

**Reframing power relationships in higher education: An integrated
understanding of conflicting power relationships and undergraduate
subjectivities in the current university climate**

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the transforming power relationship between undergraduates and academics, through an elaboration of three conflicting subjectivities pertinent to the current university climate: the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer. It questions the current research on power relationships within higher education whereby the dynamic is either taken as given or acknowledged without proper consideration. As such, the formation of power relationships, which allows their perpetuation, remains unexplored and thus, misunderstood. Equally, this thesis takes issue with the current research on student subjectivities within higher education where subject positions are often explored in isolation. As a consequence, the relationship between the most pervasive positions remains unexplored and the resulting conflict and discord that arises remains obscured.

This thesis advocates a different approach to understanding power relationships and subjectivities within universities, one which seeks to unveil the hidden mechanisms that constitute the positioning of undergraduates and the resulting power relationships. The theoretical framework draws from systemic and constitutive conceptions of power, which provides a dialectical conceptualisation of structure and agency. Methodologically, the thesis is grounded in critical realism and draws data from two case study universities. Analytically, the thesis uses Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis to explore undergraduate subjectivities and power relationships at the macro and micro levels of universities.

This thesis offers an integrated understanding of the transforming power relationship, through an elaboration of conflicting subject positionings within universities. The findings of this study reveal that what was once considered a stable power dynamic between two established social roles is now under negotiation. It is being transformed through conflicting behaviours introduced through different subject positionings, which creates confusion for undergraduates regarding appropriate behaviour within universities.

Keywords: higher education, subjectivities, power, marketisation, partnership, consumer.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
NSS	National Student Survey
SU	Student's Union
OfS	Office for Students
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
ESRC	Economic and Social Science Research Council
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
P	Professor
DTL	Dean of Teaching and Learning
FDLT	Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching*
SL	Senior Lecture
PL	Principal Lecturer
ProgL	Programme Leader
SEA	Student Engagement Advocate [name changed]
R	Reader
E	English
EL	English Literature
CW	Creative Writing
H	History
AS	American Studies
S	Sociology
MC	Media Communications
J	Journalism
Lec	Lecture
Sem	Seminar
A	University A
B	University B
M	Male
F	Female

*Data referenced is presented through abbreviations (see Appendix 5), e.g.: (B, FDLT)

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Transforming Power Relationships in Higher Education

The purpose of this thesis is to study the transforming power relationship between undergraduates and academics in the current university climate, through an integrated understanding of the conflicting subjectivities in which undergraduates are being positioned. Power relationships and subjectivities are hugely complex and multifaceted concepts. Rather than attempting to illustrate every subjectivity and power dynamic that undergraduates occupy during their studies, which would be impossible due to their individuality, I have chosen to focus on the three most prominent subject positions for undergraduates in universities today: the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer. It is the conflicting nature of these subjectivities, and the impact they have on the transformation of the undergraduate-academic power relationship, that is the central objective of this study.

The transforming relationship between undergraduates and academics has become increasingly relevant in recent years. The introduction of market models into universities across England has necessitated a shift in the existing power dynamic. There has been recognition that the subjectivities of undergraduates are being reconstituted, with particular emphasis on undergraduates as consumers (Williams, 2013; Brown, 2013; Tomlinson, 2016) and undergraduates as partners (Barnes et al., 2010; Allin, 2014; Bovill and Felten, 2016). Undergraduates are being re-positioned within universities to adapt to the changing landscape of higher education (HE), in which institutions are constituted as businesses or quasi-markets. Questions have arisen regarding the impact of these new subjectivities on the interpersonal relationships

between undergraduates and academics and, ultimately, the undergraduate learning experience. The majority have argued that the consumer subjectivity has had a detrimental effect on both the relationships between undergraduates and academics, and undergraduates' learning approaches within institutions (Scott, 1999; Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion, 2011; Williams, 2013; Naidoo and Williams, 2015; Tomlinson, 2015, 2016). Alongside the introduction of the consumer subjectivity into universities, we have seen an increased emphasis on the positioning of undergraduates as partners, the benefits and challenges of which have been present in discussions that have considered the current university climate (Little, 2010; NUS, 2013; Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). But, whilst the literature on both the consumer subjectivity and the partner subjectivity is seemingly extensive and detailed, both concepts are treated in isolation and developments and discussions surrounding the interrelation of both subject positions has been sparse, particularly in relation to the traditional learner subjectivity.

1.2 Current Literature on Power Relationships and Subjectivities in Higher Education

This thesis focuses on three distinct but connected literatures in relation to the undergraduate experience: consumerism, partnership and power. The existing literature on consumerism in HE is vast. A commonality present in this body of work is the detrimental impact that the consumer social role has on interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics within universities, which I engage with in Chapter Two and Three. It has been argued that the consumer subjectivity is encouraging passivity in the learning process, as well as an unattainable level of expectation for provision which is framed through the culture of entitlement and

demand (Nixon, Scullion and Hearn, 2016; Tomlinson, 2016). Discussions relate to undergraduates' reluctance to engage appropriately with learning at the level required for HE and the difficulty of forming meaningful relationships with academic staff. Equally, the literature on student partnership is extensive. Authors tend to focus on the need to reconstitute the dynamic between undergraduates and academics in a way that reflects reciprocity and shared responsibility in the learning process (Brew, 2006; Little, 2010; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). The significance of this is framed in terms of the challenges of breaking down traditional hierarchies and the passivity and expectation created by the consumerist model. The existing literature on power is incredibly vast, but is not often contextualised for HE. Most authors situate theories of power within political contexts and a large majority focus on the concept of power as domination (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Wrong, 1995; Hayward, 2000; Lukes, 2005). There is a need to grasp the impact of power within higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly in relation to the dispositional power granted to conflicting subjectivities.

There is recognition in the literature that the subjectivity of undergraduates is often conflicting. However, most critics discuss the tension that exists between either the consumer subjectivity and the partner subjectivity, or the partner subjectivity and the traditional learner subjectivity (Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010; Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011; Roulston, 2018). Moreover, whilst the literature on power relationships in HE acknowledges the traditional hierarchy between learners and teachers (Isaac, 1987; Shor, 1996), the discussions do not relate this conceptualisation to an understanding of how the power relationship between undergraduates and academics is being transformed through the introduction of new subjectivities with conflicting dispositional powers. The literature is missing a more interrelated understanding of

these subjectivities and power relationships within HE, which has led me to search for an alternative approach to studying these concepts.

1.3 An Alternative Approach

Drawing from literature pertaining to consumerism, partnership and power, this thesis will propose an alternative approach to studying the transformation of power relationships in HEIs, one that provides an integrated understanding of how conflicting subjectivities help to reconstitute the power dynamic between undergraduates and academics. By so doing, I demonstrate the necessity of understanding the interrelation of conflicting subjectivities, and incompatible power relations, in universities before new dynamics and learning approaches can be encouraged. Currently, institutions attempt to reframe relations without the necessary understanding of the pre-existing and competing subject positionings of undergraduates. Without consideration of the contrasting subjectivities of the traditional learner and the consumer, any attempt to position undergraduates within a partner subjectivity is futile because the behavioural expectations and dispositional power of each social role are simply incompatible. This is the approach that this thesis takes; providing an integrated understanding of the conflicting subjectivities of the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer, and how they impact the transformation of the power dynamic between undergraduates and academics, allows for the greater possibility of implementing more appropriate positions for undergraduates and thus, more effective learning approaches.

To provide this integrated understanding requires an alternative methodology and analytical framework. Both the theoretical and analytical framework in this study acknowledge the dialectical relation between structure and agency. Theoretically, the

study utilises a dialectical construction of two theories of power: systemic and constitutive. By dialectical, this study refers to the reconciliation of the above opposing concepts. These concepts are contrasting in and of themselves, but their processes are carried out through reconciliation, and this study illuminates the way in which they synthesise, and inform one another, in a continuous dialectical relation. Analytically, I employ the Faircloughian three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2015b), which also has an emphasis on the relationship between the structural formation of discourses and their use by individuals. Methodologically, the study is grounded in critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978; Sayer, 1992, 1999; Collier, 1994; Archer, 1998; Danermark et al., 2002) which, as a meta-theory, has a strong emphasis on the relationship between structure and agency. Configuring all of the frameworks in this study to reflect a dialectical relationship between structure and agency allows me to illuminate an integrated understanding of the transforming power relationships and subjectivities in HEIs; I am able to discuss the formation of subjectivities and social roles at the systemic level whilst exploring how these subjectivities are manifested at the constitutive level, within interpersonal relationships between agents.

Focusing solely on either the structural formation of subjectivities, or how agents adhere to social roles, presents only one half of the picture. Structure and agency are distinct but co-dependent concepts, with each one informing the other. This alternative approach to studying subjectivities and power dynamics in HE allows me to demonstrate the current conflict that exists for undergraduates in terms of their adherence to the expectations of particular social roles and power dynamics. Moreover, it allows me to argue that any attempt to reconstitute the undergraduate subjectivity, and the power relationship that follows, can only be successful if both structure and

agency are considered as equal contributors to the ways in which undergraduates behave within universities.

1.4 Broad Aims and Questions

The broader aims of this study are to add to the knowledge that already exists on the subjectivity of undergraduates in HE; to contribute to the understanding of power relationships between them and academics; to provide an alternative analytical framework for understanding how undergraduate subjectivities conflict in the current university climate; and to develop an understanding of how these conflicting subjectivities contribute to the transformation of the undergraduate-academic power relationship. By so doing, I argue for a deeper understanding of the processes behind the formation and transformation of subjectivities and power relationships in order to seek more successful methods of implementing effective subjectivities and undergraduate-academic dynamics that encourage appropriate learning processes for the current university climate.

Because of the complexity and polyvocality of the concepts and theories being examined, there are a number of entry points into the study. However, to make it tractable, I have designed four research questions that help to shape the coherency of the project. The research questions are:

With what intentions, and in what ways, are undergraduate students engaged through interaction with academic staff and through specific institutional characteristics, and how do these relate to the subject positioning of undergraduate students?

What regularities are evident in undergraduate student and academic staff perceptions of the power relationship between them and how it manifests in sites of learning and teaching?

In what ways is the power relationship affected, if at all, by issues of partnership and market orientations in sites of learning and teaching?

What is the significance of the findings for concepts and theory associated with undergraduate subjectivities, power, and student partnership in higher education contexts?

The first research question uncovers the methods used by institutions and academics to engage undergraduates during their studies, with a particular emphasis on how these forms of engagement lead to particular subject positionings of undergraduates. There is a wealth of literature that discusses the concept of student engagement and the myriad ways in which undergraduates are engaged during the learning process (Trowler, 2010). However, there is still a need for more research into the interrelation between forms and methods of engagement and the encouragement of particular subjectivities.

The second research question explores the perspectives of undergraduates and academics on the power relationship that exists between them. It addresses commonalities and variations in the understanding of what constitutes the expected behavioural rules and norms. Power relationships are often overlooked or taken for granted in the literature that deals with undergraduate-academic interactions and as such, more empirical research is needed to elucidate on the complexity and influence

of the power relationship, particularly in reference to the transformation of dispositional power granted to undergraduates in the current climate.

The third question addresses the current power relationship between undergraduates and academics and how it is being transformed under the influence of consumerist and partnership models in HE. It seeks to demonstrate the impact of new subjectivities on social agents' dispositional power and how these subjectivities are working to reconfigure what is demonstrated in the second research question as the traditional power relationship.

The final research question draws together the significance and impact of the first three research questions on the broader concepts being examined in this study. Its aim is to elucidate on the complexity of issues pertaining to undergraduate subjectivities, power, and partnership in HE. Drawing from the findings and analysis relating to the first three research questions, this final question tackles the issues that have not yet been considered or explored in depth within the current knowledge base, and aims to fill those gaps to provide a more integrated understanding of these critical issues within HEIs today.

The research design of this study complements the purpose of the above research questions. An intensive research design consisting of two comparative universities is utilised to provide a deeper exploration of concepts and theory in context, rather than a broader consideration. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and institutional policy documents are collated to gather insight into the perspectives and practices of relationship dynamics, providing rich data for answering the first three research

questions. Critical discourse analysis is used as a method of analysis to explore the perspectives in regard to the dialectical relation and implementation of the concepts being examined at the structural and agential level. This method of analysis aids the exploration of the findings from the first three research questions in relation to the theories and concepts addressed in the final research question; it provides insight into the relationship between the perspectives and practices of the two universities and the concepts and theories influencing those perspectives and practices.

1.5 Layout of the Thesis

The thesis proceeds as follows: the first three chapters of the study set the scene by focusing on the current literature surrounding undergraduate subjectivities and power relationships in HE. Chapter Two outlines a contextualisation of the current university climate, by recognising the influence of the introduction of both market models and partnership models into HEIs. Whilst acknowledging the important contributions made by this literature, the chapter also highlights the ways in which the current literature is limited for understanding the transformation of both subjectivities and power relationships within HE. Chapter Three illuminates the need for a better understanding of the subjectivities being considered in this thesis, by introducing an exploration of the behavioural expectations of each social role and how they conflict. Chapter Four introduces a theoretical framework of power to better conceptualise the shifting subjectivities of undergraduates and the transforming power relationship. Whilst recognising the wealth of knowledge offered by the current literature, the chapter necessitates a dialectical reconceptualisation of power, based on structure and agency, that is more appropriate to the modern university climate in which multiple power dynamics are competing.

The next five chapters of the thesis outline the specificity of this particular study and provide an analysis of the conflicting subjectivities and transforming power relationship between undergraduates and academics. Chapter Five outlines the methodological approach of the research and is followed by Chapter Six, which discusses the empirical data of this study in relation to the first three research questions being considered; it presents analysis from two case study universities, University A and University B. This chapter aims to show the ways in which undergraduates are positioned at the macro level of institutions, and the ways in which these subject positionings present conflicting and incompatible expectations for behaviour. It also illuminates the ambiguity and variance in the perceptions surrounding subjectivity and the undergraduate-academic power relationship because of the contradictions perpetuated at the structural level of the institution. Chapter Seven discusses the analysis of the data in relation to the fourth and final research question being considered. It aims to demonstrate the significance of the findings for the broader concepts that are highly relevant in the current university climate; although the two case study universities are not exhaustive, they can be seen as illustrative and allow me to argue for the importance of understanding the conflicting subjectivities and transforming undergraduate-academic power relationship in relation to institutional and governmental attempts to develop the undergraduate student experience. The final chapter concludes the study with a summary of the analysis conducted and a reflection on the research carried out, with an emphasis on both the gains achieved through the applied analytical framework as well as its limitations. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the possibilities for future research.

2 CHAPTER TWO: MARKET ORIENTATIONS AND PARTNERSHIP MODELS IN THE MODERN UNIVERSITY – CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

To better understand the ways in which undergraduates are engaged by institutions and positioned within particular subjectivities, and to better reflect on the resulting power relationships, it is imperative to understand the changing landscape in which those subjectivities and relationships are being cultivated. Layder notes, ‘to define reproduced social relations as observable patterns is to obscure the fact that hidden relations of power and domination may operate as prior structuring conditions of the observable manifestations’ (1981, p.66). Systemic, or macro, conditions have a considerable impact on the micro functioning of social institutions; acknowledging the nuances of the current university climate, then, is vital for establishing an integrated understanding of both the subjectivities of undergraduates and the subsequent power relationships in which they find themselves.

The HE sector in England is far from a homogenised or unified sector; British HE ‘comprises at least seventeen sub-sectors and sub-groups’ (Scott, 1995, p.49). It is a diverse and multivocal system of institutions, each with their own specific characteristics. Despite this diversity, though, all universities in England are still largely informed by government policies, devised at the national level. As such, they share commonalities in terms of the discursive practices that shape the subjectivities that undergraduates are adopting, in particular, through the introduction of market and

partnership models. This chapter firstly outlines the contextual specificities of the two case study institutions being used in this study. I then explore the contextual influence of the introduction of market orientations into HEIs, with reference to the characteristics of consumer culture that impact on the interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics. Although much literature has focused on the potential damage of the consumer subjectivity, Naidoo and Jamieson note that ‘relatively less attention has been paid to the interaction between macro forces such as those associated with commodification and the internal functioning of the universities’ (2005, p.278). As such, this chapter focuses on the impact of market orientations on the internal functioning of HEIs through an exploration of the power of the consumer role, consumer satisfaction, value for money, pressures on academics, investing in the future and pressures to perform. Each of these issues are a result of the construction of market orientations at the macro level, and as will be illuminated, each of them manifests within the interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics. I then turn to an exploration of the partnership concept and its pervasiveness in the current university climate, with an emphasis on the encouragement of undergraduates’ taking responsibility for learning, active participation and reciprocity in undergraduate-academic relationships.

2.2 Two Case Studies: Post-1992 Universities

This study discusses data from two post-1992 universities in England. Both universities are subject to national strategic policies and as such, they are both impacted by the introduction of market models. University A has a particular institutional policy that promotes the concept of partnership at the macro level, introduced as a direct response to the possibility of consumer-provider relationships becoming normalised within HE.

University B also has an institutional policy that encourages the positioning of undergraduates as partners, but is far less pervasive. The undergraduate population of both institutions is almost all state-school students: 97.3% at University A and 97.5% at University B (HESA, 2019b). According to Taberner, ‘the most starkly challenging students go to the post-1992 universities, where most students need lots of pedagogical and pastoral support’ (2018, p.144). As later chapters illuminate, undergraduates from post-1992 universities have a significant reliance on the teacher role. The entrenched social subjectivity of the traditional learner is pervasive among the undergraduates in this study and as such, their perception of the appropriate behaviour in universities is structured through an adherence to the traditional learner-teacher dynamic; this will be explained in more detail later. This makes it difficult to foster partnerships because the characteristics of autonomy, responsibility and shared authority are more difficult for undergraduates who lack confidence.

As well as relying on the traditional learner-teacher dynamic, undergraduates are also influenced by the consumer-provider relationship. According to a Universities UK report, ‘students at a post-1992 university are more likely than those who attend a highly selective institution to say they see themselves as customers (51% and 40% respectively)’ (2017, p.6). This is often explained as a result of post-1992 universities needing to be more vigorous in their marketing strategies: ‘in a more competitive environment, some institutions will be more successful at attracting students than others; this means that some institutions may be at risk of failing’ (Browne et al., 2010, p.50). With the financial imperatives surrounding recruitment, post-1992 universities are characterised by ‘more aggressive marketing strategies than their pre-1992 university counterparts’ (Lomas, 2007, p.41); they lack the wealth of prestige or

reputation that other universities possess and are ‘forced to justify their status by engagement and compliance with the neo-liberal agenda’ (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011, p.96). As a result, post-1992 universities are often framed as ‘more customer-orientated than their pre-1992 counterparts’ (Lomas, 2007, p.41). This is logical in theory, however, as later chapters illuminate, whilst there is a general awareness of consumerism and the encouragement to adopt certain consumer traits, the majority of undergraduates in this study disagree that their institutions position them as consumers and there was an overall reluctance to adhere to a consumer role. So, whilst post-1992 universities may have to adopt more aggressive marketing strategies, this does not necessarily lead to undergraduates’ adherence to the consumer role. However, the increased focus on market orientations does contribute to the ambiguity and conflict surrounding appropriate behaviours when interacting with academics.

The research is situated purely within the humanities, specifically the English discipline and its related subjects. Di Leo argues that ‘there is no more urgent task currently facing the humanities [...] than dealing with the consequences of neoliberalism’ (2013, p.xvi); the literature that discusses the humanities in the current university climate often surmises that the humanities are in crisis (Nussbaum, 2010; Miller, 2012; Di Leo, 2013; Bérubé and Ruth, 2015). First year undergraduates enrolling on full-time Languages degrees (of which English is a part) have seen a 5% drop between 2016/17 and 2017/18, whereas Mathematical Sciences has increased by 5% and Computer Science has increased by 3% (HESA, 2019a). The STEM subjects are framed as a better investment because they have more lucrative employment prospects and contribute more readily to the ‘knowledge economy’ (BIS (Department for Business Innovation & Skills), 2009). As such, the literature suggests that undergraduates who choose to study STEM subjects

are more consumer-oriented: 'higher grade goal, more fee responsibility, and studying a STEM subject were associated with higher consumer orientation, which were subsequently associated with lower academic performance' (Bunce, Baird and Jones, 2017, p.1969). However, as later chapters elucidate, undergraduates in the humanities are equally concerned with higher grade goal and the value for money that comes from their potential employment prospects.

Studying in the humanities is not only related to undergraduates' perceiving of themselves as consumers, but it is also directly related to the positioning of them as partners in the learning process because 'the subject is more democratic' (Evans, 1993, p.22). The traditional learning approach in the study of English is characterised by autonomy and individual interpretation where 'students deal with the original materials and are able to respond in personal and original ways' (Evans, 1993, p.22). There is an assumed academic freedom in the study of English, and the ability to 'deny seriousness, to be self-indulgent, pleasure-seeking' (Evans, 1993, p.40). Evans celebrates the English discipline as one which has the capacity to 'deny, provisionally at least, a view of life and of education which puts career, consumption, material success and upward mobility first' (1993, p.116). As such, it should be the ideal discipline in which to foster partnerships because, in contrast to being defined by finite knowledge, it is characterised by 'creativity, imagination, emotion, subjectivity, responsiveness, receptivity, the non-instrumental, the transcendent' (Evans, 1993, p.127).

However, as later chapters illuminate, English undergraduates are influenced heavily by market models, the characteristics of which will be explored later in this chapter, and as such, they have a propensity to adopt instrumentality, avoid risk and seek finite

answers that will allow them to achieve the highest grades they can to exchange for better career prospects in the labour market. This is in direct conflict to the concept of partnership, where risk-taking and deep approaches to new and unexplored knowledge are compounded. Moreover, later chapters demonstrate that undergraduates and academics characterise the study of English through independent learning and autonomy, both of which conflict with the concept of reciprocity and collaboration which partnership models encourage. The literature that deals with undergraduates studying within the English discipline is limited; this research fills that gap by exploring the subjectivities of English undergraduates and academics, and the resulting power relationships between them, in the context of a university climate dominated by market orientations and partnership models. This chapter will now turn to a discussion of the literature surrounding market orientations within universities to better understand these conflicting subjectivities and relationship dynamics.

2.3 Market Orientations

2.3.1 Introduction

HEIs in England have been transformed in recent years through the introduction of market models (Scott, 1999; Hughes, 1999; Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion, 2011; Brown, 2013; Bunce, Baird and Jones, 2017; Tomlinson, 2013, 2016; Tomlinson and Kelly, 2018). Although most recognise that ‘consumer relations in higher education differ from most other economic transactions’ (Raaper, 2018b, p.3), the social construction of the consumer-provider relationship and its associations are familiar. As such, established characteristics are naturally adopted and adhered to as part of the assimilation of market orientations within HEIs. These characteristics are pertinent for

understanding the ways in which undergraduates are being reframed within HE and the ways in which these new subjectivities are transforming power relationships; each familiar characteristic associated with consumerism outlined in the following section has an impact on undergraduate behaviour. Adherence to the characteristics of consumerism, perpetuated at the macro level through societal and institutional discursive practices, influences undergraduates' ability to assimilate the behavioural expectations of the subjectivities in which they are positioned. The current university climate creates ambiguity for the subject positioning of undergraduates and is problematic in terms of embracing incompatible subjectivities and negotiating conflicting power dynamics.

