce social inequalities of power along gendered, classed and raced lines.

7. OUTCOMES

A significant outcome of this research has been to generate spaces for higher education lecturers and students to reflexively consider and discuss their pedagogical experiences, perspectives and practices. Through the participatory methodology, the participants were able to make important contributions not only to the research itself, through for example, participation
in interviews and focus groups, but also to the identification of key areas for the development of inclusive pedagogies through workshops, seminars and informal meetings. The importance of such critical and reflexive dialogic spaces cannot be underestimated; both students and teachers demonstrated a sophisticated level of reflection and thought about pedagogical practices and relations and the importance of gender and social identities in shaping these. However, without this research there is very little institutional space to consider pedagogical issues beyond the management and bureaucratic levels and this is problematic given the changing nature of higher education and the immense expectations on staff and students within diverse, hierarchical and competitive HE contexts. The research has provided both staff and students an opportunity to discuss a range of issues and in particular it has given a space that does not usually exist for them to articulate their experiences and concerns.

Another key outcome of the research is the development of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resource pack, which will be available and of value to lecturers across a range of different higher education contexts. Key themes the CPD resource pack will address are the ways that lecturers might work through complex and diverse pedagogical relations and spaces, how lecturers might address issues of inequality and exclusion in their classrooms and through their practices and the ways they might draw on the diverse and rich experiences and identities of their students to bring alive the curriculum and pedagogical encounter.

The research has led to the award of a Fulbright Scholarship to Dr Lauren Ilia Jones, to work under the supervision of Professor Penny Jane Burke to extend the GaP project to a wider European context, including to Portugal, Spain and Italy. The Fulbright research began in September 2012.

Importantly, the research led to a range of discussions and dissemination events, all of which were very well attended and received. These included:


A national student-led seminar for students, Un-I-versity Uncovered with keynote speaker Usman Ali, Vice-President of the NUS, February 2012
Critical Symposium of two HEA projects (GaP and Disparities in Student Attainment) Identities, In/Equalities and HE Pedagogies: problems and possibilities hosted by the Centre for Educational Research in Equalities, Policy and Pedagogy in March 2012
Invited Keynote lecture Brunel University Education, Identities and Social Inclusion research group seminar: 'In or Out of the (Social) Mix'? - Developing multiple identities to negotiate cosmopolitan educational settings. April 2012

Two intensive workshops held at King’s College London for HE students and HE lecturers, February and March 2012

An invited keynote: Developing Participatory Pedagogies held at the University of Malmo, Sweden, May 2012

Paulo Freire Institute University of California, Los Angeles Eight Biennial PFI Conference. Symposium: Gender, social identities and pedagogies in the University: experiencing, constructing, and challenging academic cultures and practices – three papers presented. September 2012


Gender and social identities in the University: experiencing, constructing, and challenging academic cultures and practices – three papers presented as part of a symposium, British Educational Research Annual Conference, University of Manchester. September 2012


Finally, in November 2012, at the University of Roehampton, we hosted a high profile dissemination event, with guest speakers, including Professor Les Ebdon (Director of OFFA), Ms Sarah Howell (Head of Student Opportunity, HEFCE) Professor Sue Clegg (Leeds Metropolitan University) and Professor Monica McLean (Nottingham University). The event was highly evaluated and created a valuable space of dialogue between policy-makers, academics and professionals concerned with the relationship between teaching and widening participation in higher education.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This project has met its research aims and objectives in exploring the relationship between pedagogical practices and experiences, gendered social identities and inequalities (and its intersection with social differences of class, ethnicity and race) and questions of widening participation in higher education. The research methodology, which took a participatory approach, created a valuable space of reflexive dialogue for students and teachers to contribute to critical discussions about ways to develop inclusive pedagogies that address complex issues of diversity and inequality in higher education.