2.3.2 Consumer Power

The social role of the consumer is pervasive in Western culture because 'consumerism is now taken to be at the heart of modern productive relations' (Tomlinson, 2016, p.3). Because consumer culture constitutes much of Western culture, the dynamic of the consumer-provider relationship is well known; appropriation into HEIs means that the dynamic is also appropriated. The embracement of the consumer-provider relationship into universities, Tomlinson argues, presents the following potential scenario:

All students see higher education, and the outcomes it produces, as a "right" [...] This is likely to place considerably more power in the hands of the "paying customer" who expects their providers to deliver their services and products in ways commensurate with their demands (2016, p.2).

In consumer culture, the consumer is the social role who possesses greater power within the dynamic, as such, undergraduates who are encouraged to see themselves as consumers of their HEIs will naturally adhere to this behavioural expectation. The Browne report emphasises that 'students will control a much larger proportion of the investment in higher education [...] as students will be paying more than in the current

system, they will demand more in return' (2010, p.29). Undergraduates are actively encouraged through government policy to adopt a consumer positioning within their institutions and to exercise the dispositional power of the subjectivity. National policy influences decisions made at the institutional level; because undergraduates are being positioned as consumers at the governmental level, institutions are having to encourage the same positioning for undergraduates within their discourse and as later chapters demonstrate, the power of the consumer is pervasive throughout institutional discourse.

Bunce *et al.*, surmise that the 'consumer identity appears to be increasingly recognised by students' (2017, p.1958); later chapters show that undergraduates do assume a greater sense of entitlement to expect more from their institutions on the basis of entering a financial contract. This was an issue discovered in Tomlinson's study also, whereby his participants 'perceived themselves to have increasing stakeholder and bargaining power in how their higher education was arranged and delivered' (2016, p.6). Williams argues that 'the tuition fee invoice reinforces the idea that students are entitled to a university degree in exchange for their time and money' (2013, p.83); this is not surprising considering the exchange of money for guaranteed goods is the basis of Western economic exchange. It is also reiterated through the legal imperatives outlined in the Consumer Rights Act (Legislation.gov.uk, 2017), whereby undergraduates are legally protected as consumers of their HEIs; their power as consumers is not just a perceived sense of entitlement, it is a legal right. As later chapters demonstrate, undergraduates have internalised this notion of exchange, and the rights that come with being a consumer, but they are ambivalent towards its application in HE.

Despite the consumer model being perpetuated at the macro level, later chapters will demonstrate academics' and undergraduates' reluctance to accept consumer power at the micro level. This discovery was expressed in a report by Universities UK also, who found that 'only 62% [of students] thought they were protected by consumer law when engaging with their university, in comparison with 93% who believed they were protected in their relationship with their bank' (2017, p.6). The power of the consumer is well established and it has the potential to encourage undergraduates to 'form unrealistic expectations of both their experience and their attainment in a higher educational culture' (Nixon, Scullion and Molesworth, 2011, pp.15–6). However, as later chapters illuminate, the consumer subjectivity is not appropriated completely within HEIs and this is directly linked to a hesitancy surrounding the power of the consumer role. Nevertheless, consumer power remains an important issue caused by the introduction of market models into HE; its encouragement at the macro level is influencing the perceptions of both academics and undergraduates in terms of what constitutes appropriate behaviour within universities, and this will be explored in more detail later. With the power of the consumer comes a necessity to satisfy consumer need and this is a problematic issue that is becoming more pervasive within HEIs.

2.3.3 Consumer Satisfaction

One cogent behavioural norm of the consumer role is the mantra that the customer is always right. Scott elaborates on the 'fear of a power shift towards the student, as encapsulated in the adage that the "customer is always right"' (Scott, 1999, p.197) and argues that it leads academics to 'equate marketing with advertising and/or "doing whatever is necessary to fulfil lay-persons' demands regardless of one's professional judgement"' (Scott, 1999, p.197). Market models are associated with the concept of

customer satisfaction; providers of goods are expected to adhere to customers' expectations and ensure that they are satisfied with what they receive in exchange for their money. In a HE context, the goods are equivalent to the tuition received or the degree: 'a student engaged on a course of study has particular expectations and it is the degree to which the student believes these have been met that determines their level of satisfaction with that course' (Scott, 1999, p.198). Institutions are more concerned than ever before with ensuring the satisfaction of their undergraduates; the National Student Survey (NSS) has become a powerful factor in solidifying the stability of institutions because it dictates institutional reputation as well as undergraduates' choice of university. The University League Tables, which are informed by NSS results, contribute to the global positioning of universities and dictate the perceived quality of the institution as an educational provider. Customer satisfaction, then, is sought as a means of securing financial security and sustainability for institutions; undergraduates' perception of their satisfaction with their institutions is a powerful determiner for the future of their respective universities. As later chapters illuminate, customer satisfaction is perceived to be problematic by academics in particular; the power of the consumer in relaying their satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a constant threat to the future sustainability of the institution and as such, it becomes an important factor when academics interact with undergraduates.

Placing importance on consumer satisfaction, and the majority of institutions have no choice but to do this, encourages undergraduates to adhere to a consumer subjectivity: 'the more universities present themselves as responding to student demands, the more students are encouraged to see themselves as behaving correctly (doing what is expected) in demanding satisfaction' (Williams, 2013, p.173). Prioritising consumer

satisfaction brings with it the risk of normalising undergraduates' demanding and receiving satisfaction regardless of rationality or logic, but education does not necessarily adhere to the possibility of a demand-receive model of satisfaction: 'the educative process itself is not an entirely painless experience [...] [and] the rewards of an educational process take long to be realised' (Maringe, 2011, p.150). Thus, there is the potential for discord and antagonism to breed between undergraduates and academics; this potentiality has materialised for a number of undergraduates and academics and will be explored in the findings chapter of this study. Moreover, as Williams notes, 'in treating students as consumers needing to be satisfied, universities can play a role in infantilising students through reducing intellectual challenges to the completion of modules and replacing academic relationships with customer care packages' (2013, p.10). Giving into demand risks pandering to undergraduates, reducing levels of intellectual engagement and damaging interpersonal relationships: 'the undercutting of professional knowledge and virtues by consumer demand and satisfaction may, perversely, also have the effect of undermining, rather than enhancing, pedagogical relationships' (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, p.247). The power of the consumer role in demanding satisfaction does carry the risk of undercutting the professional power of the academic; the threat of litigation through dissatisfaction requires constant consideration from academics.

However, as the findings of this study highlight, it is simplistic to assume that undergraduates will cast off previous internalised understandings of how to behave within educational contexts and take up the role of the consumer who demands satisfaction. Later chapters will illuminate that undergraduates are actually wary of exercising their power as consumers in expressing dissatisfaction because of the

negativity attached to the notion of complaint. Moreover, undergraduates in this study are torn between their ability to express dissatisfaction and their position as traditional learners who should defer to academics because of the normalisation of the traditional power relationship. Although undergraduates may not adhere to the notion of demanding satisfaction as readily as is feared in the literature, they do have an awareness that their position as consumers gives them a greater sense of entitlement and increases their expectations of provision from academics.

2.3.4 Pressures on Academics as Providers

The consumer satisfaction agenda places considerable pressure on academics to provide undergraduates with an educational experience commensurate with their expectations. Tomlinson discovered this in his study and he argues: ‘those who adopted a service-user attitude saw it as fully justified to hold their institutions and lecturers under with greater questioning of practices that were not concordant with students’ increased personal costs’ (2016, pp.7–8). The threat of undergraduates’ exercising dispositional power as part of their consumer positioning increases the pressure on academics to adhere to their demands. As later chapters explain, academics perceive a greater pressure to keep undergraduates happy, even if it contradicts their professional opinion because of the legal imperatives facing institutions. Furedi notes that ‘there is considerable pressure on academics to put on their customer services hat and do their best not to put students off’ (2011, p.4) and Bunce *et al.*, argue that ‘lecturers may be expected to be increasingly accessible to students and respond more promptly to student matters’ (2017, p.1959). Undergraduates as consumers have the ability to ‘apply pressures on universities to make courses more relevant to the skills they require for the

workplace' (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, p.268) and academics become the bearers of these pressures.

This has a significant impact on the attempt to foster collaborative relationships: 'the idea of a two-way learning dialogue between teacher and student is not [...] the image of education conveyed by much of the neoliberal policy rhetoric which refers to academics as "providing" teaching to student "consumers"' (Scott, 1999, p.199). Later chapters illuminate that the pressure placed on academics as providers can create an antagonistic relationship, which is incompatible with one based on collaboration. Moreover, the academic positioning within institutions is undergoing a change as a result of the introduction of market models: 'as key organizational actors, academics are affected importantly by the changing environmental conditions. The nature of what is expected of them and what they take on for themselves is changing even more dramatically than the university revenue mix' (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997, p.70). Importantly, as the findings of this study elucidate, the changing role of the academic necessitates a transformation in the power relationship with undergraduates. The introduction of market models encourages a reversal of the traditional power relationship and conflicts with attempts to foster a partnership power relationship. The pressure on academics is founded partly on the consumer satisfaction agenda, but more pervasively, it is founded on the emphasis that undergraduates are entitled to, and should demand, valuable provision based on their financial investment.

2.3.5 *Value for Money*

The concept of 'value for money' frequents the literature, yet as Williams describes, 'there is little discussion about what "value for money" means in the context of

education' (2013, p.4). The introduction of fees created a sense in which it was assumed that undergraduates would seek a quantifiable exchange-value to compensate their monetary investment. With HE linked explicitly to employment, the Dearing Report suggests that the government and universities must 'encourage the student to see him/herself as an investor in receipt of a service, and to seek, as an investor, value for money and a good return from the investment' (1997a). Value for money was appropriated directly from market discourse without considering how it would be applied to a service in which the value is difficult to quantify or assess. The Office for Students (OfS), which was established as a government approved regulator for assessing the quality of the student experience, define value for money as 'when [students] experience the full benefits of higher education in exchange for the effort, time and money they invest' (2018). This definition is ambiguous and unclear as to what 'full benefits' in HE actually entails.

Despite the lack of clarity in defining value for money in HE, the concept is very real and highly pervasive within universities: 'the maxim of getting good "value for money" effectively becomes a guiding principle in how higher education's core activities are appraised' (Tomlinson, 2016, p.2). As will be illuminated in later chapters, undergraduates are preoccupied with the notion of receiving value for money. In terms of defining value for money, though, the perceptions of undergraduates and academics in this study are multifarious and ambiguous. As will be detailed later, the majority of undergraduates frame value for money in terms of graduate employability. This was a perception discovered by Tomlinson in his study, and he concludes that the consequences of this perception are an increased institutional emphasis on employability: 'if value is derived largely from HE's capacity to propel students

towards desire future employment, it often follows that goals will be orientated towards maximizing this value' (2015, p.583). As later chapters elucidate, institutional discourse frequently emphasises the notion of 'degrees with lasting value' (BIS (Department for Business Innovation & Skills), 2016, p.11); undergraduates internalise the notion that undertaking a degree is for the purpose of securing future employment.

Williams notes, 'students who are expected to pay considerable sums of money for their university degree are likely to be a great deal more preoccupied with the worth of the end product and their future employability' (2013, p.71). The emphasis on value for money being directly linked to employability entails an emphasis on undergraduates' investing in the future when they enter a financial transaction with their institution, which emphasises an instrumental approach to HE whereby undergraduates are preoccupied with securing a valuable degree to navigate the labour market after graduation (Tomlinson, 2008). As will be demonstrated in later chapters, this instrumentality is in direct conflict to institutions' and academics' attempts to encourage a partnership model of collaborative learning.

2.3.6 *Investing in the Future*

The introduction of market models has encouraged the framing of HE as an investment in the future: 'a degree is of benefit both to the holder, through higher levels of social contribution and higher lifetime earnings, and to the nation, through higher growth rates and the improve health of society' (Browne et al., 2010, p.2). Tomlinson argues that 'if indeed *learning is earning*, then the drive towards strengthening students' future job prospects is a core guiding principle' (2013, p.125) and undergraduates are encouraged to see their university experience as an investment for employment. Williams notes,

‘universities are considered by policy makers to be more about conferring private benefit upon individuals than public benefit upon society as a whole’ (2013, p.17). The notion of private benefit urges undergraduates to consider the value of their investment in economic terms, highlighting their entitlement to demand what they consider as more beneficial to them in relation to their future career prospects. Bunce *et al.*, argue that ‘students appear more career-focused than before, for example, by choosing courses that offer clear employment prospects and higher salaries (such as STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects)’ (2017, p.1960) and Naidoo and Williams conclude that ‘since academic disciplines are valued according to their exchange value, disciplines that do not translate easily into substantial profits are placed in a vulnerable position’ (2015, p.218). As will be illuminated in later chapters, the majority of undergraduates in the humanities are just as concerned with the notion of investing in the future and relate their choice of degree to the future labour market.

This emphasis placed on the notion of investing in the future has the potential to encourage an instrumental approach to learning and, as later chapters elucidate, undergraduates generally internalise this instrumentality. Brown argues that the fallout from the notion of investing in the future emphasises that ‘students should base their decisions about their higher education on how it will contribute to their future employment and not, for example, on whether they would find it intrinsically interesting’ (2013, p.13). Naidoo and Jamieson corroborate by concluding that market models entail ‘the transformation of educational processes into a form that has an economic worth of its own and has an “exchange”, rather than an intrinsic “use-value”’ (2005, p.271). Undergraduates seek to achieve a valuable degree commodity to use as entry into the labour market: ‘the “model” student-consumer wishes to possess a

university degree in order to exchange it for social mobility in the post-graduation labour market' (Williams, 2013, p.65). Encouraging undergraduates to frame their HE experience as an investment for their future employability not only accentuates the expectations of the consumer subjectivity, but it also has the potential to delimit undergraduates' desire to learn for the sake of learning and instead, places an emphasis on the performance indicators of assessment only.

2.3.7 *Pressures to Perform*

As a result of framing HE as an investment for the future, undergraduates are more likely to adopt an instrumental attitude to the learning process because what matters is how they perform on assessments and thus, what level of degree they can exchange within the labour market. Williams notes that 'students cannot trust that intellectual risk-taking will be rewarded when they constantly receive messages to work in a particular way to secure a certain grade' (2013, p.95). This causation frequents the literature; most critics surmise that a consumerist approach to education inhibits intellectual discovery. Nixon *et al.*, argue that informed choice 'allows students to negotiate the perceived "easiest" route through the degree, thus the opportunity for and discomfort of intellectual challenge and personal transformation is minimised' (2011, p.203). Similarly, Molesworth *et al.*, conclude that, 'in reducing their degree to preparation for their first job, some students focus on assessment and on material they judge most relevant in this quest' (2009, p.281). The focus on assessment, and the pressure to perform that it invokes, has a considerable impact on the power relationship between undergraduates and academics. As will be illuminated in later chapters, imperatives on performance not only encourage adherence to the consumer subjectivity, but they also position undergraduates within the traditional learner subjectivity, which

entails passivity and deference to unilateral authority: ‘by focusing predominantly on the measurement function of assessment – the assessment *of* learning – testing cultures position the student as a passive, powerless, even oppressed victim of the assessment process’ (Sambell and Graham, 2010, p.33). This positioning directly conflicts with the positioning of undergraduates as partners, entailing a different set of behaviours within interpersonal relationships.

According to McCulloch, the ‘implied emphasis on the individual and his or her performance, rather than on the “collective” experience of the learning group and the importance of the group in encouraging learning, is also potentially detrimental to the learning of all students’ (2009, p.181). Market orientations inhibit intellectual risk-taking, collaboration and inquiry because they are irrelevant to an undergraduates’ assessed performance. As later chapters explore, this pressure to perform conflicts with the attempts from institutions and academics to foster collaborative partnerships. This chapter will now discuss the contextualisation of partnership models in the current university climate, which are arguably as pervasive as market models and just as influential on the subject positioning of undergraduates and the resulting power relationships.

2.4 A Partnership Approach

2.4.1 Introduction

The concept of partnership has become increasingly popular in HEIs over recent years (Streeting and Wise, 2009; Little, 2010; Allin, 2014; Bovill and Felten, 2016; Bryson, 2016; Marquis et al., 2016; Bovill, 2017; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). According

to Matthews *et al.*, ‘research-based education and student-staff partnerships are both in vogue at the moment’ (2018, p.30) and this is partly in response to the threat of the consumerist model becoming normalised within universities. Despite the popularity of partnership models, there is a lack of consensus in terms of what partnership models specifically entail. This is demonstrated further by the different discursive terms used to describe the concept, ranging from *student-staff partnership* (Barnes et al., 2010; Bovill, 2017), *co-production* (McCulloch, 2009; Carey, 2013), *co-creation* (Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011; Bergmark and Westman, 2016), *co-researching* (Jones et al., 2012), *collaboration* (Allin, 2014; Dickerson, Jarvis and Stockwell, 2016) and *research-based education* (Brew and Mantai, 2017; Clark, 2018).

Nevertheless, they all share similar characteristics; partnership is underpinned by authenticity, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, challenge, community, and responsibility (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014). The majority of the literature that deals with partnership, or some form of partnership, reference either all or some of the above characteristics. Levy *et al.*, define partnership in terms of ‘shared responsibility and cooperative or collaborative action, in relation to shared purposes’ (2010, p.1) and Tong describes partnership as ‘working collaboratively as partners towards a collective goal, with power and opportunities distributed more evenly between students and staff members’ (2018, p.5). Whilst some critics emphasise the reciprocity of the relationship in partnership models, others focus on the encouragement for undergraduates to take responsibility for the creation of knowledge, in direct contrast to the traditional learner subjectivity. Jensen and Bennett argue that ‘partnership goes beyond listening to students and offers them a central role in developing teaching and learning’ (2016, p.51)

and Levy *et al.*, surmise that the goal of partnership is to ‘share authority in the process of jointly constructing meaning’ (2010, p.4).

As well as shared conceptualisations of the necessary components of partnerships, there is also a wide consensus across the literature that introducing partnership models into HEIs poses considerable challenges. Bovill and Felten conclude that ‘partnership does not always fit easily within existing cultures in higher education’ (2016, p.1); this is because the partnership model ‘poses a threat to the “taken-for-granted” way of approaching education, which sees the teacher as expert and the student as inexperienced listener’ (Tong *et al.*, 2018, p.315). This is the traditional dynamic, whereby ‘teachers hold all the power and knowledge and only they can bestow it on the learners, who remain passive recipients throughout the learning process’ (Pilsworth, 2018, p.127). As later chapters reveal, this traditional dynamic is a significant barrier to the implementation of partnership models within HEIs; the behavioural norms associated with the dynamic, and the power distributed to each subjectivity, create formidable structural boundaries which inhibit the introduction of relationships that threaten the established order.

To gain a better insight into how partnership models are restricted by the behavioural characteristics and expectations of the traditional power relationship and its associated subjectivities, we must first understand the specific characteristics that are necessary for a partnership model to be successful. As such, I will first discuss the concept of undergraduates’ taking responsibility for learning, followed by an exploration of active participation before finally considering the idea of reciprocal relationships.

2.4.2 *Taking Responsibility for Learning*

As detailed above, in order for partnership models to be successful in HEIs, there needs to be an emphasis on shared responsibility within the learning process. Telfer argues that partnership ‘has the ability to increase students’ abilities to acquire and retain their own knowledge through the double-loop learning model and the act of designing one’s own approach to learning’ (2018, pp.249–50). This is the ideal of the partnership model; it aims to encourage the shared responsibility from undergraduates and academics in the production of knowledge. In research, new knowledge is sought, but in teaching, finite knowledge is provided; this helps to explain the inclination for undergraduates to avoid taking responsibility for their own learning. As Hargreaves notes, ‘when the teacher attempts to make the change to self-directed learning there is considerable distress for both teacher and pupils’ (1972, p.210); in the current university climate, there are two contributing factors to this distress.

First, is the strength of the consumer subjectivity and its associated behavioural norms. As discussed above, the consumer social role has particular associations which, as a result of the discursive positioning of undergraduates as consumers, are compounded as an appropriate form of behaviour within universities. This has a significant impact on encouraging undergraduates to take responsibility for their own learning: ‘students who identify as consumers may have little interest in what is actually being taught and show reduced responsibility for producing their own knowledge’ (Bunce, Baird and Jones, 2017, p.1959). The consumer subjectivity is characterised by passivity and an expectation of pre-determined provision. When government policy and institutional discourse positions undergraduates as consumers, they position them in a role that

requires little responsibility or effort. Moreover, the performance imperatives that stem from the consumer model belie a concept of responsibility. MacFarlane argues that

The effects arising from these performative pressures have a negative effect on the rights of students as autonomous adults who have entered a voluntary phase of education – to choose how to use study time, to learn as individuals, to speak or be reticent, and to develop their own ideas and values (2015, p.339).

Later chapters illuminate that undergraduates are being pulled in two opposing directions; in one direction, they are encouraged to form reciprocal relationships with staff through a partnership model, with an emphasis on their responsibility for creating independent knowledge; in the other, they are encouraged to see themselves as consumers of the institution and as such, adhere to the behavioural expectations of the consumer social role, which includes passivity and expectation.

Secondly, undergraduates have internalised the socially constructed role of the traditional learner that has been perpetuated throughout their schooling, which creates a pervasive normalisation of appropriate behaviour within educational contexts. Matthews *et al.*, acknowledge that ‘students are not pedagogical or disciplinary experts’ (2018, p.31); as will be explored in more detail in later chapters, undergraduates have been socialised into a learner role which emphasises the unilateral authority of the teacher, whilst diminishing the responsibility of learners in the creation of knowledge. Teachers are the experts, they create the knowledge and bestow it upon learners as they see fit; learners, by contrast, take no responsibility in creating knowledge, they are instead expected to internalise the knowledge provided to them. Partnership models, which emphasise undergraduates’ responsibility for learning, entail ‘unfamiliar territory for students, staff and institutions’ (Bovill and Felten, 2016, p.2) because for partnerships to be successful, there must be ‘a change in the way [staff and students] think about teaching and learning, as well as their assumptions about how higher

education should work' (Clark, 2018, p.93). However, introducing partnership is not as simple as promoting a change through dispelling assumptions. As later chapters illuminate, it is not merely assumption that hinders the implementation of partnerships, but powerful structural constraints based on established and enduring social subjectivities and relationship dynamics. Both the consumer social role and the role of the traditional learner prevent undergraduates from taking responsibility for their own learning. These socially structured roles also belie an undergraduates' willingness to actively participate in the learning process.

2.4.3 Active Participation

The concept of active participation is framed as an important aspect in the literature on partnership. For undergraduates to be considered partners, or co-producers of knowledge, they must be actively involved in the creation of knowledge: 'co-production requires active engagement with the entire learning process on the part of the student, and sees the student as an active participant in the development of knowledge' (McCulloch, 2009, p.178). Such is the importance placed on active participation that Topcu argues: 'universities and research institutes are therefore not being optimally efficient in their teaching methods if they continue with passive methods' (2018, p.100). However, whilst it is widely recognised that active participation in the learning process encourages a deep approach to learning, whereby undergraduates 'aim to understand ideas and seek meanings [...] [and] an intrinsic interest in the task and an expectation of enjoyment in carrying it out' (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999, p.3), the implementation of active participation is far more complex than simply discarding passive teaching methods.

Barnes *et al.*, argue that it is ‘debatable whether the majority of students actually want to be engaged actively in improving their learning experience [...] due, at least partly, to preconceived, deeply held and socially constructed ideas about what a university education entails’ (2010, p.19). This is true, but what Barnes *et al.*, fail to elucidate is that these deeply held, and socially constructed, ideas are not only in relation to what constitutes a university education, but they are also in relation to socially constructed subjectivities and their behavioural expectations. As MacFarlane discovered in his study, ‘students still rate lectures very highly and find elements of active learning, such as the time-consuming nature of these activities and the fear that they will not be able to cover the course material, disconcerting’ (2015, p.342). Undergraduates are heavily dependent on the socially constructed subjectivities in which they have been positioned within universities; later chapters reveal that the subjectivities of the traditional learner and the consumer inhibit an undergraduates’ willingness to engage in active learning because it contradicts the behavioural expectations of both.

Naseem surmises that partnership is where ‘teachers and students work together in the production of knowledge through active participation, rather than act as, respectively, providers and passive recipients of its transmission’ (2018, p.228). However, whilst this conceptualisation of partnership is ideal in theory, it does not consider the strength of either the traditional learner subjectivity and its behavioural characteristics, nor the consumer subjectivity and its associations. Consumers are external to, and therefore passive recipients of, the provision for which they have paid for, and as later chapters explain, an adoption of this subjectivity encourages undergraduates to expect passive provision. Equally, the traditional learner subjectivity is characterised by a passive acceptance of finite knowledge bestowed at the teacher’s discrepancy, therefore, an

adherence to this subjectivity encourages undergraduates to passively rely on academics. The concept of active participation is an important characteristic of the partnership model; however, the literature often fails to acknowledge the strength of the opposing social subjectivities that undergraduates are positioned within during their studies. This thesis will illuminate the pervasiveness of these conflicting subjectivities and the importance of recognising their impact on undergraduates' adherence to particular behaviours within sites of learning and teaching. Alongside responsibility and active participation, these socially constructed subjectivities also inhibit an undergraduates' willingness to engage in reciprocal relationships with academics.

2.4.4 Encouraging Reciprocity

Forming a reciprocal relationship is precipitated on the notion of shared authority 'whereby students and staff work together to achieve common goals' (Matthews, Cook-Sather and Healey, 2018, p.31). In order for reciprocal relationships to work, they 'require a structure that is formed by the exchange of ideas and agreed by all participants' (Sotiriou, 2018, p.57). However, reciprocity needs to be negotiated differently in partnership models because, although the term partnership may suggest it, the relationship does not necessitate an equality of power in the way that might be assumed: 'the balance of power should not shift to the students, nor should there be equivalency: partners should be equally valued by their different areas of expertise recognised' (Matthews, Cook-Sather and Healey, 2018, p.38). A reciprocal relationship in the partnership model, then, requires negotiating power as context-dependent and on an ongoing basis. This, though, is problematic in relation to the two conflicting subjectivities of learner and consumer.

As Marquis *et al.*, note, ‘student-faculty partnerships are not without their challenges, foremost amongst which are the difficulties attached to dismantling entrenched structures of authority and developing means of sharing power meaningfully’ (2016, p.5). In a different study, Marquis *et al.*, discovered that ‘some participants questioned whether it is *possible* to fully challenge existing hierarchies, particularly when they are so normalized that we can be blind to their operations’ (2017, pp.726–7) and noted that ‘even when individuals are willing to step outside of these pre-existing roles, the unfamiliarity of the process can create uncertainties about how to act’ (2017, p.726). The notion of fostering reciprocal relationships is acknowledged in the literature as being both problematic and challenging, but what is missing is an integrated understanding of these problems and challenges in relation to pre-existing social subjectivities, their behavioural expectations and the power relationships that they encourage.

Bovill *et al.*, surmise that partnership models ‘inherently subvert the traditional power hierarchy between learners and teachers by re-positioning partners as learners and teachers’ (2011, p.14); as later chapters reveal, the traditional power relationship is not the only barrier to the implementation of successful partnerships. Not only do academics and undergraduates resist reciprocal relationships because of the ‘*enduring relations*’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22) of the traditional power relationship, they also resist them through the expectation of adherence to the consumer-provider power relationship. Both undergraduates and academics must negotiate three opposing power dynamics, based on the adherence to three conflicting social subjectivities and their behavioural expectations. Later chapters will illuminate the characteristics of these conflicting power relationships and how a greater understanding of the behavioural expectations of

each can aid institutions in the attempt to reconstitute interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics. Without an in-depth understanding of the pre-existing social roles and power relationships that are creating barriers to the implementation of partnership models, it is impossible to restructure them in a way that is appropriate for the current university climate.

2.5 Conclusions

This chapter has summarised and critiqued the literature that details the context of this study. It has contextualised the universities being explored in this study and has outlined the arguments in relation to the concepts of marketisation and partnership in HE. I have detailed the issues within both concepts that are pertinent to the exploration of undergraduate subjectivities and power relationships; this chapter has demonstrated the gaps in the literature surrounding both subjectivity and power relationships, which are necessary for a more integrated understanding of the ways in which both undergraduates, and the power relationships in which they find themselves, are being transformed within the current university climate. I will now turn to a discussion of the literature that deals with the social construction of subjectivities and the behavioural expectations associated with the subjectivities of the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer.

3 CHAPTER THREE: REFRAMING THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

3.1 Introduction

Now that the study has been contextualised in relation to undergraduate subjectivities and the power relationships encouraged by market and partnership models in HE, it is important to discuss the literature that surrounds each of the subject positions being examined in this study: the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer. McMillan and Cheney note that, ‘in the past [...] we were content simply to call students “students”’ (1996, pp.12–3) but as the previous chapter demonstrated, the positioning of undergraduates is not as simplistic within the modern university. It is critical to understand the different subjectivities that undergraduates are being positioned within because as, Morrissey argues, ‘the first challenge in reworking conditioned agency is recognising it’ (2015, p.628). Much of the literature surrounding subjectivities in HE fails to recognise the conflicting ways in which undergraduates are expected to behave. This study satisfies a gap in the literature by considering the different subject positionings of undergraduates and details how they are formed, how they are changing and how they impact on the power relationships that dictate interactions between undergraduates and academics.

Daniels and Brooker acknowledge that identity is a ‘fluid and flexible process’ (2014, p.69) which is dependent upon an individual’s ‘ability to shape, adapt, and apply the self to the needs of a particular role’ (2014, p.69). During their university experience, undergraduates are forced to attempt to adapt to three conflicting subjectivities, each of which require different behaviours and are characterised by different rules and norms.

This leads to an attempt to assimilate incompatible social roles, which is detrimental to an undergraduates' ability to adapt in given contexts. Kitchener conceptualises this incompatibility of social roles through a theorisation of dual relationships and argues:

The greater the incompatibility of expectations is, the greater the role strain for the individual in the roles. In addition, there is greater potential for frustration, anger, and disequilibrium for others interacting with the person, and a higher potential for confusion about what is appropriate behavior (1988, p.218).

As this chapter will discuss, and later chapters illuminate further, the incompatibility of the three subjectivities leads to confusion regarding appropriate behaviour. Raaper argues that 'it should be a concern to all in higher education to recognise this changing relationship between student subjectivities, their understandings of education and behaviour' (2018a, p.13). This chapter outlines the literature surrounding the social construction of subjectivities, before moving on to critically evaluate the literature that discusses the three subject positions being explored in this study: first, I explore the subjectivity of the traditional learner; secondly, I discuss the partner role; thirdly, and finally, this chapter considers the subjectivity of the consumer.

3.2 The Social Construction of Subjectivities

The literature surrounding subjectivities is vast and polyvocal. The concept of subjectivity is fluid and dynamic and there is often an interchange between discursive terms representing a similar idea; as such, this thesis will utilise the following terms interchangeably to identify the same concept: subjectivity, subject position, self, identity, and social role. This is done in order to provide comprehension in the assimilation of literature that employs differing discursive terms to explore similar concepts. This thesis presents a conceptualisation of subjectivities based on Weber's concept of ideal types:

An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct (Weber, 1949, p.90).

The subjectivities being explored in this study are presented as heuristic constructs, or ideal types, which allows the tractability of ‘*limiting concepts* against which reality is to be measured’ (Weinert, 1996, p.75). Despite recognition that ideal types are only limited representations of empirical reality, they provide a valuable tool in emphasising specific elements that are common within the given phenomena. They provide a means of giving order to the chaos and fluidity of social reality; for the purposes of this study, ideal types allow a structured and coherent examination of dynamic phenomena.

This thesis emphasises that the ideal types of traditional learner, partner and consumer have specific characteristics that are familiar to each through their social construction.

Ball and Olmedo argue:

The subject is the result of endless processes of construction of identities that are to a greater or lesser extent, but never completely, constrained by the contingencies of the particular historical moment in which they are inscribed (2013, p.87).

Subjectivities are the product of social rules determining appropriate ways of being; in other words, they refer to ‘prescriptions about the behaviour of a person occupying a given position, a set of guide-lines which direct the behaviour of the role’ (Hargreaves, 1972, p.71). Mead argues that ‘the self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience’ (2009, p.140). As a social construct, subjectivities are contingent upon pre-determined characteristics that define that particular subject position. Atkins notes that ‘taking up a subject-position in a certain social discourse provides the individual with knowledge and rationale for actions with which the individual unwittingly identifies’ (2005, p.208). Undergraduates

take up the subject position of the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer during their HE studies.

However, the extent to which undergraduates adhere to the ideal type of each subject position differs; Hargreaves argues that ‘if an actor is simultaneously occupying two positions with roles which are likely to conflict he can solve such a conflict by giving one of the roles a priority over the other’ (1972, p.85). Indeed, much of the literature that deals with undergraduate subjectivity tends to focus on the homogenisation of one particular subjectivity, be it a consumer, a partner, or a traditional learner. However, this only provides one perspective and fails to relate to the multifarious nature of subject positionings for undergraduates in the modern university. Later chapters illuminate how these conflicting subject positions create variance and confusion; perceptions of appropriate behaviour differ vastly across undergraduates and, as will be argued later, this is a result of the role conflict that undergraduates are being forced to adapt to. Thus, it is essential to understand exactly what the characteristics of each subjectivity are in order to appreciate how and why conflict arises; this chapter will now discuss the literature in relation to each subjectivity and its characteristics.

3.3 Undergraduates as Traditional Learners

The traditional learner subjectivity is an established social role; it is internalised throughout compulsory schooling as the correct position to take up within educational contexts. Freire, from a critical pedagogical perspective, argues that in this traditional learner subjectivity, ‘educators are the possessors of knowledge, whereas learners are “empty vessels” to be filled by the educators’ deposits’ (1985, p.100). He elaborates by surmising that education ‘is reduced to a situation in which the educator as “the one

who knows” transfers existing knowledge to the learner as “the one who does not know”” (1985, p.114). As a traditional learner, then, individuals are expected to be dependent upon the unilateral authority of the individual occupying the teacher role, with little need to discover knowledge for themselves. This characteristic is naturalised to such an extent that ‘what has been socially and historically constructed by a specific culture becomes presented to students as undebatable and unchangeable, always there, timeless’ (Shor, 1996, pp.10–1). As Shor illuminates, the traditional learner subjectivity is a social construction but, because of its pervasiveness, it appears as natural.

The natural adoption of the traditional learner subjectivity is framed as a negative barrier to the implementation of more autonomous learning methods in HE. McMillan and Cheney argue that ‘we need to depart from the old-fashioned model of passive information transmission, in which the student is viewed merely as a receptor and mirror’ (1996, p.13). However, it is far more complex than stating a necessity for departing from the transmission model of teaching which is closely aligned with the traditional learner subjectivity. As MacFarlane notes, ‘there is a wealth of evidence that students prefer to learn in ways that are often labelled negatively as “traditional” or “passive”, notably via the lecture method’ (2015, p.342); there is a close association between the characteristic of deference to the teacher’s authority that is a part of the traditional learner subjectivity and the passivity encouraged by certain teaching methods. Moreover, the capacity to exercise power that is given to the social role of learner is limited; learners have little authority over class content, the assessment process or the creation and distribution of knowledge. Allin notes that ‘in terms of learning and our relations with students [...] the power resides with the authority of the lecturer and is often reinforced through our social practices of teaching and our

interactions' (2014, p.97). HE is still 'dominated by traditional teaching methods: lectures, seminars and tutorials' (Morris, 2009, p.104) and as such, the traditional learner subjectivity often appears to be the most appropriate position to adopt.

Closely aligned to the characteristic of deference, is the propensity for the traditional learner subjectivity to seek praise in order to build self-esteem and confidence in ability. Nixon *et al.*, note that, 'like parents, lecturers have a double nature to their students; they can provide pleasure and gratification, though their capacity is not unlimited, and inflict pain and suffering in their role as judge and disciplinarian' (2016, pp.13–4). As later chapters illuminate, this reliance on teachers to boost self-esteem and provide confidence is pervasive amongst the majority of undergraduates; there is a natural inclination to rely on an academics' evaluation of an individuals' ability, which inhibits their willingness to see themselves as co-creators of knowledge. Whilst the literature acknowledges that 'in any act of learning, evoked prior experiences, perceptions, approaches and outcomes are simultaneously present in a student's awareness' (Trigwell and Ashwin, 2006, p.244), the majority of critics fail to recognise how these particular pre-existing notions play out in context and what impact they have on the ability to reconstitute appropriate behaviour within universities. Equally, whilst the literature recognises that undergraduates have pre-existing understanding of how they should behave within an educational context, it fails to provide an understanding of how this understanding interacts with the behavioural norms associated with the positioning of undergraduates as partners within universities, to which this chapter will now turn.

3.4 Undergraduates as Partners

The implications of a partnership model within HEIs has already been discussed in the previous chapter. However, what must be considered for a greater understanding of how undergraduates, and the power relationships they negotiate, are being reframed is an understanding of the characteristics encouraged by positioning them within a partner subjectivity. The literature that deals with the subjectivity of partners in universities frequently recognises the tension that stems from the conflicting behavioural expectations of positioning individuals within dual roles. Bovill notes that ‘for both academic staff and students, there are accepted teaching and learning norms which may be difficult to deviate from without experiencing discomfort’ (2014, p.22). There is significant recognition in the literature that the subjectivity of the partner conflicts with the expectations of the traditional learner subjectivity:

When students are treated as students, it appears that they are kept in a subordinate place [...] However, when students are thought of as junior colleagues, the dynamic of their relationship to their teachers and to the university changes (Brew, 2006, p.96).

The social role of partner is less established than that of the traditional learner and as such, it is more ambivalent. Having said that, the literature does emphasise a consistent expectation for undergraduates to behave as equal contributors and participate in ‘shared responsibility and cooperative or collaborative action, in relation to shared purposes’ (Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010, p.1). Marquis *et al.*, argue that the partner subjectivity is characterised by ‘reciprocity, mutual respect, shared responsibility, and complementary contributions’ (2017, p.720); the partner role, then, is constructed around the equal distribution of power.

Individuals occupying a partner subjectivity are granted the capacity to exercise power that is equal to those individuals occupying an academic or teaching role. This, though,

is in direct conflict to the power granted to the social role of the traditional learner. Whilst the traditional learner is granted little to no power, the partner is expected to share power equally. The literature acknowledges that power relationships are a primary barrier in the implementation of a partnership dynamic within universities (Wuetherick and McLaughlin, 2010; Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010; Barnes et al., 2010; Marquis et al., 2016; Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017; Kehler, Verwoord and Smith, 2017; Murphy et al., 2017; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). However, what the literature fails to recognise is that it is not enough to acknowledge existing social roles and the power relationships they invoke; what is needed is an integrated understanding of what defines these subjectivities and power dynamics and how these behavioural expectations and norms play out in practice. The literature on the partner subjectivity often considers the traditional learner subjectivity and the structural limitations it creates for the implementation of partnership models in universities. Likewise, the literature often considers the barriers created by undergraduates' adherence to the consumer subjectivity, which entails a contrasting set of behavioural expectations; this chapter will now explore the consumer subjectivity and its associated expectations.

3.5 Undergraduates as Consumers

Williams argues that 'there are many forces encouraging students to adopt consumer attitudes, not least the behaviour of lecturers and universities themselves. Such socialisation leads many students to believe that behaving as a consumer is what is expected of them' (2013, p.8). As discussed in the previous chapter, undergraduates are positioned as consumers through both national and institutional discourse and as a result, they are encouraged to adopt the subjectivity of a consumer and the characteristics that define the role. According to Bunce *et al.*, 'students who identify as

consumers may have little interest in what is actually being taught and show reduced responsibility for producing their own knowledge' (2017, p.1959). The same study discovered that 'a lower learner identity was associated with a higher consumer orientation, and in turn with a lower level of academic performance' (Bunce, Baird and Jones, 2017, p.1970). The literature is inundated with studies professing the negative impact of the consumer subjectivity on learning approaches and outcomes within HE (Love, 2008; Williams, 2013; Brown, 2013). The majority surmise that it stems from the passivity associated with the consumer role: 'since customers are generally external to an organization, students who internalise a consumer identity in effect place themselves outside the intellectual community and perceive themselves as passive consumers of education' (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, p.272). Whilst the consumer subjectivity is characterised by a passive expectation of provision, it is simultaneously characterised by the capacity to exercise power based on entitlement.

Mark argues that 'treating students as customers, it is thought, facilitates a transfer of power to students and prompts them to blame the institution for their own personal shortcomings' (2013, p.4). Mark sees no reason for adhering to the associated characteristics of the consumer subjectivity, instead using it as a prompt to improve the quality of experience provided to undergraduates during their studies. However, such an assertion is naïve if we consider the strength of social roles. The consumer subjectivity is a solidified and familiar social role; to conclude that undergraduates will not adhere to the characteristics of the consumer subjectivity merely because they are positioned as such at the macro level, is idealistic and misinformed. Later chapters illuminate that although undergraduates do not necessarily adhere to all of the characteristics that shape the ideal type of the consumer role, they do recognise

particular associations that are relevant within HEIs, such as greater expectation for, and entitlement to, quality provision, greater focus on assessment performance and less willingness to take risks in the learning process.

Morley notes that ‘the entitlement culture is more about “what can I get?” rather than “what should I do?”’ (2003, p.141); the consumer subjectivity is granted an increased capacity for exercising power than that distributed to the role of the traditional learner. Tomlinson considers the ambivalence between the role of the traditional learner and the role of the consumer within universities; he argues:

Both indicate two different modes of responsiveness and responsibility in students. One entails a more engaged, self-directed process of ownership over personal learning and negotiates the markets of academic performance set by institutions. The other constitutes a level of responsibility in scrutinizing what and how effectively higher education provides (2015, p.574).

Although Tomlinson recognises the conflict of subjectivities and their behavioural expectations, he does not acknowledge the characteristics of the traditional learner subjectivity which oppose both the consumer role and what he has defined above as the student role. As already discussed, the traditional learner subjectivity is characterised by deference to, and dependence on, the teacher role to distribute finite knowledge. The characteristics of engagement, self-direction and ownership which Tomlinson attaches to the position of a student, I have argued, are more aligned with the position of a partner within HEIs. The expectations of the consumer subjectivity, and the power that is distributed to the role, are in direct conflict with the characteristics and power given to the role of the traditional learner. Moreover, these two subjectivities are negated further by the positioning of undergraduates as partners within universities, which introduces another contradicting set of behavioural expectations and differing dispositional powers.

Whilst some critics focus on the conflict between the traditional learner subjectivity and the consumer subjectivity, some choose to highlight the opposition between the behavioural expectations of the consumer in relation to that of a partner. Naidoo and Williams note that ‘risk-taking does not sit easily within a learning relationship based on passive consumerism in which there is an assumption that qualifications will follow in return for specified levels of work and a fee’ (2015, p.217). Similarly, Streeting and Wise emphasise the conflict of power associated with the subjectivities of consumer and partner:

We believe this issue is ultimately about power, and in particular, who has the power to determine action in the educational environment. In a model of consumerism, power is cleaved; consumers exert it through their market choices and their complaints to the provider [...] In co-production, power is shared; both students (as users) and institutions (managers and academics) each have joint responsibility for change in policy and for their own roles in practice. Both approaches are problematic because they are insensitive to the reality of the world of higher education in all its complexity, and create differing but often unhelpful pressures for all concerned (2009, pp.4–5).

As the above comment illustrates, the behaviours associated with the consumer role and the partner role are in direct conflict and simply positioning undergraduates within one in order to counter the other fails to recognise the complexity of socially constructed subjectivities and their impact on dictating behaviour. Streeting and Wise acknowledge the problems that arise from the opposing dispositional powers associated with the two roles; this study, though, expands on the further complexity created by the adherence to the traditional learner subjectivity alongside both the consumer and partner positions.

There are only a number of critics that consider the negotiation of all three subjectivities as being problematic for undergraduates. Levy *et al.*, argue that ‘there is considerable tension between the ideal of partnership and the effects of consumerist discourse and academic hierarchy’ (2010, pp.2–3). Whilst Levy *et al.*, acknowledge tension, they do not attribute this to the behavioural norms attached to social roles. Millard *et al.*, also

reference the conflict that stems from positioning undergraduates within three opposing subjectivities:

While pupils wait for the teacher to tell them what to do in the light of the traditional teacher-pupil relation in the classical education institution, and customers expect teachers to fulfil their expectations seeing the university as a (paid for) knowledge provider, it is rather different with partners and employees (2014, p.1).

Although the above comment acknowledges that each subjectivity emphasises different expectations, it still does not elucidate on these expectations and fails to illuminate the behavioural conflict, or the opposing dispositional power, that is attached to each subjectivity. An understanding of the specific characteristics, and dispositional power, attached to the subjectivity of partner is necessary for evaluating to what extent these positionings conflict with one another. This thesis delves into the assumed understanding of what defines the socially constructed roles of the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer, and provides an insight into the power relationships that are formed as a result. Only with this understanding can institutions consider ways in which to successfully reconstitute and reframe the undergraduate student in an appropriate position for the modern university climate.

3.6 Conclusions

This chapter has considered the literature that surrounds the social construction of subjectivities; it has outlined the strength with which socially constructed roles pervade familiar contexts. In HE, the socially constructed subjectivities of the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer are pervasive in the perceived appropriateness of undergraduates' behavioural choices. This chapter has illustrated that, although the literature acknowledges the tension that exists between the three dominant subjectivities, it fails to consider how the behavioural expectations of each role conflict

with each other. This study fills this gap in the literature by demonstrating the contradictory nature of each subjectivity in terms of both the behavioural norms and the dispositional power granted to each. In order to better understand how power relationships are being transformed through incompatible and conflicting subjectivities, it is necessary to conceptualise an appropriate theorisation of power, to which I will now turn.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF POWER

4.1 Introduction

‘Our particular conceptions of power also create and limit our experiences of relationship’ (Kreisberg, 1992, p.33). Our understanding of power influences the ways in which we form and experience relationships; this is why power is an appropriate and beneficial theoretical framework for this research. However, power is sometimes considered an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Lukes, 2005, p.62). Wartenberg describes the difficulty in defining a single, coherent theory of power: ‘the range of conflicts among various discourses of power makes it hard to accept the idea that there could be a single theoretical explanation of what power is’ (1990, p.11). However, perhaps this difficulty, and the continuing debates concerning how essentially contested it is, lies in the misguided attempt to think of power as a single, coherent theory at all (see Clegg, 1989, p.89).