The participatory methodology at the heart of the GaP Project brought students and teachers together to share their views and examine each other’s pedagogic practices, particularly in relation to diversity and inclusion.
Academic staff at the case study university met in teaching team focus groups twice through the project: once to describe the pedagogical practices commonly in use on their programmes and once to reconsider these approaches in response to data from students outlining their experiences of learning and data from their colleagues from the first focus groups. Towards the end of the project national and international events and conferences allowed the project team to repeat the exercise, using the student quotes to facilitate conversations about pedagogical practices with academic staff from a wide range of other universities. For many academic staff these were valuable opportunities to explore as a team and as individuals the conceptions of student learning that underpinned pedagogical practices. Many academic staff talked about how difficult it was to make choices about pedagogical practices at a time when the diversity of the student body required much more sophisticated and nuanced pedagogies. Their time was restricted; a sense of surveillance overshadowed their work and they reported a reluctance to admit they needed help. The quotations from the focus groups with academic staff and with students provided a powerful context to facilitate dialogue, ensuring the developer was a ‘context provider’ rather than a ‘content provider’. This form of professional development can be described as the creative orchestration of collaborative conversations replacing the more usual ‘staff development workshops’. In these contexts professional development is viewed as an integral part of academic work, reframed as an active process exploring a pedagogic problem in the same way academics might explore a research question while moving people beyond fixed identities, official university discourse and subjective notions of academic roles. The process echoes Kandlbinder’s (2007) term ‘deliberation’ describing it as demanding a form of communication that is different from everyday conversation. Mann (2005) describes it in relation to online communities as ‘opening up possibilities for expression, seeking understanding, making explicit norms and assumptions in order to question and configure them more appropriately, getting to know the other, checking out different experiences, needs and purposes, voicing different experiences, histories and positions and having these accounts heard.’

A summary of key findings of the research is listed in the Executive Summary above (section 2).

9. IMPLICATIONS

A summary of key recommendations is included above in Section 2.

A key implication of this research is that as higher education becomes increasingly diverse, HE lecturers need support in developing inclusive pedagogical practices that are sensitive to gender differences as well as other social inequalities and exclusions in higher education. The GaP research provided a unique space for critical reflexivity for both lecturers and students to deepen their understanding of gendered identities, inequalities and pedagogies and to feed in to the process of developing inclusive practice. According to their accounts and responses, both formal and informal, this benefitted both students and teachers. The research highlights the profound
need for such spaces of critical reflexivity to be provided in higher education, not only in terms of enriching approaches to widening participation but also in valuing teaching and learning and the teachers’ and students’ experiences of HE. Many of the lecturers expressed a deep sense of disempowerment in terms of increasing workloads, high levels of institutional expectation not least connected to the marketisation of HE and the rapid pace of change in HE policy. Widening participation presents rich pedagogical opportunities but also complex challenges. Institutions and policy-makers at the national level must acknowledge these challenges and support lecturers.

Secondly, the research suggests that there is a common assumption amongst both students and academic staff that gender is no longer an important issue in terms of widening participation in higher education. However, the accounts of both the students and the lecturers reveal that a deeper level of discussion and consideration generates profound issues in relation to gender and how gender intersects with other social inequalities of class, ethnicity and race. It is therefore paramount for widening participation and for social equality and justice that awareness is raised around these issues. This requires serious levels of attention to the relationship between pedagogical practices and relations and social identities, inequalities and exclusions. This is because, as the findings have shown, gender is not only tied to individual identity formations but also shapes pedagogic and disciplinary practices, epistemologies and assumptions. Thus the complexity of the issues at stake point to sophisticated strategies in higher education to address them, including research such as GaP, which provides opportunities for discussion, critical reflection and continuing professional development.

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i See e.g. Spurling, 1990; Clarke et al 1994; Martin, 1997; Francis et al 2001

ii With the exception of aspects of Business most notably Business Computing where 100% are Black students and Human Bio Science and Bio Medical Science where 12.9% and 12% are White respectively. B&ME students are very under represented at postgraduate level.