Haugaard (2010) considers the strengths of defining power in terms of the context to which it is being applied, of treating power as *a family resemblance concept*, a concept which originates with Wittgenstein (1953) and his theorisation of the language-game. The family resemblance concept is a useful one for critiquing strong essentialist views of power; Wittgenstein points out that there are ‘various resemblances between members of a family’ (1953, p.32) and although they are not shared by every member, the characteristics overlap to the extent that they are recognised as belonging to the same family. As Haugaard describes, ‘the idea that power is a *family resemblance* concept entails that there can be no single best definition of power. Rather, any theorist

who is interested in power is interested in a cluster of concepts' (2010, p.427). He argues:

It is entirely legitimate for a sociologist to have a different set of conceptual tools from a political theorist. This makes it entirely legitimate for someone to stipulate that they are using a specific concept in a particular way in order to enable them to construct a particular theory or examine a particular phenomenon (2010, p.430).

Following this line of thought, in order to examine the individual relationships that exist within the structural institutions of universities, I will draw from 'a cluster of concepts' (Haugaard, 2010, p.427) and consider the interrelation between two theories of power: *systemic power* and *constitutive power*.

A systemic conception of power can be defined as 'the ways in which given social systems confer differentials of dispositional power on agents, thus structuring their possibilities for action' (Haugaard, 2010, p.425) and a constitutive conception of power focuses on the ways in which individuals, their relationships and their social worlds are constituted by power relations (Foucault, 2002; Spinoza, 2002). These two theories of power are arguably separate considerations of power in social relations and many theorists treat them as such, however, for this study it is critical to consider them alongside each other in a dialectical relation. Ashwin, in his understanding of teaching-learning interactions, argues that 'to understand what happened within a particular teaching-learning interaction it is necessary to understand how the interaction was shaped by processes that might not be visible within the interaction' (2009, p.6). A relational conceptualisation allows for a richer understanding of how power relationships are transformed through the dialectical relation between structure and agency, which will be explored in more detail later.

This chapter begins by outlining a detailed framework for the systemic conception of power and the main theorists whose work has been utilised in establishing this framework (Isaac, 1987; Wartenberg, 1992; Kreisberg, 1992; Haugaard, 1992, 2010, 2011, 2017; Foucault, 1979b, 1996; Shor, 1996; Hayward, 2000; Hayward and Lukes, 2008; Bates, 2010). I then move on to outline a detailed framework for the constitutive conception of power and the main theorists used for establishing that framework (Foucault, 1979b, 1980, 1996, 2002; Lukes, 1979, 2005; Isaac, 1987; Hay, 1997; Hayward and Lukes, 2008; Bates, 2010). I will explore the relationship between structure and agency and how it is appropriately considered through a relational framework of systemic and constitutive power. When outlining the framework of interrelated concepts being used in this study, I will refer to what are considered, by some, to be the main contributors to the field of power; notably, the ‘three faces’ of the power debate (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Dahl, 1967; Lukes, 2005). I will explore why these theorisations of power alone are inappropriate for this study and how they have aided me in considering alternative approaches for the structuring of my theoretical framework.

4.2 The Systemic Conception of Power

The systemic conception of power emphasises the structural limitations imposed upon individual agents in terms of their ability to exercise power. According to Hayward,

When agents act, they act within limits that are set, in part, by the actions of other agents. At the same time, they act in contexts that are structured by rules and laws and norms: social boundaries to action, which – not unlike the actions of other agents – limit what they can do and what they can be (2008, p.14).

Social agents are constrained by structural boundaries; an agent’s ability to act in a specific context depends upon the rules of that context. Haugaard points out that a structure or system ‘constitutes a way of ordering the world, which precludes certain

conditions of possibility and facilitates others' (2015, p.151). In structuration theory, Giddens argues that structure constitutes the 'rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction; institutionalized features of social systems have structural properties in the sense that relationships are stabilized across time and space' (1984, p.xxxi). However, there is a danger in Giddens' conceptualisation of collapsing structure into agency through the emphasis on enactment of structural properties through 'social practices ordered across time and space' (Giddens, 1984, p.2). Giddens' structuration theory, although useful for understanding the duality of structure and agency, and the perpetuation of structural properties through individual interaction, provides little recognition of individual perception and choice; this notion of adherence and rejection by social agents will be explored later in this chapter. Regarding the structured rules of universities, though, academics and undergraduates are bound by both the actions of fellow agents as well as the laws and the social norms that govern a university as an educational institution. These social laws contribute to the shaping of the traditional learner subjectivity; individuals know how to act as a learner, or a teacher, because they are familiar with the rules and norms of an educational context as a social practice. This is particularly pertinent within the context of the current university climate. The structural limitations imposed upon universities through the introduction of market policies and partnership models has a crucial impact on shaping individual agents' subjectivities, which determines their capacity to exercise power; this will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

Hayward, in her conceptualisation of power, tells us that 'even the "bad" actions of "bad" men often are shaped by remedial social constraints on freedom' (2008, p.10). In other words, understanding agents' action through the lens of power is not just a moral

critique of decision-making, but an understanding of those actions as shaped by structural boundaries. For the purposes of this study, it is not enough to explore the power dynamic between individual social agents; we cannot understand, or evaluate, their actions without understanding how they have been shaped, in part, by structured subjectivities and subsequent relations. Indeed, the structural limitations of the university, shaped partly by external constraints such as government policy and state legislation and partly by internal policies and procedures, in turn, shapes the reality of social agents within universities and partly determines how they can act; these restrictions constitute what Wartenberg calls an '*agent's action-environment*' (1990, p.80), which is 'the structure within which an agent exists as a social actor' (Wartenberg, 1990, p.80). Wartenberg argues that an individual's assessment of their action-environment is a critical precursor for action and involves both *understanding* and *evaluation* of action-alternatives (1990, pp.81–4). In other words, individual agents must first understand their situation, the rules and norms and laws that are in place in the context in which they find themselves, and then evaluate the possible actions that can be taken within that context. Within this conceptualisation, the structural constraints of the current university climate play a significant role in determining undergraduates' behaviour because the possibilities for action are dependent upon those contextual structures.

When considering structural limitations on agents' ability to exercise power, it is important to understand how these structural limitations come to be solidified; this is something that is missing from Hayward's critical account of structural power and only alluded to in Wartenberg's. If power relationships are to be understood fully in HE, then there must be a critical awareness of how these systems are formed and maintained.

Kreisberg describes the social rules, the structural limitations, we abide by as the result of discourse:

There is, in fact, a dominant discourse of power in modern Western culture, which is reflected in our popular culture, in our institutions, throughout our social relationships, and within the social sciences. This dominant discourse is intricately enmeshed in and reflective of a wider “regime of truth” that has both constrained and produced modern societies (1992, p.35).

If we consider this argument, power in a social context is shaped by the dominant discourse of that particular context; our dominant discourse dictates how undergraduates and academics should behave toward one another and the extent to which they can exercise power. The dominant discourse within Westernised educational contexts prescribes the traditional learner subjectivity, which, as previously discussed, is a subjectivity with specific and familiar dispositional powers. Because these dispositional powers are shaped by the dominant discourse, it comes to be internalised as part of the ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1979b, p.47). The subjectivities of consumer and partner contradict the regime of truth which social agents have internalised over years of schooling; they present conflicting capacities for exercising power and because they go against the dominant discourse, they present a challenge for agents to adhere to.

Foucault’s concept of a dominant ‘regime of truth’ (1979b, p.47) gives extensive consideration to the relationship between power and discourse. He tells us:

Thoughts and discourses are very much organized by systems. But these systems must be considered as the internal effects of power. It is not the systematic nature of discourse which holds its truth, but rather its possibility of dissociation, or reutilization, or reimplantation elsewhere (1996, p.199).

By this view, discourses are organised by systems, which are themselves organised by power. It is not the intrinsic nature of language that holds power but rather, the utilization of discourse by social agents who have the capacity to exercise power, which

gives discourse its ability to form, maintain or transform power relationships in specific contexts. Discourse is the fundamental way in which social agents communicate; whether it is written, verbal, non-verbal, or multi-modal, social contexts are constituted through communicative discourse. Thus, discourse contributes to shaping social contexts and because of this, the power relationships between social agents in that context have, to a large extent, been shaped by discourse. This discourse, according to Foucault, becomes recognised as knowledge:

We live in a society which is marching to a great extent “towards truth” – I mean a society which produces and circulates discourse which has truth as its function, passing itself off as such and thus obtaining specific powers. The establishment of “true” discourses (which however are incessantly changing) is one of the fundamental problems of the West (1996, p.215).

For Foucault, the power of discourse lies in its expression of truth; to produce knowledge as truth is critical to securing power through the function of discourse. These truths, though, are not concrete, they change as often as the social agents who utilise them; this is evident in the modern university climate whereby undergraduates are being positioned within three conflicting subjectivities through the discourse perpetuated at the structural level. Universities once positioned undergraduates as traditional learners, with well-defined dispositional power and behavioural norms, however, with the change in national policies and imperatives, institutional discourse is now positioning them within the conflicting subjectivities of consumer and partner. Despite the malleability of discourses, the truth to which they ascribe is working to transform the power relationship in the current university climate.

The truth within discourses can be seen in the power relationship between undergraduates and academics. Considering how the dominant discourse of Western society grants dispositional power to certain agents in certain contexts, Isaac gives critical attention to, what he calls, the social conditioning of power, and he uses the

learner-teacher relationship to demonstrate his theory. For Isaac, power is '*the capacities to act possessed by social agents in virtue of the enduring relations in which they participate*' (emphasis in original) (1987, p.22). Power is both socially constituted and socially distributed in Isaac's theorisation; the capacity to act is granted through '*enduring relations*' (1987, p.22). In other words, those relationship dynamics that have become naturalized and familiar to social contexts because of their endurance over time; these relationships are founded on the intrinsic natures of the social subjectivities that possess the capacity to exercise power (Isaac, 1987). The intrinsic natures are 'not their unique characteristics as individuals, but their social identities as participants in enduring, socially structured relationships' (Isaac, 1987, p.21).

The intrinsic natures of socially constructed identities determine the capacity of the social agent who performs in that role to exercise power. In universities, the socially constructed identity of the teacher is adopted in many situations, whether subconsciously or consciously, because universities are educational sites and because of the internalised association between educational contexts and the traditional learner-teacher dynamic. These socially structured relationship dynamics can explain why different social identities are granted differing dispositional powers; the social identities, and their dispositional powers, are so recognisable and familiar to social contexts that their capacity to exercise power is reproduced according to this dynamic. The socially conditioned identities of agents is a phenomenon that is clearly seen in the learner-teacher dynamic. The 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1979b, p.47) that has socially conditioned the identities of teachers and learners, means that people recognise the power dynamic between the two identities and reproduce it without much thought. People recognise that teachers possess the capacity to exercise power in the classroom:

they have the power to structure lessons, the power to set assignments, the power to distribute grades, the power to discipline and so forth (Isaac, 1987). The capacities to act granted to teachers and learners is mirrored in a traditional method of teaching which is referred to by Freire (1996) as the ‘banking method’:

Similar to making a bank deposit, the teacher “deposits” knowledge into the student and then makes “withdrawals” in the form of tests and quizzes and methodical questioning. This knowledge is detached from the student’s experience. It is someone else’s understanding of what someone else thinks is important. Nevertheless it is presented as Truth, to be stored by the student and regurgitated on demand (Kreisberg, 1992, p.7).

Even within universities where undergraduates are actively positioned as consumers and partners, both of which have different dispositional powers and behavioural expectations, the traditional power relationship is so entrenched through years of compulsory schooling that it becomes natural to adopt those subjectivities, and their behaviours, in any sites of learning and teaching.

Shor, an American educator, attempted to break the enduring relations of the learner-teacher power relationship in an experiment with his students. As a barrier to his ability to reconstruct these relations, he notes that ‘a kind of epistemic illusion is delivered by the traditional syllabus: culture is presented as nature. That, what has been socially and historically constructed by a specific culture becomes presented to students as undebatable and unchangeable, always there, timeless’ (1996, pp.10–1). Culture as nature is synonymous with the concept of enduring social relations; ‘if a social relationship reflects nature then the perception of it as “unfair” is beside the point because change presupposes an “impossible” (contrary to nature) thus, arguably, perverse, mode of existence’ (Haugaard, 2003, p.103). These socially conditioned relationships are perceived as *natural*, rather than constructed and as such, they appear impossible to change. Even in universities, where attempts are often made to alter the

traditional relationship, such as using first names and reconstructing the spatial dynamic of sites of learning and teaching, individuals rely on the behavioural characteristics that perpetuate the traditional relationship because they are internalised as natural.

These seemingly natural relations are incredibly potent in relationships between learners and teachers. Shor describes this phenomenon in his description of the typical classroom:

Like plants growing toward sunlight, students are expected to sit in rows facing the lecturing teacher at the front, the unilateral authority who tells them what things mean, what to do, and how to become people who fit into society as it is (1996, pp.11–2).

In his attempt to reconstruct these enduring relations, Shor redesigned the space of his classroom. As he describes above, the spatial arrangement of the traditional classroom dictates the power dynamic between the two, it is ‘an architecture of control that helps teachers assert their authority to transmit an official syllabus to the students’ (Shor, 1996, pp.11–2). The teacher is the powerful figure, the central focus at the front of the room, alone and in control; the learners are grouped together facing the teacher, waiting for them to tell them what to do. Shor rearranged the spatial dynamic so that he was no longer at the front, no longer the central and sole focus of the classroom; he moved to stand or sit amongst the students, spatially eliminating the barrier between them. He attempted to counteract the “Siberian Syndrome”, that is, their learned habit of automatically filling the distant corners first, representing their subordinate and alienated position’ (Shor, 1996, p.12). Moreover, he gave the students the power to dictate the classroom; they helped to choose the syllabus and assignment structure. The experiment, though, was not entirely successful because students were uncomfortable with the change in dynamic; unfamiliar with the new relationship, they were unsure how to behave and Shor was met with resistance.

As described by Haugaard, 'structural constraint is a process whereby actors who threaten systemic stability by new and innovative structuration practices are met by the non-collaboration of others in the reproduction of these new structures' (2003, p.94). Shor's innovative methods were met with resistance because they threatened to erode the stability of the given structure of the traditional power relationship. Structural constraint is a challenge in HE; institutional discourse positions undergraduates as consumers and partners, alongside their natural adherence to the traditional learner subjectivity. Encouraging individuals to adhere to a consumer subjectivity imposes new behavioural expectations as well as a different capacity for exercising power. Whereas the traditional learner has limited power, the consumer, in comparison, is granted extensive dispositional power in accordance with the rules that dictate the subjectivity and the subsequent power relations in which that subjectivity performs. Moreover, individuals in the current university climate are not only expected to adhere to the conflicting dispositional power of the traditional learner and the consumer, but they are also expected to balance those with the expectations of the partner subjectivity. As a traditional learner, social agents have little power and as consumers they have greater power, but when performing in a partner subjectivity, agents are expected to share power. Each one of these subjectivities are roles with unique behavioural expectations and each of them reside within equally specific power relationships.

The 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1979b, p.47), which constitutes who can and cannot exercise power, is perhaps why 'we cannot envisage a scenario in which any actor is somehow liberated from all structural conditions' (Bradshaw, 1976, pp.121–2). Bradshaw's stance on the effect of structural conditions on agents' behaviour comes

from a critique of the work of Steven Lukes, who is an eminent figure in the power debate because of his three-dimensional view of power. He constructs his three-dimensional conceptualisation as a follow on from the work of Dahl (1967) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962), the theorists who formulated what are known as the first two faces of power. Dahl was heavily criticised for his sole focus on ‘actual and observable, *conflict*’ (Lukes, 2005, p.18), which fails to consider other, less noticeable, forms of power. Bachrach and Baratz were criticised because, although they considered non-observable forms of conflict in which certain actors are excluded from decision making, they failed to consider the ways in which actors can be oblivious to the power being exercised over them (Hay, 1997, p.47). These criticisms led Lukes to formulate a third face of power.

For Lukes (2005), social agents are subject to an insidious form of power that shapes their desires, wants and beliefs to reflect those that benefit the exercisers of that power with such subtlety that people are unaware it is happening. However, as Bradshaw’s critique suggests, Lukes fails to give adequate consideration to the impact of structural conditions on agents’ capacity to exercise power. One of the central problems of Lukes conceptualisation is his heavy focus on the actions of agents; for Lukes, the exercise of power is attributed heavily to individuals, without much consideration of the context in which they are acting. As Bates describes, ‘both structure, in the sense of systems of human relations among social positions, and agency are sources of power’ (2010, p.354); Lukes fails to adequately explore the ways in which structure can determine agency. He purports that *interest* plays a central part in the exercise of power; namely, agents who exercise *power over* others do so as a way of reflecting their own interests.

His conceptualisation gives no consideration to the exercise of *power to* act and this is problematic within a HE context.

Between an undergraduate and an academic, issues arise concerning whose interest is being served in particular contexts; arguably, undergraduates are incapable of knowing what their best interests are in terms of their education, because they are still in the process of learning their discipline, but in Lukes' conceptualisation, this would imply that the academic is exercising a form of power over the individual in order to shape their interests. Applying the concept of Isaac's '*enduring relations*' (1987, p.22), social agents have internalised the teacher's authority in determining what learners should study; Lukes' three-dimensional power gives no consideration to this notion of socially structured relationships, for him, it would be a form of insidious power over others. Perhaps in a context in which power as domination is applicable, Lukes' three-dimensional view would be an appropriate theory for understanding the interactions between social agents. However, in the context of an educational institution, and if we consider Haugaard's argument for selecting a theory of power based on the context being analysed, power as domination is not appropriate.

Indeed, for the purposes of selecting an appropriate theory of power, it is important to understand the distinction between *power over*, which is often utilised in political theory, and *power to*:

One man may have power over another or others, and that sort of power is relational, though it is not a relationship. But he may have power to do or accomplish something by himself, and that power is not relational at all; it may involve other people if what he has power to do is a social or political action, but it need not (Pitkin, 1972, p.277).

What we can glean from Pitkin's consideration of power is the distinction between a specifically relational approach to power and one which can be either relational or

autonomous. When considering the power relationship between undergraduates and academics, it is critical to understand the structural constraints of the university and the HE sector as a whole; these structural constraints have a considerable impact on undergraduates' and academics' ability to exercise *power to*, rather than *power over*. As later chapters illuminate, the *power to* associated with different subjectivities impacts on both the perception and behaviour of undergraduates when interacting with academics.

It is clear, then, that systemic power is critical for exploring the power relationship that exists within universities. Agents can only act in so far as they abide by the rules of the structure within which they are carrying out their action; to ignore the constraints of socially structured subjectivities and the context of HE, would be to ignore a hugely significant influence driving the actions of both academics and undergraduates. As I have said, there is a dialectical relationship between structure and agency and they must be considered alongside each other with equal importance and so, I will now turn to the framework of constitutive power being used in this study.

4.3 The Constitutive Conception of Power

The 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1979b, p.47) that helps to shape the structures that dictate the dispositional power granted to social identities, in turn, constitutes the individual relationships that exist within those structures. Foucault tells us:

The form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects (2002, p.331).

By this view, the individual power relationships, which are partly constituted by systemic structures, position people in subjectivities that pertain to their particular social context. Foucault argues that ‘power relations are rooted in the whole network of the social’ (2002, p.345) and as such, power relationships constructed at the systemic level are only perpetuated through adherence at the constitutive level. Within universities, the ‘immediate everyday’ (Foucault, 2002, p.331) power relationship positions undergraduates as traditional learners and academics as teachers. This is obvious if we only consider the constitutive conception of power, but if we relate it back to the systemic conception of power, undergraduates and academics are positioned in terms of the ‘*enduring relations*’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22) of the learner-teacher dynamic, which have been formed, and are reproduced, through structural constraints. Later chapters illuminate that undergraduates do in fact adhere to the traditional power relationship because it appears appropriate to an educational setting. However, later chapters also demonstrate that undergraduates partially adhere to the power relationship constituted through the adoption of the consumer subjectivity and the partner subjectivity; undergraduates are positioned in three conflicting subjectivities at the systemic level, and the characteristics of each social role are adhered to in various ways at the constitutive level, which entails negotiating a different power relationship with academics for each subjectivity.

The ‘law of truth’ (Foucault, 2002, p.331) in the traditional power relationship, is that both the learner and teacher adopt social identities regular to the socially structured relationships of their dynamic. However, it is futile to consider the systemic conception of power, and its impact on structuring social relationships, without considering the agents that are impacted by the structures being considered. For Lukes, agency is the

most prominent consideration in the power debate: ‘the concept of power should remain attached to the agency that operates within and upon structures’ (2008, p.11). By this view, the power to act lies solely with social agents; they are the ones who built the structures that both hinder and benefit certain individuals. In many ways, this argument is true; we cannot consider the limitations imposed on the capacity to exercise power by structures without considering the agents that exercise the power. As Giddens (1976) points out, we cannot find structures if we look for them because they only exist in relation to the practice of them. Structures are inanimate, they cannot exercise power, it is the agents within the structures that exercise power.

This is strengthened when considering the limitations of a conceptualisation of power which is too heavily focused on structure. Hayward, in her conceptualisation, ‘de-faces’ (2000) power and as a result, ‘her concept of structure is arguably beset by theoretical problems that make it difficult for her to sustain her argument that structures are more than what agents make of them’ (Bates, 2006, p.359). Hay emphasises the importance of both structure and agency in conceptualising power:

To define power as context-shaping is to emphasise power relations in which structures, institutions and organisations are shaped by human action in such a way as to alter the parameters of subsequent action. This is an *indirect* form of power in which power is mediated by, and instantiated in, structures. Yet power is also exercised in a *direct sense* when A gets B to do something that s/he would not otherwise do (1997, p.51).

Thus, it is crucial to not simply disregard agency when conceptualising a framework of power. However, the weakness of Lukes’ agent-centred approach lies in the idea that we should ‘attribute responsibility to agents, individual and collective’ (2008, p.11). By this view, it is the agents’ responsibility to exercise power or not; structures may limit their ability to act, but they do not act for them. In Lukes’ consideration, responsibility should be placed on social agents who exercise power, whether it produces negative or

positive outcomes. The capacity to exercise power possessed by the academic in universities can be a negative form of power in that they can drastically impact an undergraduate's future; an academic has the power to dismiss an undergraduate's view because they have the power of expertise. This act of dismissal can potentially impact that individual negatively; it may reduce their self-confidence, it may foster self-doubt in ability and it may put the undergraduate off vocalising their thoughts again.

However, the power exercised by academics can also create positive outcomes. According to Wartenberg, 'a teacher who is teaching a student who wishes to acquire a skill that the teacher has is seeking to develop that student into a more effective, more competent being' (1990, p.218). By this view, the power exercised by an academic in a learning context is a productive form of power because it helps to shape undergraduates into better citizens, which is the perspective from which Shor began his research (1996). It is obvious that power between academics and undergraduates can be exercised to produce both negative and positive outcomes in a myriad of ways, but too much emphasis on a moral evaluation of power, as in Lukes' conceptualisation, limits a deeper understanding of *how* and *why* the power was exercised in the first place.

Often the analysis of power is 'driven by a commitment to human freedom and political equality' (Hayward and Lukes, 2008, p.9) and because of this, critics are often heavily focused on the morality in the exercise of power. However, morality is subjective and any evaluation is going to be interwoven with personal notions of right and wrong. Instead, it is important to focus on why power is exercised by certain people and why it is exercised in certain ways; only then will it be possible to understand undergraduates' and academics' perceptions of the relationships that form their experience in

universities and how we can use this understanding when implementing change. Although it is important to understand why certain actors choose to act or not act, Lukes gives no consideration to the naturalisation of social identities, and neither does Hay. Although Hay gives equal importance to structure and agency, neither Hay nor Lukes considers the idea that, as part of structural limitations, the enduring relations of social dynamics can determine how agents act in a given context, and more importantly, *why* they act in that way.

The capacity to exercise power in individual relationships is based, if we consider Isaac's (1987) conceptualisation, on the notion of *naturalisation*; a naturalisation that is constituted by the structural powers that help to shape the social identities within the relationship, which become enduring relations over time. In considering the social relationship between the learner and the teacher, Isaac notes that the 'powers to act are part of the nature of the relationship. They are not regularities, strictly speaking, but are routinely performed and purposeful activities' (1987, p.22). These purposeful activities help to position undergraduates in a particular subjectivity; they adopt the traditional learner subjectivity because it is natural to them in that context. Foucault considers this naturalisation in schooling and notes,

The school system is based on a kind of judicial power [...] One is constantly punishing and rewarding, evaluating and classifying, saying who's the best, who's not so good [...] Why must one punish and reward in order to teach something to someone? That system seems self-evident, but if we think about it we see that this self-evidence melts away (2002, p.83).

What Foucault is suggesting is the notion that power relationships in everyday instances are accepted partly because they are recognised as normal and logical. However, this normalisation does not necessarily dictate necessity or even appropriateness, it simply means that people do not give these individual power relationships much consideration because they appear *natural*.

This naturalness can be attributed to the ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1979b, p.47) dictated by the dominant discourse in Western society. Foucault defines discourses in terms of statements, which ‘act to both constrain and enable what we can know’ (Mchoul and Grace, 1995, p.37) and the discourse that shapes the relationship between a learner and a teacher dictates that learners have less knowledge than teachers, that they should learn from their teachers and that learners have less dispositional power because of this. But more than this, the dominant discourse dictates that this relationship is natural and based on *truth* and later chapters illuminate that both undergraduates and academics have internalised this ‘truth’ concerning appropriate behaviours when interacting with one another. However, with the ‘reutilization, or reimplantation’ (Foucault, 1996, p.199) of marketised discourse into the university, this truth is in flux, which creates problems ‘such as representing university students both as students in a conventional sense and as consumers, as both being subject to the authority of the university and as having consumer rights to hold the university to account’ (Fairclough, 2015b, p.13). Educational discourse and market discourse are clashing within universities, and this has huge implications for the subjectivities of both undergraduates and academics.

The enduring relations of social identities may appear to be so natural as to be solidified, but they ‘are only relatively enduring, not immutable. Insofar as the exercise of power is always contingent, it is constantly negotiated in the course of everyday life’ (Isaac, 1987, p.24). Additionally, the introduction of partnership discourse into universities is creating further discord. The conflicting dispositional power associated with the subjectivities of the traditional learner, the partner and the consumer is rupturing the

naturalness of the ‘truth’ to which both undergraduates and academics have spent the majority of their educational experience abiding by. As later chapters elucidate, the subjectivity of the traditional learner, the partner and the consumer are incompatible by the nature of the power that they intrinsically possess, or in other words, ‘those powers distributed by the various enduring structural relationships in society and exercised by individuals and groups based on their location in a given structure’ (Isaac, 1987, p.28). The dispositional powers for these three subjectivities are contradictory and difficult to consolidate.

The subjectivities of the traditional learner and the consumer are well established and familiar; social agents recognise the dispositional power and behavioural norms of each ideal type. However, the subjectivity of the partner is less established; the dispositional power and behavioural expectations of the role have not been solidified in the same way and do not constitute part of the ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1979b, p.47). The two case study universities being used in this project both have strategies that position their undergraduates as partners. But, as later chapters highlight, discord is created through the naturalisation of the traditional learner subjectivity and its seeming appropriateness for educational contexts. The perceived natural order of the dynamic between learners and teachers constitutes a ‘powerful structural constraint’ (Haugaard, 2015, p.153) in HE; the partner subjectivity goes against what is perceived to be the natural way to interact between undergraduates and academics. Equally, the positioning of undergraduates as consumers has a drastic impact on the attempt to form partnerships at the constitutive level. It is contradictory for an academic to form a partnership with an individual who is also their consumer and likewise, for an undergraduate to become a partner with an academic who is, at the same time, providing a service. There is a

distinct difference in the dispositional power granted to partners and those granted to consumers and providers; as later chapters illuminate, it is highly difficult for a social agent to adopt dual subjectivities that entail conflicting behaviours (Kitchener, 1988). The partner subjectivity was introduced largely in opposition to the consumer framework; however, market discourse works to contradict discourses on partnership and continues to influence the power relationship at the constitutive level.

The individual and relational ways in which social agents and their worlds are constituted by power relationships is critical for understanding how the systemic conception of power is able to form, maintain and reproduce power relations in social contexts. We cannot consider individual power relationships without understanding how they have been structured at the systemic level; likewise, we cannot understand how structures limit or extend power without understanding the individual power relationships at play between social agents within those structures. The dialectical relationship between systemic power and constitutive power provides a deeper understanding of the transforming power relationship between undergraduates and academics within the current university climate.

4.4 The Formation of Subjects

‘There is no individual, no self, that is ontologically prior to power’ (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p.87). This thesis has already critically evaluated the literature that surrounds the social construction of subjectivities; it is important for this study, though, that the formation of subjects is understood in relation to the theorisation of systemic and constitutive power and the dialectical relation between the two. The dialectical relation between systemic and constitutive power is essential for understanding the ways in

which social agents are formed as subjects. Butler argues: ‘power acts on the subject in at least two ways: first, as what makes the subject possible, the condition of its possibility and its formative occasion, and second, as what is taken up and reiterated in the subject’s “own” acting’ (1997, p.14). Social roles and subjectivities, as ideal types, are formed through systemic power, that is, they are socially structured. However, they are maintained, perpetuated or challenged through the constitutive level, whereby social agents either reject or adhere to certain subjectivities in specific contexts. Danaher, drawing from Foucault, notes that although agents are ‘the effects of power relations, we are not helpless objects formed and moved by power, but individuals constituted as subjects by governmental practices of power and normalisation, and we can choose to respond to, or resist, these practices’ (2000, p.128).

It is not possible to understand the formation of subjects without an understanding of both the individual agent and the social context in which they are situated:

Because the individual cannot have experiences, form beliefs, or perform actions, except against the background of a particular social context, therefore we have to examine the ways in which a particular context influences, limits, or determines the forms of subjectivity people take on (Bevir, 1999, p.357).

It is essential that the systemic formation of power is understood in this study; the subjectivities adopted by undergraduates are contextually dependent and the institutions in this study help to determine the subject positioning of undergraduates. Equally, though, the individuality of social agency is necessary for an integrated understanding of subjectivity within HE. Undergraduates are limited to what they can do and what they can be by the structural limitations of the institutions in which they find themselves. Evaluating the work of Foucault, Bevir says:

We must allow for agency if only because we cannot individuate beliefs or actions by reference to social context [...] because different people adopt different beliefs and perform different actions against the background of the same social structures, there must be an undecided space in front of these

structures where individual subjects decide what beliefs to hold and what actions to perform for reasons of their own (1999, p.358).

The social construction of subjectivities constitutes how social agents behave; agents 'develop expectations about what it is that one does, and what it is that one ought to do, in particular contexts' (Hayward and Lukes, 2008, p.14). But the individuality of social agents allows them flexibility in whether or not they choose to act and behave appropriately in a given context, by adhering to the socially accepted subjectivity for that context.

Undergraduates within universities are constructed in particular subjectivities through a dialectical relation between systemic and constitutive power. On the one hand, they are positioned in particular subjectivities through systemic power and the encouragement to adopt socially constructed subjectivities which are context dependent. This involves internalising specific behaviours that are associated with particular social roles. All three subject positions being explored in this study are constituted through systemic power, and each has its own set of behavioural expectations that are deemed appropriate for the contexts in which they are normally applied. On the other hand, undergraduates are simultaneously in the process of adhering or rejecting the adoption of behaviours and expectations which correlate to these specific subjectivities at the constitutive level. Kitchener argues: 'in addition to the strain arising from the incompatibility of expectations, role conflict may also arise from incompatible obligations and from different prestige and power associated with the roles' (1988, p.218). As the findings of this study will illuminate, the conflict between the subjectivities that are encouraged within universities leads to incompatibility in terms of negotiating dispositional powers within interpersonal relationships with academics. The formation of subjects, then, is a cyclical process

between systemic and constitutive forms of power and, as I will discuss in later chapters, this process has led to multiple and conflicting subjectivities for undergraduates and as a result, multiple and conflicting power relationships.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined a theoretical framework of power that is relevant to a HE context; this thesis has made use of a ‘cluster of concepts’ (Haugaard, 2010, p.427) in order to appropriately conceptualise power for understanding the power relationship between undergraduates and academics within universities. Making use of the ‘*family resemblance concept*’ (Haugaard, 2010, p.424) in framing power goes beyond a strong essentialist view of power and incorporates the most meaningful features for understanding power in HE contexts. As a result, this chapter has critiqued the prominent theorists in the power debate and explored why their conceptualisations were too limiting for this study and I have outlined a justification for the choice of alternative theories; I have considered the ways in which power can be both negative and productive and the importance of understanding how and why power is exercised through systemic and constitutive conceptions of power.

The dialectical relationship between systemic power and constitutive power is critical for understanding the ways in which undergraduates are positioned within specific subjectivities. I have outlined how the cyclical relationship between systemic and constitutive forms of power constitutes subject positions and how these subjectivities create conflict for undergraduates. Considering systemic and constitutive power alongside each other, making use of the cluster of concepts that overlap and interlink between the two, gives a richer and fuller depiction of how subjectivities and the

associated power relationships are established, maintained, reproduced or challenged in HE. I turn now to an exploration of the methodology chosen to complement and advance this theoretical framework.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

5.1 Introduction

Understanding and explaining the theoretical framework utilised in this study requires a detailed methodology that corresponds with the main aim of this research: to examine how power relationships are being transformed through conflicting subjectivities that are constituted through both structure and agency. I have chosen methods that allow for a deeper understanding of the ways in which undergraduates are positioned in subjectivities through interaction with academics and through their specific institutional environments, and how these social agents perceive their positions and the relationships they negotiate. In this chapter, I detail the methods chosen and the justification for the choices, explaining the ways in which the data was collected and analysed. I then outline the critical realist meta-framework of this study and the ways in which it has been incorporated into my research design, before concluding with a reflection on important ethical considerations.

5.2 Research Design

I am using an *intensive research design*, the aims of which are to explain the causal mechanisms behind undergraduate-academic power relationships and the subject positioning of undergraduates in two universities. An intensive research design differs from an *extensive research design* in that the latter examines a much larger number of cases, but has less explanatory power because of its breadth. The methods associated with an intensive research design are typically ‘in-depth interpretive data, as obtained through interviews or focus groups’ (Fletcher, 2016, p.185), which contrasts to an

extensive research design which utilises large-scale data. The primary concerns for each design differ greatly; whilst extensive research is concerned with finding generalizations and patterns in whole populations, ‘in intensive research the primary questions concern how some causal processes works out in a particular case or limited number of cases’ (Sayer, 1992, p.242).

I am using two empirical case studies as part of my intensive research design. Both case studies are post-1992 universities in England; the first case study is particularly anomalous amongst other post-1992 universities by way of one of its institution-wide policies, and the other is used as a contrasting institution. The choice of these two specific case studies allows for a comparative study of causal mechanisms regarding power relationships and subject positionings of undergraduates.

5.2.1 Methods

This study employs a mixed qualitative method approach. The methods being used are: semi-structured interviews, direct observation, public access documents and data, and critical discourse analysis (CDA).

The semi-structured interviews make up the bulk of data; interviews were chosen as the main method of data collection because they allowed me to ‘explore the understandings, reflexivity and potential agency that participants experience in relation to the practice under investigation’ (Clegg and Stevenson, 2013, p.12). From a critical realist perspective, which will be detailed later, semi-structured interviews emphasise individual perception and agency within the social structure of the university: ‘we need to use methods for social research that do not presume commonality or similarity or

impose an illusory uniformity on the phenomena we study' (Maxwell, 2012, p.51). Moreover, critical realism 'prioritise[s] social actors' descriptions of their experiences, projects, and desires' (Scott, 2005, p.644); the interviews were flexible for each participant, following main lines of inquiry but allowing for adaptation. This was important because it allowed the prioritised perspectives and opinions of the participants to come through unobstructed. As part of the interviews, I asked participants to draw their conceptualisation of their relationships at university; undergraduates were asked to conceptualise positive and negative relationships with academics as well as their relationship to the institution, and academics were asked to conceptualise positive and negative relationships with undergraduates. This method was a valuable tool for this study; it provided a visual representation of the participants' perspectives and allowed me to understand the relationship between the perspective of relationships and how they appear in practice. The analysis of these drawings also provided rich insight into the presuppositions and ingrained social practices that influenced the participants' perspectives.

Much HE research that examines the perceptions and perspectives of social actors has used semi-structured interviews as a method: Lomas (2007) employed semi-structured interviews to better understand academics' perceptions of their students as customers; Curran and Millard (2016) employed semi-structured interviews to capture the perceptions of both students and staff on a partnership approach to HE teaching; and, Tomlinson (2016) used semi-structured interviews and focus groups to better understand students' perceptions of themselves as consumers. Focus groups are often used alongside, or instead of, semi-structured interviews in qualitative research and if they had been used in this study, they would have given an interesting illumination on

group dynamics in relation to the participants' perceptions. However, because of the intimate nature of personal relationships, interactions and hierarchies, focus groups could have prevented undergraduates and academics from being candid in their responses. Moreover, a number of academic participants only spoke truthfully once assured that their confidentiality and the institutions' anonymity would be protected. Focus groups would have limited some of those more genuine responses and as such, they were discarded as a choice of method. A phenomenological approach was briefly considered because of its ability to provide a deep insight into the perceptions and perspectives of individuals in their lived experience. However, because this study was interested in the dialectical relationship between structure and agency and the ways in which social actors are positioned through, often unconscious, presuppositions born from social conditioning, it was more appropriate to employ a methodology that allowed the examination of both structure and agency. Phenomenology would have provided only a surface understanding of the perceptions of undergraduates and academics in relation to power relations and subject positionings, without an understanding of how those perceptions have been shaped.

In order to understand both structure and agency, then, I chose to use direct observation to better explore participants' behaviour in context, as well as to infer any inconsistencies between participants' perspectives and their actual behaviour in practice. Although participant observation is a common method for ethnographic research, it is more focused on immersion in a particular culture as an active participant for ethnographers. In choosing observation as a method, rather than understanding through immersion, my focus was to avoid the 'common fallacy in educational research [which] is to claim that what practitioners say they did is the same as what actually

happened' (Scott, 2000, p.16). Observing participants *in situ* allowed me to analyse the differences between rhetoric and practice, if there were any, and gave me a richer understanding of the ways in which participants' behaviour is shaped by the structural constraints of the context in which the observation took place. Indeed, it allowed me to draw inferences, which was important for 'getting at tacit understandings and "theory-in-use," as well as aspects of the participants' perspective that they are reluctant to directly state in interviews' (Maxwell, 2012, p.106). I took detailed and descriptive field notes during the observations of the natural setting and the participants. However, the most appropriate stance for me to adopt was 'participant as observer'; although the participants were aware of my purpose, I did not interact during the observations and I kept myself as unnoticeable as possible in order to avoid a change in behaviour from the participants (Baker, 2006).

This study also incorporates the analysis of public documentation, which refers to a select sample of documents from each university under study, which is detailed later. The choice to include institutional documents was to better understand the ways in which undergraduates are positioned systemically within particular subjectivities, and how this relates to their own perceptions. In a study examining the absent position of the academic in HE policy, Sabri (2010) chose to examine policy documents in order to better understand the ways in which actors are included or excluded from certain arenas. Analysing the discourse of institutional documents gave me a greater understanding of the ways in which undergraduates are positioned throughout their time at university and aided in examining the dialectical relation between structure and agency.

CDA was employed as part of my methodology, specifically the dialectical-relational, or critical realist, approach, which is closely aligned with a critical realist ontology and attributed to Fairclough (Fairclough, 2005, 2015a); the method of analysis will be outlined later. The method itself was chosen because the defining feature of CDA is its ‘concern with power as a central condition in social life [...] Not only the notion of struggles for power and control, but also the intertextuality and recontextualisation of competing discourses in various public spaces and genres’ (Wodak and Meyer, 2015, p.12). Given that power relationships are a central concern in this study, CDA was appropriate for understanding the ways in which power is distributed through discourse and the ways in which these discourses work to position actors in particular subjectivities. The dialectical-relational approach to CDA also recognises the cyclicity in discourse, emphasising that discourse shapes society, but at the same time, discourse is shaped by society.

CDA is particularly useful for understanding social interaction; ‘language use is always simultaneously constitutive of (i) social identities, (ii) social relations, and (iii) systems of knowledge and belief’ (Fairclough, 1993, p.3). CDA is used in this study as a means of exploring the relationships between undergraduates and academics, and the participants’ perception of these relationships. CDA is used to analyse the interview data, the policy documents from each university and the observational data because the dialectical-relational approach to CDA encompasses more than just spoken or written language. Fairclough extends it to include:

Semiotic practice in other semiotic modalities such as photography and non-verbal (e.g. gestural) communication. But in referring to language use as discourse, I am signalling a wish to investigate it in a social theoretically informed way, as a form of social practice (1993, p.3).

Discourse in CDA is defined more broadly as ‘language use as [...] social practice’ (Fairclough, 1993, p.3) and it is through this recognition that an understanding of social relationships, practices and events is examined through language and non-verbal communication.

5.2.2 *Sampling, Data Collection, and Analysis*

5.2.2.1 *Sampling and Data Collection*

This research project is a comparison of two case study universities, and the sampling was influenced heavily by my initial research questions. I chose University A because of its relevance in examining issues of power and partnership; University A has an institution-wide policy that attempts to address issues concerning power relationships in marketised contexts by placing emphasis on the collaborative process of creating knowledge. University A differs from other universities in its formation of an institutional strategy to configure a collaborative learning process at the structural level. It is a leading institution in England regarding the reconstitution of student-staff relations in terms of collaboration and bases its conceptualisation on a reformation of the purpose of HE. Initially, University A was the only institution selected but on reflection I felt it would be a richer study if there was a comparison institution. University A is a post-1992 university and so, University B was chosen to supplement a comparative study of two post-1992 universities; it was also chosen based on the similarity of its undergraduate population size. This aided in drawing out the nuances between two universities within the same categorisation; my intention was to explore the similarities or differences of perspectives between a university with an influential partnership model and one with less cogency. Moreover, researching within post-1992

universities has given this study a specific insight into the traditional learner subjectivity because ‘the most starkly challenging students go to the post-1992 universities, where most students need lots of pedagogical and pastoral support’ (Taberner, 2018, p.144). Conducting the study within institutions that attract less confident and autonomous undergraduates gives the research a more pertinent understanding of the reliance on the traditional learner subjectivity and its appropriation within HEIs. If I had chosen a Russell Group university or a pre-1992 university, the data would perhaps have provided alternative perspectives on the traditional learner subjectivity in relation to the consumer and partner subject positions. However, it would have offered less comparative analysis to University A because institutions in England are categorised by ‘crude clubby labels’ (Scott, 2013) based on their similarities to one another. Table 5.1 shows the empirical data collected at both institutions.

	Semi-structured Interviews	Observations	Documentation
Case Study One (University A)	Six academic interviews Ten undergraduate interviews	Three lecture observations Three seminar observations	Six public access documents (student charter, learning and teaching strategy, complaints procedure, prospectus, student terms and conditions, code of conduct)
Case Study Two (University B)	Six academic interviews Ten undergraduate interviews	Three lecture observations Three seminar observations	Six public access documents (student charter, learning and teaching strategy, complaints procedure, prospectus, admission terms and conditions, student regulations)

Table 5.1 Data collection from case study one and two

Once the two case studies were chosen, I decided on my sample for study. I chose to situate my research within the humanities, specifically the Department of English at both institutions; there were two reasons for this choice. First, I have an academic background in English Literature and Language, having studied it at both BA and MA level and so, I felt I could both understand and relate to the undergraduates' situation on a deeper level. Secondly, a large number of studies have been carried out within STEM disciplines (Woodall, Hiller and Resnick, 2014; Jabbar et al., 2018). The value of the humanities, in a HE system based on economic and social contribution and entrance into the labour market, is in crisis (Miller, 2012; Di Leo, 2013; Bérubé and Ruth, 2015; Qiao, 2018). Understanding how and why undergraduates choose to study within the humanities in a context in which other disciplines are often deemed a better investment, is an important area of research that is underexplored. Having contextualised my study at both institutions, I selected a purposive sample, which

includes academics of differing ranks (see Appendix 5). The sample also contains undergraduates in different years of study (1-3), different genders (M or F) and differing disciplines within the humanities (see Appendix 5). The observations in the sample were either lectures (Lec) or seminars (Sem) and spanned across different years of study (1-3) (see Appendix 5).

5.2.2.1.1 Case Study One: University A

University A is a medium-sized post-1992 university in England, with a population of just over 11,000 undergraduates. First, I analysed documents from this university to understand the ways in which the university operates, with regards to the institutions' undergraduate population. All documents were publicly available on the university website. I used the documents to develop my interview guidelines, including questions based on a few of the documents. For the academic interviews, I referenced the university's Learning and Teaching Strategy, as well as the institution-wide policy, the name of which has been changed to the Student Collaboration Policy throughout this thesis. For the undergraduate interviews, I referenced the Student Collaboration Policy and the Student Charter. I chose to include the documents in the interviews to better gauge the participants' relationship with their institutions. Secondly, I contacted the Head of Department and asked permission to recruit undergraduates and academics within the Department of English (see Appendix 1). It took several weeks to receive a response; in the meantime, I began interviews at University B. After two months, I was granted permission to conduct my research.

Initially, I planned to interview both academic and administrative staff; I had conducted a pilot study of one academic and one administrator at Lancaster University, which had

provided some rich data. I conducted two interviews with non-academic staff members at University A before deciding to concentrate solely on academic staff. These two interviews have not been included in the final data set. I excluded them because I felt that I did not have a large enough sample to justify interpretation; this was an issue that was raised during my confirmation process and it helped to ensure the project was more focused. Moreover, the small number of non-academic staff participants in the Department meant that my inability to present a justified interpretation was unavoidable.

At first, the Head of Department's personal assistant sent a department-wide email outlining my research and requesting volunteers to both undergraduates and academics. Two academics volunteered immediately, after which, I had to contact chosen academics separately. I chose the academics based on their job titles, choosing a mixture of senior and newer academics with varying roles (see Appendix 5). All but one were English teaching staff; one academic was the former Dean of Teaching and Learning within the university. Although not an academic within the English discipline, it was important that this participant was interviewed because of their role in writing the Student Collaboration Policy. I gathered contact information for the staff from the university's website and sent them an outline of my research with an invitation to participate. The response rate was high, and I continued to email academics for interview until I reached my planned number of six; the interviews were conducted between June 2017 and January 2018.

For the undergraduate interviews, a department-wide invitation email was sent via the Head of Department's personal assistant and an announcement was made on

Blackboard, the virtual learning environment. The invitation emails were sent out periodically between Summer 2017 and Spring 2019. I put up posters around the university from January 2018 onwards, which were approved by the Department and the Student's Union (SU). I also posted to the university Facebook pages, which was permitted by both the Head of Department and the Facebook page administrators. I also asked the participants at the end of the interview whether they would be happy to mention the research to their course peers and to pass on my details; they were all happy to do so. The undergraduate volunteers came through periodically between November 2017 and January 2019. I was not allowed to contact undergraduates directly, so I had to wait for them to approach me; subsequently, I continued to utilise the methods listed above to promote the research and reach as many volunteers as possible. I experienced some difficulty in recruiting undergraduates for two main reasons: first, the undergraduate cohort for English is fairly small in comparison to other subjects; and secondly, the semester breaks are long and a large number of undergraduates return to their hometowns, which prevented me from recruiting during those periods. I initially planned to recruit 12 undergraduates, but after experiencing difficulty, I changed the sample size to 10 and continued the same approach until I had reached that number.

The restrictions on the undergraduate interviews were as follows: a full-time undergraduate studying English of some variation (joint honours undergraduates were included), under the age of 25 and a UK resident. The reason for these restrictions was twofold. First, I wanted a sample that reflected the majority of undergraduates, which is why I did not include international, mature or part-time students because they form the minority in terms of total undergraduate population. Secondly, the restrictions of this study meant that I would not have been able to do justice to the experience of

international, mature or part-time students, because as the field of literature indicates, they have vastly different experiences of their undergraduate studies (Morris, 2009; Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009; Swain and Hammond, 2011; Mallman and Lee, 2016). The reason behind my purposive sample was not to reflect generalisability but instead to ‘identify groups, settings, or individuals that best exhibit the characteristics or phenomena of interest’ (Maxwell, 2012, p.94). Indeed, Cohen *et al.*, argue that much qualitative research ‘seeks to explore the particular group under study, not to generalize’ (2011, p.161). My sample, then, was chosen to best represent the nuances of the interactions in question.

All interviews lasted between 30 and 100 minutes; they were semi-structured and focused on interpersonal relationships within sites of learning and teaching. The interviews explored the following topics: the marketisation of HE and the consumer model; the ways in which the institution and individual academics engage undergraduates, with a focus on different teaching and learning methods; the impact and evaluation of the policy documents for both the academic and the undergraduate; the relationships between undergraduates and academics and their meaning; visual representations of positive and negative relationships through participant drawings; and finally, the role of the SU and extra-curricular activity.

The volunteers were provided refreshments during the interview: a drink of choice and biscuits. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, however, repeated use of the word ‘like’ and the phrase ‘you know’ were removed from transcripts for ease of comprehension; this did not impact the content of the interview in any way. As well as this, affirmations

or agreements from the interviewer in the middle of the interviewee's response were removed because they obstructed comprehension without adding value.

As well as interviews and public documents, I observed one lecture and one seminar of three academic interviewees. Although all academic interviewees initially agreed to me observing their classes, only three responded when emailed to arrange dates for observation. The seminar and lecture observed were of the same topic, which allowed for a sense of continuity; I also requested that the seminar and lecture I observe have the same group of undergraduates, which was granted. All notes recorded were written by me. The undergraduates who were part of the seminar and lecture were informed via the lead academic and they were given the option of refusal. The observations took place between October 2017 and March 2018.

During the observations I was looking for specific elements: *facts*, including the spatial environment and how it was utilised, as well as the number of attendees and the facilities in the classroom; *events*, including the amount of conversation between the academic and undergraduates as well as between peers; and *behaviours*, including both non-verbal and verbal behaviour of the academic and the undergraduates (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The data collected in the observations was highly selective, which is inevitable for this method of data collection. As a researcher, I am aware that there will be elements in those observations that were unobserved or not recorded by me. However, that being said, 'the use of immediate awareness, or direct cognition, as a principle mode of research thus has the potential to yield more valid or authentic data than would otherwise be the case with mediated or inferential methods' (Cohen, Manion

and Morrison, 2011, p.456). The observations, alongside the interviews, gave my data a greater authenticity.

5.2.2.1.2 *Case Study Two: University B*

University B is a medium-sized post-1992 university in England, with a population of just over 13,000 undergraduates. As with University A, I first analysed documents taken from the university website. Whilst the interview guidelines were the same for both universities, the questions based on the documents differed; for the academic interviews, I chose to refer to the university's Learning and Teaching Strategy, as well as the Student Charter, the distinct name of which has been removed from the thesis. For the undergraduate interviews, I chose to refer only to the Student Charter. Secondly, I contacted the Head of Department and asked permission to recruit undergraduates and academics within the Department of English (see Appendix 1), which was approved quickly. Whilst I waited for a response from University A, I began liaising with the Programme Leader of English Literature at University B.

The Leader sent out an invitation email to all academic and non-academic staff in the department. I interviewed two non-academic staff members, which are not included in the final data set for the reasons stated earlier. There were two initial responses from academics from the invitation email, after which I approached academics individually and the response rate was high. I chose the academics from the university website and I tried to match my sample with those at University A; for instance, I made sure I interviewed a Professor at each institution, as well as an academic without a PhD. I also interviewed the current Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning, despite their

teaching discipline being outside of English. This was done to ensure I had a similar data set for comparison across the two case studies (see Appendix 5).

As with University A, I could not contact undergraduates directly, so I relied on the Leader for recruitment. The restrictions were the same as University A and within a few weeks, I had two volunteers; I received their contact information once they had agreed to take part and this continued as more volunteers came through. The invitation emails were sent out periodically between Summer 2017 and Summer 2019 and announcements were made on Blackboard, the virtual learning environment. I put up posters around the university from January 2018 onwards, which were approved by the Department. I also posted to the university Facebook page, which was permitted by the Leader and the Facebook page administrator. Again, I asked the participants to pass on my details to other potential participants; they were all happy to do so. As with University A, I initially planned to recruit 12 undergraduates but found it very difficult, particularly at University B because of frequent staff changeovers. As a result, I extended my recruitment to undergraduates studying Creative Writing degrees and I continued the approach I had adopted until I had recruited 10 undergraduates. The interviews took place between September 2017 and June 2019. The interviews lasted between 30 and 100 minutes; they were semi-structured and focused on the same topics as University A. The volunteers from University B were also provided refreshments during the interview. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, but as with the interviews from University A, repeated use of the word 'like' or the phrase 'you know', as well as affirmations from the interviewer, were removed for coherence.

I observed one lecture and one seminar of three academic interviewees, in the same way as University A; the observations took place between October 2017 and December 2017. The same selection process was used for this institution as was used for University A. Likewise, all notes recorded during the observations were written by me and the undergraduates were given the option to refuse. During the observations, I was looking for the same elements as I was in University A to ensure a foundation for comparison.

5.2.2.2 *Data Analysis*

Publicly accessible documents and statistical data were used in this study to contextualise each university; the institutional documents were used as a means of understanding the practices of each institution, as well as the structural framework and institutional discourse, and so, they were analysed alongside the interviews and observations. Interviews and observations were the main source of data because the central focus of this research was to understand individuals' perspectives on particular phenomena within a specific context. Interviews allowed me to understand the individual perspectives of both undergraduates and academics, whilst observations allowed me to consider those perspectives in practice (Maxwell, 2012).

The method of CDA used in this study was guided by the Faircloughian three-dimensional model. All data, including the observational data and the drawings from each interviewee, were analysed as a text (analysis of vocabulary and grammar), a discursive practice (interpretation of situational context of text production and intertextuality) and a social practice (explanation of the social determinants influencing the text) (Fairclough, 2015b) (Figure 5.1). The three-dimensional model allowed for a

richer understanding of the relationship between structure and agency and the resulting power relationships, the ways in which new discourses are inculcated into, or rejected from, social structures and the ways in which discourses can frame perceptions and influence subject positioning.

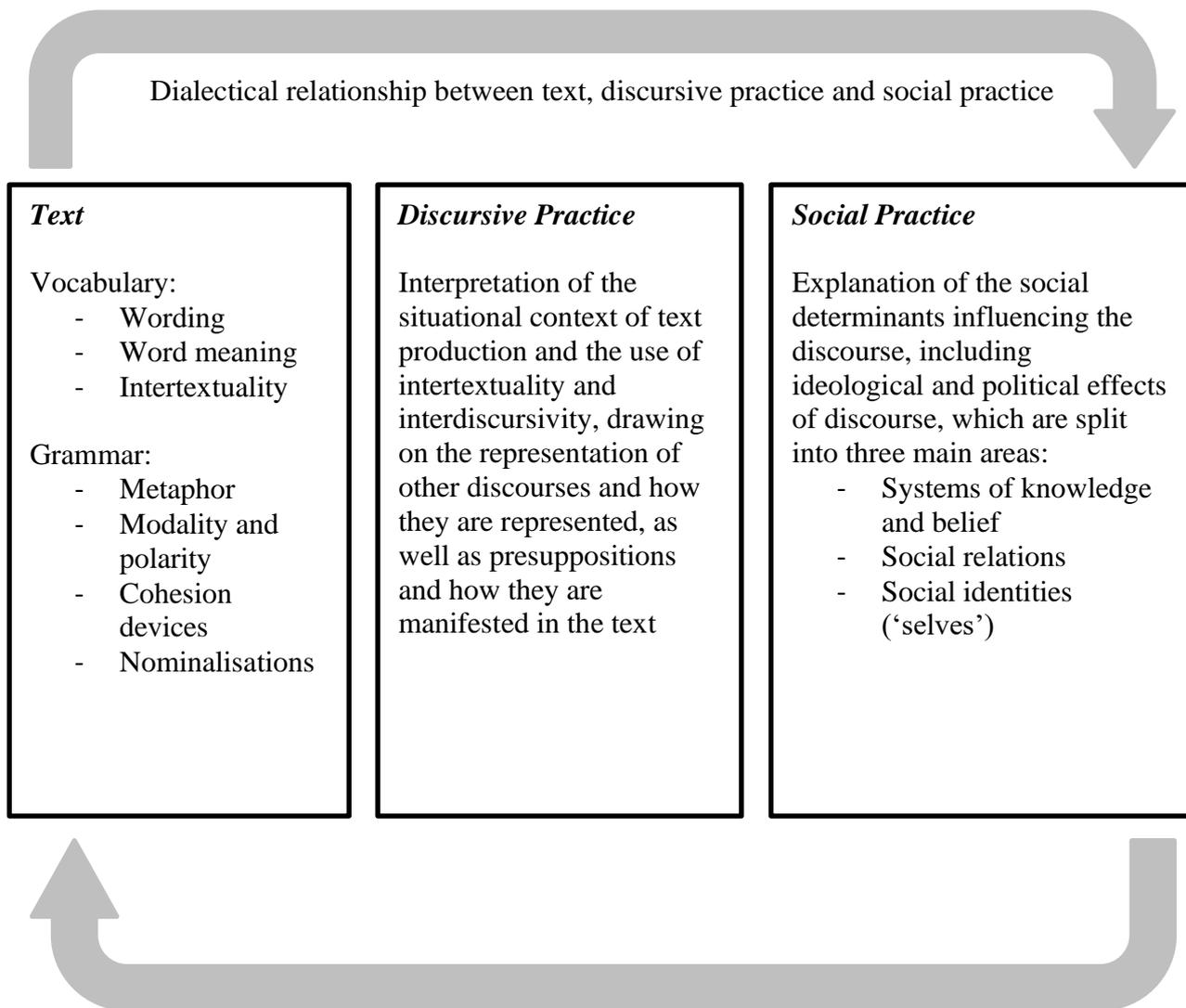


Figure 5.1 The stages of analysis

The data analysis was carried out with a focus on one research question at a time and key parts of the data were selected for analysis. The three-dimensional model was applied to these key parts with a lens to focus on the particular research question being considered. The textual analysis, including vocabulary and grammar, has a large repertoire of possible elements to analyse (see Fairclough, 2015b). CDA as a method, though, is flexible because it recognises that *'a good method is a method that is able to give a satisfactory (reliable, relevant, etc.) answer to the questions of a research project'* (Wodak and Meyer, 2015, p.3). Therefore, this study has chosen to only focus

on the aspects of vocabulary and grammar that are noted in Figure 5.1, because I felt they would be the most pertinent in answering my research questions. The data was analysed as a discursive practice once the key vocabulary and grammatical aspects had been established. I interpreted the ways in which the text had made use of other discourses and how these had manifested, whether in terms of context and style or ideational meaning. I also interpreted any presuppositions in the text and where these presuppositions had originated. Once the textual aspects and the discursive practices had been established, I used them to explain the text as a social practice, which included analysing the social determinants that influence the text. The focus of this part of analysis was on considering the ideological and political effects of discourse, namely, systems of knowledge and belief, social relations and social identities and how these manifested in the text being analysed. Explaining the text as a social practice involved making the move back from abstract analysis to the concrete, which is a component of critical realist analysis and will be detailed later. Thus, my analysis continuously referred back to the concrete in order to understand both the abstracted elements of the text and the social processes and determinants, as well as the relationship between them.

Throughout analysis, the interview data was checked against the observational data and the data retrieved from the institutional documents. I did not take what was said in the interviews to be absolute truths, rather I looked for consistencies amongst participants and checked the participants' responses against the practices in the observations and the institutional documents, and whether there were any consistencies or differentiations between the three data sets. However, this study is concerned with the *perspectives* of the participants in the first instance, so any notion of truth is subjective and that is important in itself for understanding how participants understand their experiences and

the relationships they negotiate. The theoretical consideration of the relation between structure and agency is apparent in my analysis of the participants' perspectives. As Sayer notes, 'beliefs and opinions are [...] phenomena which are borne by individuals and yet are socially constituted. Roles and personal identities also generally cannot be determined unilaterally by individuals' (1992, pp.32–3). As such, when I analysed the interview data, alongside the observational notes and the institutional documents, I was critical of the difference between the participants' subjective truth and the socially constructed reality in which that truth was determined. In other words, I constantly reflected on the relationship, and subsequent tensions, between structure and agency in the data.

5.3 A Critical Realist Ontology

Critical realism is the meta-theoretical framework of this research project (Bhaskar, 1978; Sayer, 1992, 1997; Collier, 1994; Archer, 2000; Scott, 2000, 2005; Maxwell, 2012; Fletcher, 2016).

Critical realism is a theoretical paradigm for understanding the nature of reality that emphasises ontology before epistemology: 'knowledge follows existence, in logic and in time; and any philosophical position which explicitly or implicitly denies this has got things upside down' (Bhaskar, 1978, p.39). Critical realism posits that human knowledge of the world is fallible and not absolute; there is a world that exists regardless of us and our knowledge of it is limited to what we have perceived and what we can perceive. According to Sayer,

The crucial point to remember is that social phenomena are *concept-dependent*. Unlike natural (i.e. non-social objects) they are not impervious to the meanings ascribed to them. What the practices, institutions, rules, roles or

relationships *are* depends on what they mean in society to its members (1992, p.30).

Critical realism recognises the importance of human perception for epistemology and that, unlike the natural world, social phenomenon is entirely constructed, and its meaning is entirely dependent on the meaning we prescribe to it. This consideration of ontology is mirrored in this study's understanding of the dialectical relation between structure and agency; the perceptions of undergraduates and academics, as social agents, are real and meaningful, but this study seeks to better understand the socially structured causal mechanisms that have shaped those perceptions.

The theoretical framework of systemic power and constitutive power employed in this study marries with the central concern of critical realists: 'the central relation of social reality is that between agency and structure' (Scott, 2005, p.640). As Bates describes,

Within a stratified social ontology, the structural and agential realism are recognizable and distinct in their own right but, at the same time, do not and cannot exist independently of each other. The structural and agential realms are related *in* and *through* time by a constantly fluid interpenetration (2006, p.157).

The dialectical relationship between systemic and constitutive power considered in this study is reflective of this critical perspective; structure and agency are separate, but inseparable, phenomenon and cannot be considered without reference to each other when studying social phenomena. Remembering the construction of social phenomenon in critical realist thought, it 'can provide a framework for better understanding the relationship between actors' perspectives and their actual situations' (Maxwell, 2012, p.20); this has been given primary consideration in my research design. Given the subject matter of this study, critical realism allows for a thorough analysis of the relationship between structure and agency in determining social reality for individuals:

Within social structures there are particular "positions" associated with certain roles. It is particularly important to distinguish the occupant of a position from

the position itself. One of the most pervasive illusions of everyday thinking derives from the attribution of the properties of the position, be they good or bad, to the individual or institution occupying it. Whatever effects result, it is assumed that particular *people* must be responsible; there is little appreciation that the structure of social relations, together with their associated resources, constraints or rules, may determine what happens, even though these structures only exist where people reproduce them (Sayer, 1992, pp.92–3).

This notion is reflected in my theoretical framing of the dialectical relationship between systemic and constitutive power, it provides an understanding of the construction of social roles and their perpetuation through individual adherence. Critical realism serves my research aims for this study; it allows me to go beyond the surface relationships between undergraduates and academics and to explore how power is systemically structured and manifested in particular social contexts, i.e. how and why certain roles have the capacity to exercise power and how this impacts on the perceived experience of undergraduates. I am researching within an open system in which events can present irregularities or overlap and people can change (Brown, Fleetwood and Roberts, 2002; Danermark, 2002) and thus, I am focusing on explanation rather than predictability, which would not be possible in an open system. In order to adequately explain the social phenomena in my research, I am applying the three stages central to critical realist thought.

The first of these stages is *abstraction*. According to Sayer,

In order to understand [concepts'] diverse determinations we must first abstract them systematically. When each of the abstracted aspects has been examined it is possible to combine the abstractions so as to form concepts which grasp the concreteness of their objects (1992, p.87).

An important aspect of abstraction in critical realism is to not only analyse abstractions from concrete objects, but to then return to an analysis of the concrete. This dialectical relation is pertinent to CDA: 'a critical realistic discourse analysis is not merely concerned with languages and orders of discourse; it is equally concerned with texts as

(elements of) processes, and with the relations of tension between the two' (Fairclough, 2005, p.923). Implementing this method meant that I abstracted specific aspects in the form of texts, looking at individual grammar and vocabulary in the discourses of the data, so that I could better understand their formation when relating them back to the concrete, or the social practice they arose from; through abstraction I analysed the dialectical relationship between the abstract analysis of texts and the concrete analysis of the texts as social practices, events or processes.

The second stage of critical realist thought is *abduction*, or theoretical redescription, which is when the empirical data is redescriptioned through theoretical concepts. According to Fletcher, this stage 'raises the level of theoretical engagement beyond thick description of the empirical entities, but with an acknowledgement that the chosen theory is fallible' (Fletcher, 2016, p.188). Abduction uses a theoretical frame of interpretation of the data to form a new interpretation of the concrete phenomenon under study; we can form a conclusion. However, in critical realism any conclusion formed is far from absolute truth and is considered more as a reasonable interpretation. Despite this though, abduction is useful in increasing knowledge on a particular topic as it can lead to deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Once textual aspects had been abstracted from the discourses, I reconstructed them through the lens of systemic-constitutive power to form a new interpretation of the data. I interpreted the abstracted elements in terms of how they were influenced by, or aided the perpetuation of, power relationships at both constitutive and systemic levels.

The next, and final, stage is *retroduction*. Although abstraction and abduction are useful for their own reasons, they do not allow for an understanding of causal relationships.

Retroduction, though, is the stage where causal mechanisms and conditions are examined; the goal is ‘to identify the necessary contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and to result in the empirical trends observed’ (Fletcher, 2016, p.189). Retroduction is important for understanding why things are as they are in particular contexts;

Merely knowing that “C” has generally been followed by “E” is not enough; we want to understand the continuous process by which “C” produced “E”, if it did. [...] [Retroduction is the] inference in which events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them (Sayer, 1992, p.107).

Retroduction is particularly useful for understanding the dialectical relationship between structure and agency; it allows for an understanding of why individual agents act in certain ways in certain contexts. As Sayer describes:

Even though social structures exist only where people reproduce them, they have powers irreducible to those of individuals [...] Explanation of the actions of individuals often therefore requires not a micro (reductionist) regress to their inner constitution (though that may be relevant too) but a “macro regress” to the social structures in which they are located (1992, p.119).

By using CDA as my method, this stage allowed me to explain the textual data as a social practice, analysing the underlying causal mechanisms of systems of belief, social relations and social identities that influenced the production of the text. I analysed the ways in which the discursive abstractions were influenced by, or perpetuated through, established social practices – whether beliefs, relations or identities – constituted through the dialectical relation between systemic and constitutive forms of power. Retroduction was utilised when interpreting undergraduates’ perceptions of the behavioural expectations of the traditional learner subjectivity. For example, the undergraduates’ expectation of deference was understood through the causal mechanism of the teacher identity and its established characteristic of authority over knowledge. A table outlining the ways in which critical realism and CDA are aligned

is shown in Table 5.2. These stages of thinking were utilised alongside the three-dimensional model of CDA throughout the data analysis.

	Critical realism stage one: Abstraction	Critical realism stage two: Abduction	Critical realism stage three: Retrodution
Critical Discourse Analysis	<i>(Text)</i> : Analysing the data through analysis of the text (abstract), but understanding it as a discursive practice and a social practice (concrete)	<i>(Discursive Practice)</i> : Reconstructing discourses, that have been deconstructed in the analysis, through a systemic and constitutive theory of power	<i>(Social Practice)</i> : Understanding the data as a form of social practice, that is, examining the necessary social conditions for the data, or texts, to exist

Table 5.2 Alignment of Critical Realism and CDA

5.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethics in this study is not only related to the individuals that took part in the interviews and observations, but also the impact of my research on the HE sector as a whole. The main ethical considerations in my study were: securing informed consent from the interviewees as well as the observation leaders; avoiding harm during data collection; doing justice to participants; and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity for both the individuals and the institutions throughout every stage of my research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). My research was conducted in line with both Lancaster University Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences ethical procedures and the guidelines outlined by the ESRC. As my studentship with the ESRC began after my study had been granted ethical approval, I followed Lancaster’s guidelines in the first instance (see appendix

6). However, ethics were considered throughout the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

The first major ethical consideration concerned the participants of the study; the interviewees and observation participants. When recruiting participants for interview, I complied with the ethical guidelines of my institution; the participants were fully informed volunteers, they had the right to withdraw before, during, and up to 2 weeks after the interview and they were anonymised. The interviewees were informed of the research objectives beforehand; they were aware from the initial invitation email and informed again through the participant information sheet (PIS) (see Appendix 2 and 3). They all signed consent forms (see Appendix 2 and 3) and all participants were kept anonymous throughout the process to ensure the anonymity of the institutions. The PIS and consent form was created in line with Lancaster's ethical guidelines and sent to all interviewees beforehand. When I contacted academics, I gave them a brief summary outlining my project and its aims, along with their expected contribution and details about the interview; once they had agreed to participate, they were sent the PIS and consent form and if they had any questions, I gave them additional information. The undergraduates were also sent a brief summary, but the communication was done through their institution. Once they contacted me with their voluntary participation, they were sent the PIS and consent form and any questions were answered. For both academics and undergraduates, part of the interview referred to specific policy documents and copies of these were sent alongside the PIS and consent form ahead of the interview. When we met, I outlined the project again, reminded them of their right to withdraw, asked their consent to record and answered any questions. During the

transcription of interviews, any identifiable information to the participant or the institution was removed to ensure confidentiality.

When recruiting participants to observe, I contacted academics that I had already interviewed. I outlined what the observation would entail and informed them of their right, and the undergraduates' right, to anonymity. The academic leading the session was informed of the research objectives and given a PIS and consent form to sign (see Appendix 4). The undergraduates were informed beforehand by the academic being observed and told they could refuse; although the undergraduates themselves did not sign consent forms, they were briefed again at the start of each observation and asked to speak out if they did not wish to participate. However, no undergraduates refused to participate. The notes generated from the observations contained no identifiable features of either the undergraduates or the academic; any reference to the institutions' identifiable characteristics were also omitted.

Ethical consideration was also given to ensure anonymity of the institutions under study; the study pertains to power relationships and the subject positioning of undergraduates, which can be a sensitive topic and so, anonymity was given to the institutions in order to protect their reputation in the sector. To do this, when analysing the public documents, quotations were shortened to such an extent that they were not identifiable; giving the full-length quote would have breached anonymity. Any identifiable features mentioned in the interviews were removed as well, including direct quotations from the two documents provided to participants. Because of their recognisability, the institution-wide policy from University A and the Student Charter from University B were given different names in the transcripts and throughout the

thesis. In some ways, my research was sensitive to participants because of the personal topics covered in the interviews and because of the importance of institutional reputation; some participants expressed concern that they did not want their institution named because of what had been said in the course of the interview. Protecting the reputation of the institutions was given full priority in this study and I took measures to ensure that neither institution would be identifiable.

Lastly, the critical realist perspective employed in this study emphasises the importance of reflexivity for researchers. As Clegg and Stevenson point out,

The problem, as well as the advantage, of insider research is the sheer immersion of the researcher in the field she is researching. She is a fish in the water, part of the habitus, with a feel for the rules of the game (2013, p.7).

My knowledge of the world, and more specifically, my knowledge of the HE sector has been determined by my own experience of it (Sayer, 1992) and thus, it was important to be constantly reflective of my own position as a researcher in my field. As such, I constantly reviewed my impact during the interviews and the observations. I scrutinised any bias I had from being a part of the HE environment and I was constantly reflective of my position as someone who had studied English at undergraduate level.

During the study, I was conscious of the critical perspective that ‘because we are accustomed to thinking in terms of a particular set of concepts, we rarely recognize their influence’ (Sayer, 1992, p.53) and so, I made sure I was critical and reflective of my own assumptions of knowledge, my own understanding of the social phenomena being analysed and the environment under study. Critical realists recognise that researchers must accept, and be critical of, their own subjectivity; we are incapable of separating ourselves from our social world:

Social scientists who treat “data” literally as “given things” (often those who feel most confident about the objectivity of their knowledge and the “hardness” of their facts) therefore unknowingly take on board and reproduce the interpretations implicit in the data: they think *with* these hidden concepts but not *about* them (Sayer, 1992, p.52).

Accordingly, I reflected on my personal experiences of working and studying within the HE sector, particularly within the English discipline. I critically reflected on my values and beliefs about the HE sector in the current climate and considered the ways in which this could have impacted on the research process. Overall, the reflexivity I employed during the study allowed me to be more critical of the phenomena under study, constantly looking for hidden assumptions, including my own, to better understand the research in its entirety.

5.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology that has guided my study of power relationships and subject positionings in the current university climate, using two post-1992 case studies in England. Utilising critical realism in this study has allowed me to explore social phenomena without falling into the dangers found in some forms of both empiricism and constructivism. Critical realism provides me with a meta-theory that allows me to adopt ‘a “both and” theory, rather than an “either/or” one’ (Collier, 1994, p.143), which corresponds to my dialectical framework of systemic and constitutive power. Using the Faircloughian three-dimensional model of CDA in my analysis, which closely aligns to the three levels of critical realist thought, has allowed me to critically consider the dialectical relation between structure and agency in understanding power relationships, and how these relationships are influenced by the subject positioning of undergraduates.

6 CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS – ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS ONE, TWO AND THREE

6.1 Introduction

Having outlined the methodology for this study, I turn now to a discussion of the analysis of the data. This chapter is split into three separate but interrelated sections, each one addressing a separate research question. The first section discusses the ways in which undergraduates are engaged through institutional characteristics and interpersonal relationships with academics, the reasons behind these modes of engagement and how they relate to the subject positioning of undergraduates. I then discuss perceptions of the power relationship that exists between undergraduates and academics, outlining the perception of a ‘traditional’ power relationship, which entails specific characteristics and behavioural expectations of both the traditional learner and teacher subjectivities. Finally, this chapter considers the ways in which the engagement of undergraduates as partners and consumers impacts what is perceived of as the traditional power relationship. This chapter draws on the data from the semi-structured interviews, the observational fieldwork and the institutional documents from both universities.

6.2 PART I: Discussion in Relation to Research Question One

6.2.1 Introduction

The first research question in this study is:

With what intentions, and in what ways, are undergraduate students engaged through interaction with academic staff and through specific institutional characteristics, and how do these relate to the subject positioning of undergraduate students?

This question considers the broad field of literature in relation to the practices and perceptions apparent in both universities to better understand the ways in which undergraduates are engaged through interaction with academics and through specific institutional policies and strategies. I draw on the literature to integrate an understanding of the roles of the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer; both universities, and their academics, engage undergraduates in ways which position them in the above three subjectivities. The purpose of this research question is to present a foundation for understanding the positioning of undergraduates within both universities; a foundation on which to build a more complex picture of the ways in which conflicting subjectivities and power relationships are manifesting in the current university climate.

This section first discusses the ways in which undergraduates are engaged through an emphasis on the deference to authoritative knowledge and how this mode of engagement works to position them within a traditional learner subjectivity. I then discuss the ways in which undergraduates are engaged through an emphasis on their responsibility for learning, their active participation in the learning process and an encouragement to share authority in reciprocal relationships. I explore how these methods of engagement relate to the positioning of undergraduates as partners. I then

discuss the ways in which they are engaged through an emphasis on their legal rights, their entitlement to demand and the significance placed on their satisfaction as consumers; I consider how these modes of engagement relate to their positioning as consumers. Finally, I conclude with an exploration of how these different and conflicting methods of engagement, each of which are carried out with different intentions, relate to the subject positioning of undergraduates within incompatible subjectivities, each of which encourage conflicting behaviours.

6.2.2 Engaging Undergraduates as Traditional Learners

Neither institution in this study explicitly engages undergraduates as traditional learners. However, universities are educational institutions and as such, they are inevitably associated with the social roles normally found in educational contexts: learners and teachers. As discussed, there is a familiarity within these social roles because they have been internalised, through social norms and enactment in compulsory schooling, as the appropriate social identities for educational contexts. Thus, academics naturally adopt a ‘teacher-student relationship’ (B, SL and ProgL) because university is ‘so similar to when you were at school’ (B, 3, F, EL and MC). The intentions behind academics engaging undergraduates as traditional learners are constituted through internalisation, rather than explicit reasoning. The familiarity of the educational context means that academics subconsciously engage their undergraduates through the consistent recognition, and thus emphasis, on deference to authoritative knowledge, which positions them as traditional learners.

6.2.2.1 *The Traditional Learner: Deference*

Historically, teaching has been constituted through the transmission of authoritative knowledge, which encourages the adoption of traditional learner and teacher roles: ‘the academic [...] tended to do most of the talking because it was just *easier* that way’ (A, P and former DTL). The reliance on teacher roles to provide correct knowledge is a prominent characteristic of the traditional learner subjectivity because it is a component of the relations that form the learner-teacher dynamic within compulsory education. As Shor discovered in his study: ‘if I express an interest or opinion, the students don’t relate to it necessarily as “right” or “wrong” but rather as authoritative, and whatever authority is interested in can become a door to bad or good grades’ (Shor, 1996, p.51). This notion of authoritative knowledge was reflected by one undergraduate who said: ‘they don’t spoon-feed us but they, kind of, *do* in a way. They provide us with everything that we need’ (A, 2, F, E and H). Despite an emphasis on undergraduates taking responsibility for their own learning, which will be discussed later, the familiarity of the educational context promotes a reliance on teacher roles to provide undergraduates with authoritative knowledge.

The findings generally reflected acceptance that academics have greater knowledge than undergraduates: ‘obviously, as a tutor I would know more about certain topics than them’ (A, SL), with the word ‘obviously’ implying little ambiguity. One academic recognised the authority of knowledge as being an established expectation of the teacher role: ‘they trust that you are the expert in your knowledge and in your teaching profession. So, I think there is a, kind of, respect for professional *expertise* from the student’ (A, PL and ProgL) and another reflected:

There's a certain part of their higher education that they believe should be me teaching them about things. I am an expert, they perceive me as an expert [...] they perceive that I know a lot more about the topic than they do and they want me to *tell* them about it (B, SL).

The above perceptions indicate that there is an expectation from undergraduates that anyone who is performing in the role of a teacher should have authority over the knowledge held by that subject. Another academic noted that 'some students want to be lectured at because [...] it makes them feel safe because they're being *told* what it is they need to know' (B, PL); undergraduates have internalised the behaviour of deferring to authoritative knowledge because 'years of socialization have led us to internalize the unilateral authority of the teacher as the normal, "commonsense" way to do education' (Shor, 1996, p.27). As such, it has become a naturalised behaviour within educational contexts.

Undergraduates are engaged as traditional learners through the emphasis on deference to authoritative knowledge through the spatial 'top-down dynamic of the lecture' (A, SL and ProgL). In every lecture observed, the academic was stood at the front, whilst the undergraduates were positioned facing them (A, 2, Lec; A, 1, Lec; A, 2, Lec2; B, 3, Lec; B, 2, Lec; B, 2, Lec2). There was a recognition amongst academics of the way in which deference to knowledge is perpetuated by the spatial dynamic of sites of learning and teaching: 'you're, sort of, sat there, and they're all sat round and they're looking at you and there's that expectation that you are going to give them and they will just consume' (A, SL and SEA). Others made attempts to negate the behaviour of deferring to authoritative knowledge through the re-constitution of the learning space: 'I think it's something that I, kind of, try to avoid [...] in a seminar, I will *never* have the room in, kind of, lines with me at the front, it's always a circle' (A, SL and ProgL) and another said: 'it's very rare that I would be in a situation where I would be standing in front of

a room and saying, “You’re not allowed to interrupt” (B, FDLT). However, the spatial dynamic of the academic at the front and centre, was carried over into seminars as well, despite a recognition that seminars are more concerned with academics being a ‘facilitator of their learning rather than preaching’ (A, SL). In the seminars, the undergraduates’ chairs were typically arranged in the shape of a horseshoe to discourage separation, however, the academics’ chair was always positioned in the centre of that horseshoe, thus re-establishing their authority (A, 2, Sem; A, 1, Sem; B, 3, Sem; B, 2, Sem; B, 2, Sem2).

There was one academic at University A who utilised the seminar space differently. Undergraduates worked in groups and the academic shared time interacting with each group. Rather than sit in front of the group as other academics did (A, 2, Sem; A, 1, Sem; B, 2, Sem), this academic kneeled down next to the undergraduates so that they were physically lower, which undermines the authority of the academic (A, 2, Sem2). Despite this isolated case, the socialisation that posits deference to authoritative knowledge held by the teacher is well established through spatial configuration and was demonstrated in a number of the drawings:

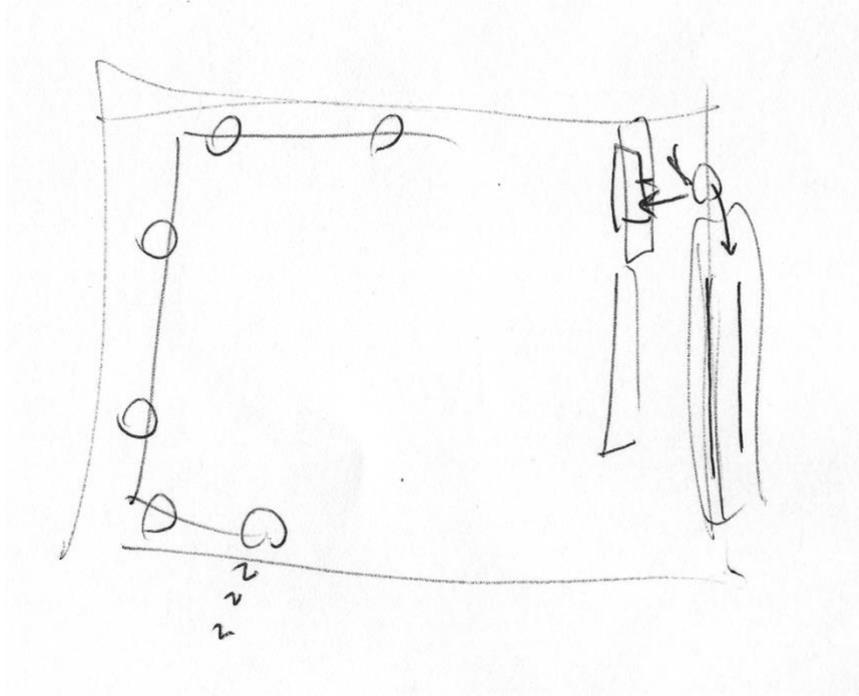


Figure 6.1 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (A, 1, F, E and CW)

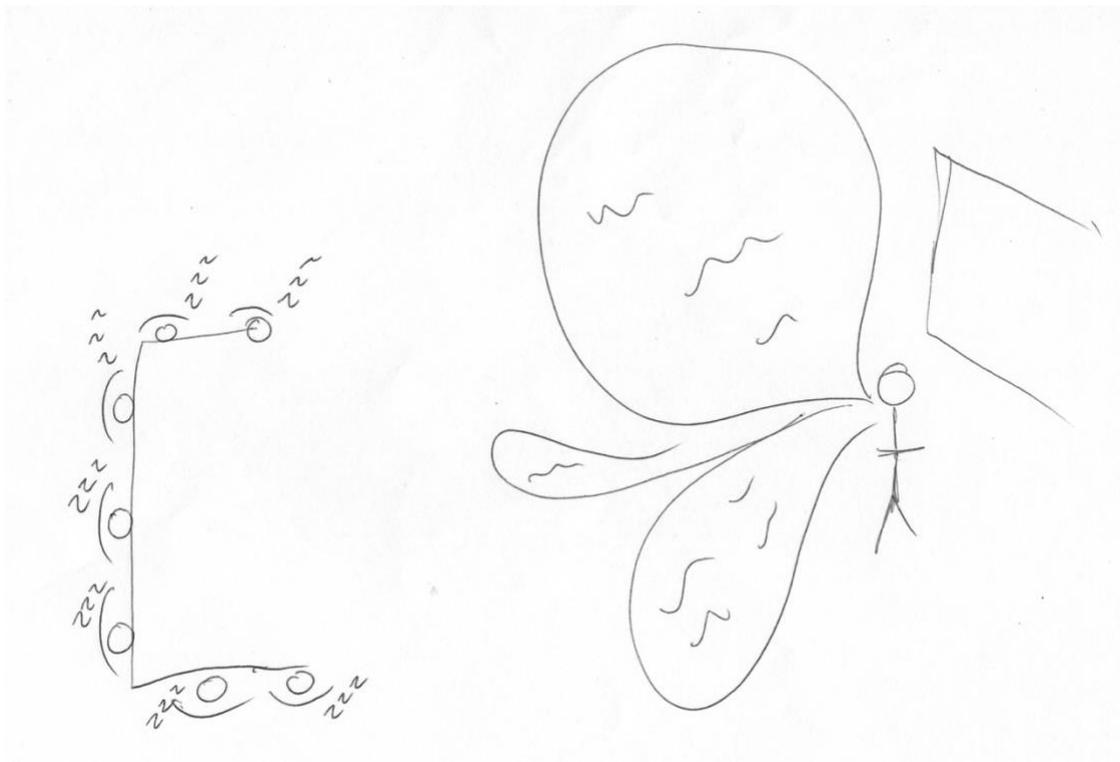


Figure 6.2 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 3, F, EL and MC)

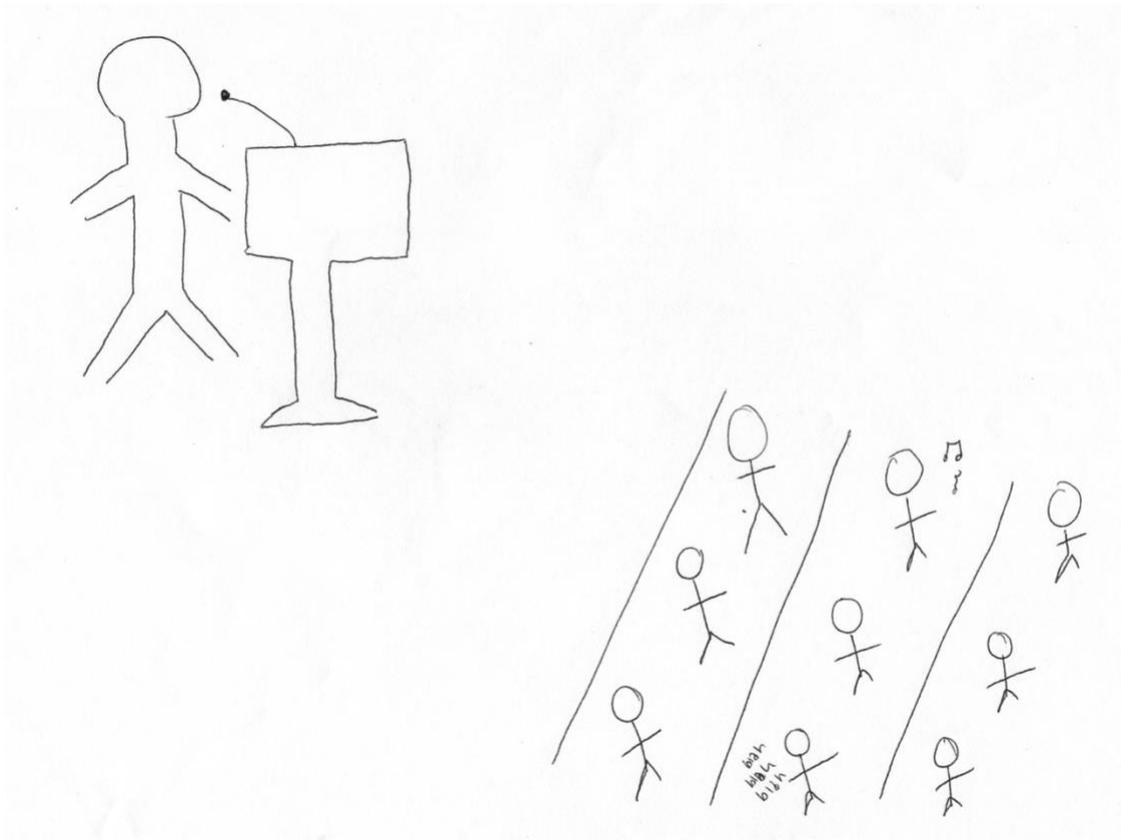


Figure 6.3 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 3, F, EL and S)

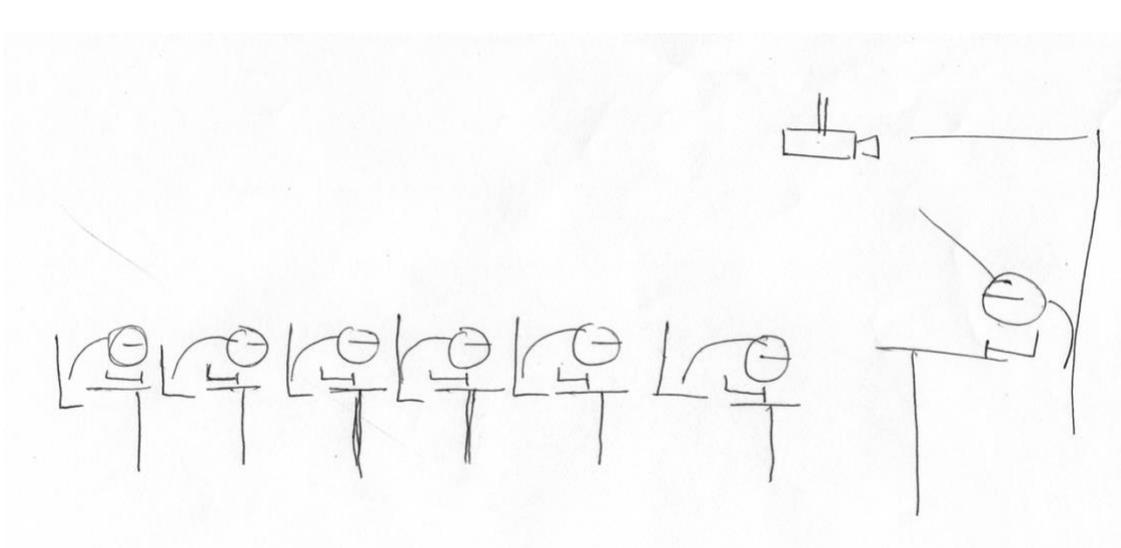


Figure 6.4 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 2, M, EL)



Figure 6.5 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 2, F, EL)

What is particularly interesting about these drawings, is that they all represent a 'bad' relationship with an academic, which suggests that undergraduates perceive engagement through deference to authoritative knowledge, perpetuated through spatial configuration, as a negative characteristic of relationships at university.

6.2.3 Engaging Undergraduates as Partners

As discussed, partnerships are becoming increasingly popular within universities (Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018); they are thought to have a positive influence on the learning experience of both undergraduates and academics and to promote the discovery and creation of knowledge: 'co-production sees the student, lecturers and others who

support the learning process as being engaged in a cooperative enterprise, which is focused on knowledge, its production, dissemination and application' (McCulloch, 2009, p.181). Both universities have institutional policies which outline methods for engaging undergraduates within partnership models. For University A, the policy is based on 'mutual expectations and aspirations' (2018e), and for University B, the policy defines undergraduates and staff as 'co-creators of understanding' and 'co-producers of knowledge' (2018a). According to Marquis et al., 'partnerships involve the formation of reciprocal relationships between students and academic staff, with the capacity to mitigate traditional hierarchies and benefit all parties involved' (2016, p.4). For both universities in this study, though, each unique partnership strategy is, at best, ambiguously defined and the discourses of the interviews indicate ambivalent and varied perceptions of its meaning and representation.

The academic interview discourses from University B reflected conflict and ambiguity in attempting to define what partnership entailed for the institution. For one academic, it was perceived as 'anti-consumer rhetoric' (B, P), whereas for another, it was considered a representation of a 'two-way *relationship*' (B, PL) and another yet saw it as a 'word which is *used* in order to break *down* [...] a teacher-pupil division' (B, SL and ProgL). Each of these definitions has slightly different connotations for engaging undergraduates; an anti-consumer ethos would imply an attempt to diminish the power of the undergraduate as a consumer, whereas a strategy to break down the traditional hierarchy would suggest empowering undergraduates. One academic defined the practical implications of the partnership model as: 'student reps, students have an opinion, they contribute to the way that a programme is delivered' (B, FDLT). According to Little though, these representations of undergraduate consultation are not

related to the concept of partnership: ‘institutional attempts to engage students in shaping the learning experience historically have rested more on the discourse and practices of representation and consultation than on those of partnership and collaboration’ (2010, p.7). The true concept of partnership relates back at least as far as Humboldt’s University of Berlin and entails ‘a community of learners and scholars engaged in the pursuit and building of knowledge through collective inquiry’ (Little, 2010, p.3). The emphasis on undergraduate evaluation and opinion is not so much partnership, but a recognition of undergraduates’ rights as institutional stakeholders.

The discourse of the academic interviews in University A suggested a similar ambiguity in the understanding of partnership. The founder of the Student Collaboration Policy defined it as representing the logic of the ‘cooperative university [...] ran by its members, who are all equal’ (A, P and former DTL), defining the institution as one in which students and staff ‘work it out together’ (A, P and former DTL), which suggests a complete rebalance of power between undergraduates and academics. However, other academic participants perceived it slightly differently; one said: ‘the way that I tend to think about it, is not in terms of a *specific project* [...] the way that I understand it *more*, is in terms of a, kind of, *ethos*’ (A, SL and ProgL), which suggests an understanding and accepting of the theory behind the strategy, but a reluctance to implement it in practice. Another perceived it as ‘repackaging’ what ‘university teaching’s always been’ (A, PL and ProgL) and another simply stated that ‘we understand the concept, and we approve of the concept and we have meetings in which we talk about the concept’ (A, SL), which suggests that the partnership strategy is a *concept* rather than a practical or implemented strategy. Despite the Student Collaboration Policy being fairly well known in the field, the academics at University A had ambiguous perceptions of

what the strategy meant in practice. This dichotomy between theory and practice has been felt by participants in other studies; Marquis et al., noted that ‘while it appeared that the idea itself was simple and/or appealing, thinking about putting it into action was intimidating’ (2017, p.725). Moreover, the Student Collaboration Policy is not as prominent in the institution as it once was; the explanation of its purpose is no longer found on the official website for University A, but instead on a separate website that is ‘no longer being updated’ (University A, 2018f). For both institutions, there was a very obvious lack of consistency in how the concept of partnership should be defined, how it should be understood and how it should be implemented in practice.

Despite the ambiguity in defining partnership in practical terms, there were particular characteristics perpetuated by academics at the constitutive level that align with the expected behaviours of a partner subject position; generally, academics engaged undergraduates through an emphasis on them taking responsibility for learning, actively participating in the learning process and sharing authority with academics in reciprocal relationships. All of these behavioural characteristics are expected within partnership models (Little, 2010; Marquis et al., 2016; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). Institutions and academics encourage undergraduates to engage with these behaviours as a means of promoting deep learning to develop them as independent scholars.

6.2.3.1 *The Partner: Taking Responsibility for Learning*

The discourses of the institutional documentation from both universities reflected an emphasis on undergraduates’ responsibility for learning. The Student Charter from University A encourages an understanding of ‘respective responsibilities’ and expects undergraduates to ‘take responsibility for [their] own learning and research’ (2018e).

The institution positions them as ‘independent learner[s] or researcher[s]’ (2018e) and as such, they ‘are required to engage in independent study’ (2018a). According to the Student Charter from University B, undergraduates are expected to ‘take responsibility for managing their own learning’ (2018b) and this is achieved through an emphasis on ‘developing confidence’, ‘accepting uncertainty’ and ‘challenging accepted thinking’ (2018a).

The majority of academics supported the emphasis on undergraduates’ responsibility for learning and the majority perceived it to be an essential characteristic of engagement:

Engagement is making them take *responsibility* and ownership (A, SL and SEA).

I think the more that the students are taking responsibility for facilitating their own discussion, the better, because it’s about *their* learning experience (A, SL and ProgL).

It’s about the student having ownership of the learning experience (B, R).

I would encourage them to do as much of the talking as possible really, because again, it’s that idea of *engagement*, I’m trying to steer *them* to do something not do it *for* them (B, P).

The academic interviewees consistently emphasised their attempts to engage undergraduates as independent learners who are responsible for their own learning. One academic said they try to ‘give them more independent tasks, where [...] they *lead* part of the seminar, or *they* find a resource that they want to bring and share with everybody, rather than always prescribing to them what I’ve found’ (A, PL and ProgL). Another academic said they design assignments ‘that are creative in a way, so that [...] I’m not just asking them to regurgitate what we’ve discussed in class but asking them to, kind of, use that as a basis to do something else with’ (B, SL) and another reflected that they ‘try and encourage them *not* to accept everything they read, just because it’s in an

academic journal' (B, PL). In these reflections, there is an emphasis on the teaching practice being facilitated by undergraduates, which reverses their engagement through deference to authoritative knowledge. This emphasis on their responsibility was reflected back in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews across both institutions. One said: 'most tutors try to get you to interact with them, answer questions, think for yourself and come up with your own answer' (A, 3, M, E) and another said: 'there are some topics that I think they gave you specifically so *that* you'll look up and you'll research on your own, because they also want you to do independent study' (B, 1, F, EL and CW). Generally, undergraduates and academics from both institutions perceived the undergraduate's responsibility for learning to be very apparent within sites of learning and teaching.

This emphasis was apparent within the observations, whereby academics attempted to negate an undergraduate's inclination for affirmation that stems from the traditional learner subjectivity. There were a number of instances in the observations at University B where undergraduates verbally sought affirmation, which was met with an avoidance of definitive answers. During one observation, there were phrases that suggested the uncertainty of the undergraduate: 'I assumed' and 'is it because?' (B, 3, Lec). This particular academic was careful to avoid giving affirmation in the sense of providing an authoritative answer; the undergraduates' answers were countered with 'I wonder' and 'I think you could play this either way' (B, 3, Lec). In another seminar, an undergraduate opened her response with 'I would be wrong. I am wrong' (B, 2, Sem2) and the academic responded with 'it's difficult to be wrong in this poem. I don't think you're wrong' (B, 2, Sem2); the undergraduate was seeking correction from the academic by actively depreciating their own interpretation, but the academic did not affirm this and

instead encouraged the undergraduate to take responsibility for the validation of their ideas. This was also apparent during the observations at University A; during one, an undergraduate asked the academic if their interpretation was correct and the academic responded with ‘I don’t know, maybe’ (A, 2, Sem). Like the academic from University B, this academic responded in a way which forced the undergraduate to validate their own interpretation.

Moreover, there was a particular emphasis on responsible and independent learning for the discipline of English; a number of undergraduates noted that the responsibility for independent learning was particularly prominent within the discipline of English because of the style of learning. One said: ‘in English, particularly, is it’s very much, “Come to the lectures, we’ll chat for a bit in the seminar and then, off you go, do your own thing”’ (A, 2, F, E and H) and another said: ‘there’s a lot less contact hours so, they, sort of, encourage us to do our own thing, we have time to read and stuff’ (A, 1, F, E and CW). There was a recognition that reading for an English degree requires less contact time with academics and so, undergraduates are engaged through an emphasis on independent study: ‘the emphasis in the Humanities, and in English especially, is *much more* on the individual doing *their own work*’ (A, SL and ProgL).

6.2.3.2 *The Partner: Actively Participating*

As well as being engaged through independent learning, the findings also illuminated that institutions and academics engage their undergraduates through active participation in the learning process, which is considered essential for deep learning: ‘students develop their understanding of concepts and best retain knowledge by engaging with so-called “active learning” methods that include problem solving and critical thinking’

(French and Kennedy, 2017, pp.644–5). When asked to define the methods of engagement within their respective institutions, the general response from participants referred to active participation:

Engagement is encouraging students to be *active* learners, to be *engaged*, to *negotiate* learning with lecturers (A, PL and ProgL).

Being engaged, I think it indicates some, kind of, *active* participation in something so, rather than being *passive* (A, SL and ProgL).

It's synonymous with participation, I think, in an academic sense. It's students not just turning up and doing the work and reading the texts, but being brought into [...] a learning community (B, SL and ProgL).

Engaging entails the *active* participation of students to the learning activity (B, R).

Participation? More than anything, if someone says that they require a certain amount of engagement from me, I'm going to actually take part (A, 2, F, E and H).

Engaging is more than turning up, it is also contributing, so, kind of, being alive, *awake*, when you're there in that moment, and then actually giving something back, not just being on the receiving side of things (B, 3, F, EL and MC).

You're taking part and you're listening and you're involved (B, 2, F, EL).

From the above perceptions, it is clear that engagement is considered synonymous with active participation and that there is an emphasis on engaging undergraduates through active participation within both universities.

One academic disliked the association between active participation and engagement and argued that engagement actually means 'using your head, using your brain, using your faculties. So, I like the word engagement over, say, something like participation, because participation means did you *talk* during class?' (A, SL2). The same academic elaborated:

Engagement means that the contribution that's made has actually given serious thought to the question and to the text. So, you may have a student that is much shyer, that may not *speak* as often as the person sitting next to them, but their level of engagement can actually be higher (A, SL2).

By this view, active participation does not necessarily correlate to an undergraduate's engagement with the learning, it only indicates that they have spoken: 'engagement is such a better word because it does represent the *quality*, not necessarily the *quantity* of the thought and contribution' (A, SL2).

Another academic reflected that engagement through active participation inevitably excluded undergraduates who were less confident in speaking amongst others: 'people have a perfect right to be shy and, they shouldn't *have* to be put on the spot in front of 20 people they don't know very well, if they don't *want* to be' (B, PL). Engagement through active participation was felt by undergraduates too, to be potentially detrimental because of the emphasis on forcing undergraduates to interact, even if they have nothing valuable to contribute:

I think sometimes seminars try and *force* an opinion out of you [...] *force* you to think, and sometimes that's not necessarily useful [...] I don't think it helps you *understand* the topic more, it just makes you [...] feel as though you've said something (A, 2, M, E).

If no one answers, then nobody else answers for the next 2 minutes and the tutor will wait [...] for as *long* as it takes for someone to speak up [...] it's just worsening everything because the longer the silence goes on, the longer [...] no one wants to speak. That's *not* engagement for me (A, 2, M, E).

There were a number of instances during the lecture and seminar observations where academics pushed for active interaction and were met with silence (A, 2, Lec; A, 2, Sem; A, 1, Sem; B, 3, Lec; B, 3, Sem; B, 2, Sem). It was clear that academics were keen to engage undergraduates through active participation during lectures and seminars, because of the widely accepted notion that 'being active while learning is better than being inactive' (Biggs and Tang, 2007, p.94) but as reflected in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews, attempts to force active participation were often met with resistance.

One undergraduate considered the push for active participation to be stifling:

There could be a person in a classroom who's nervous to speak out and nervous to go and meet someone [...] it's just I think that there's very much a way of doing it and if you can't do that way then that's it (B, 3, M, CW).

This implies that the notion of active participation reinforces a specific way of learning, which is detrimental to those who are unable to engage with this process of learning. The emphasis on active participation as a performative measure of engagement is considered by Gourlay to be detrimental to other valuable learning styles:

Mainstream conceptions of student engagement emphasise practices which are observable, verbal, communal and indicative of "participation", and that private, silent, unobserved and solitary practices may be pathologized or rendered invisible – or in a sense unknowable – as a result, despite being central to student engagement (2015, p.410).

According to one undergraduate, those who read English struggle with active participation: 'a lot of people on this course are incredibly anti-social [...] *no one* wants to [...] be the first person to speak out loud in a big class' (A, 2, M, E). The engagement of undergraduates through active participation as part of their positioning as partners, then, can be detrimental to those who struggle with 'normative notions of what constitutes "acceptable" student practice' (Gourlay, 2015, p.403).

There is an emphasis, and arguably a pressure, on undergraduates to actively participate in sites of learning and teaching as an assumed indication that they have engaged with the learning material. Academics in this study attempted to engage their undergraduates through active learning, which relates to their positioning as partners. However, some undergraduates were reluctant to adhere to the behaviour of active participation and there was a recognition that engaging undergraduates through active learning was not always beneficial to their understanding. Engaging undergraduates in this way conflicts with their engagement through deference to authoritative knowledge and their positioning as traditional learners and creates confusion in terms of expected behaviour.

Alongside active participation, both institutions, and their academics, also attempt to engage undergraduates through an emphasis on shared authority within reciprocal relationships.

6.2.3.3 *The Partner: Reciprocity and Shared Authority*

The word ‘reciprocal’ was used by some academics in response to outlining the ways in which they engage undergraduates or for defining the relationship between them. One said: ‘I guess it means a, kind of, reciprocity, I suppose. So, you expect certain things from students and they should expect certain things from you’ (A, SL) and another said: ‘it’s very much about something *reciprocal* [...] I’m *engaged* and as *engaging* as the students are prepared to be’ (B, R). One academic emphasised reciprocity in a drawing:

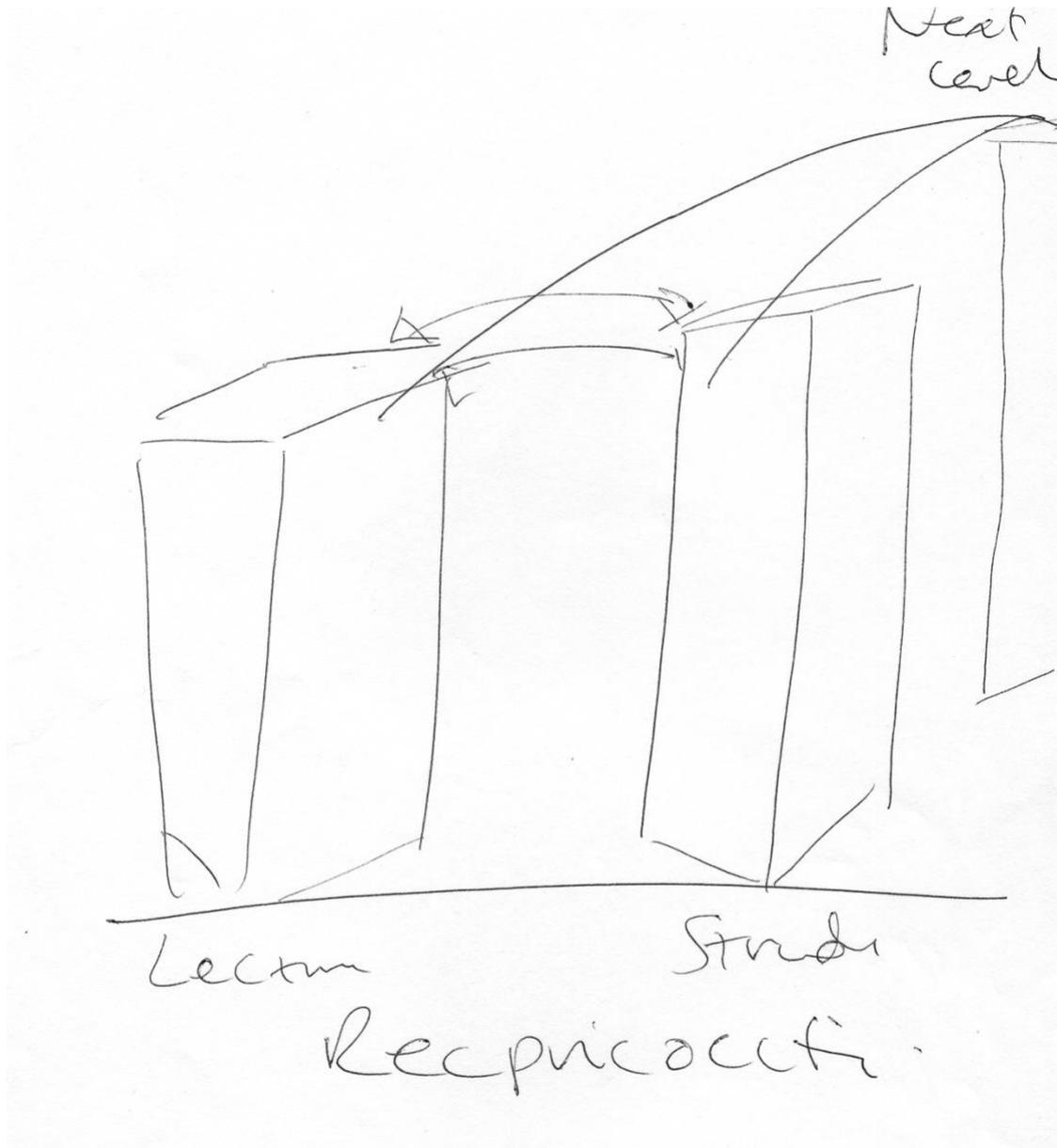


Figure 6.6 Drawing of a 'good' relationship between undergraduates and academics (B, FDLT)

This academic described the conceptualisation as ‘something that’s reciprocal, so it’s equal and the conversation is two-way’ (B, FDLT). The concept of mutuality or equal contribution was cited frequently as being a means of engagement; this notion is pervasive throughout the literature on positioning undergraduates as partners in the learning process (Bovill and Felten, 2016; Kehler, Verwoord and Smith, 2017; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

Another academic emphasised reciprocity in their drawing:

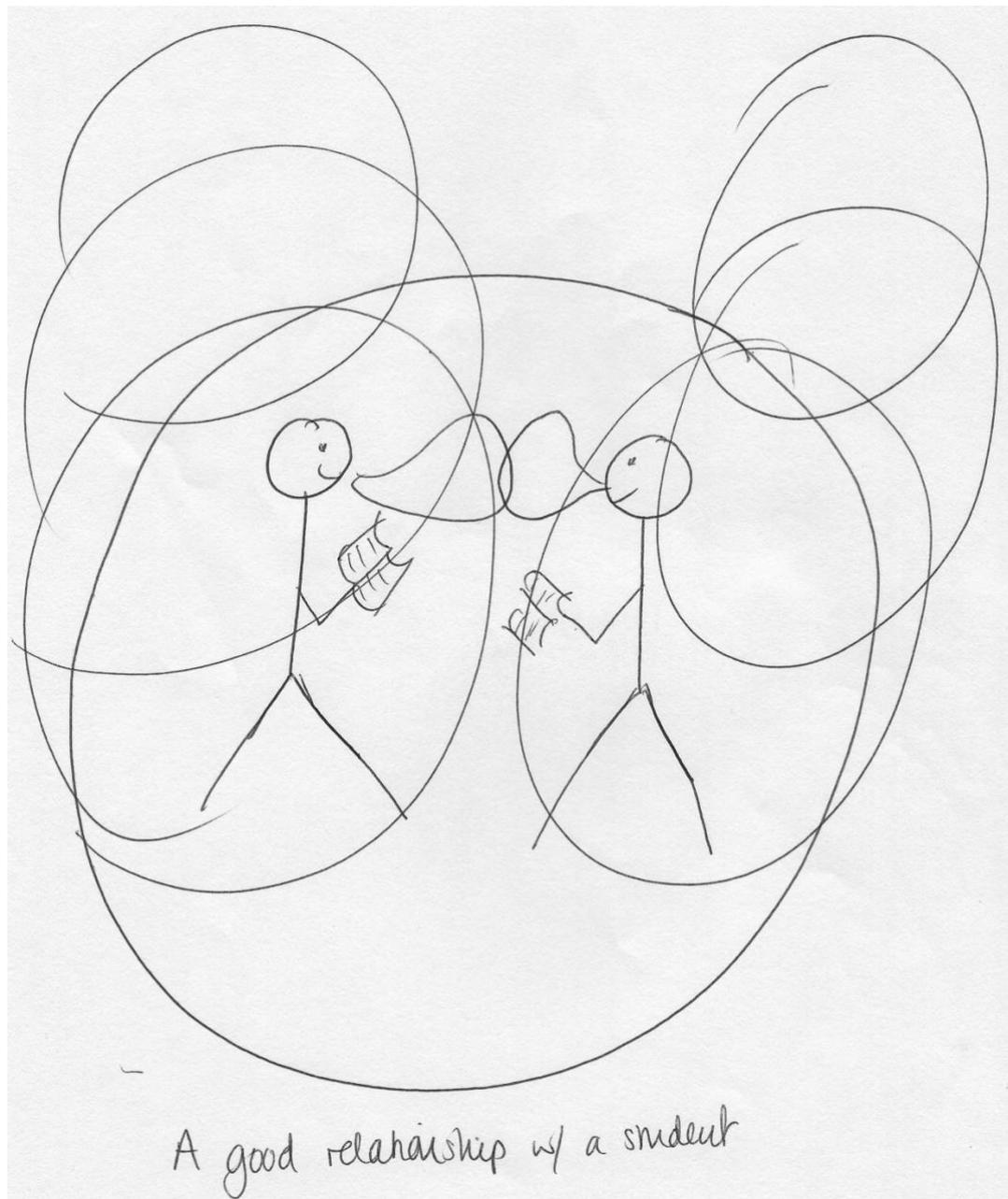


Figure 6.7 Drawing of a 'good' relationship between undergraduates and academics (A, SL and ProgL)

By way of explanation, this academic said: 'the big circle is where we all, kind of, interact and then we've all got other things as well and then we've *both* got things to say, equally and so the idea is, there's a, kind of, equal thing here' (A, SL and ProgL).

Another academic argued that engaging undergraduates is an ‘ongoing collaboration’

(B, R). They argued:

Your mind is not this empty vessel and then I come in and I pour all my knowledge into it. So, relationship means that, in order for students to *succeed* and for me to succeed as a *teacher*, you need to give me something back, that the knowledge travels two ways [...] it means *dialogue*, it means *conversation*, it means, yeah, the traffic is two ways (B, R).

There was a strong sense in which academics felt they engaged undergraduates through emphasising a two-way process, whereby the dialogue is shared rather than unilateral, which works to position undergraduates within a partner subjectivity, which was emphasised in the institutional documentation also. This is in direct conflict to engaging them through deference to authoritative knowledge, which is highlighted by the phrase ‘empty vessel’.

In general, the discourses of the undergraduate interviews also reflected a recognition of the attempts made to engage them within reciprocal relationships:

I think *interaction* between two people. It can’t just be a one-way channel, it has to be open both ways (A, 3, M, E).

Everyone is on the same level of understanding, ready to co-operate with each other, yeah, engagement (A, 2, M, E).

It’s a two-way process [...] if I’m interested in a thing, but also if someone’s *encouraging* the interest (A, 2, F, E).

It’s a two-way street in some ways. You’ve got to, kind of, meet them in the middle (B, 3, F, EL and MC).

It’s more of a two-way, rather than lecturers just standing there talking at you (B, 3, F, EL and S).

If you want to go and interact with them, you value their time and they value yours, rather than it being just a one-way street (B, 2, F, EL and MC).

The repetition of the phrase ‘two-way’ emphasises the cogency of reciprocal relationships between undergraduates and academics, which is also emphasised in the discourse at the systemic level of both institutions. University A encourages

undergraduates to be ‘co-creators of new knowledge’ (2018g) and to ‘work collaboratively’ (2018g) and University B stresses their engagement as ‘co-creators’ and ‘co-producers’ (2018a). There is a strong emphasis within University A on avoiding positioning undergraduates as ‘recipients of “received wisdom”’ (2018g) and instead, encouraging the shared discovery of knowledge; engagement through these behaviours emphasises undergraduates’ positioning as partners. However, the institutional characteristics of both universities also engage undergraduates through an emphasis on the legal rights that stem from their financial contract with the institution, which inevitably works to position them within a consumer subjectivity.

6.2.4 Engaging Undergraduates as Consumers

Universities in England are legally obligated to engage their undergraduates as customers, which subsequently positions them in a consumer subjectivity. Each institution emphasises the necessity of engaging undergraduates in terms of their rights as consumers, with the intention of complying with legal imperatives facing all HEIs in England (Legislation.gov.uk, 2017). The findings suggest that academics, though, actively discourage engagement through methods that incite a consumer subject positioning, despite the professional requirement to adhere to legal policies. Nevertheless, the institutional characteristics that emphasise an undergraduates’ legal rights were cogent out of necessity and they were reflected in undergraduates’ understanding of their subject position within their institutions. Specifically, both institutions engage undergraduates through an emphasis on their legal rights, with an encouragement to perceive HE as an investment for their future employability.

6.2.4.1 *The Consumer: Legal Rights*

Institutions are obligated to protect undergraduates' 'consumer rights' (Competition and Markets Authority, 2015). As one academic pointed out,

It's not the students who are at the heart [of the university], it's the legal relationship [...] It undercuts everything. It's the legal framework, so the university thinks of that at the beginning because it *has* to (A, P and former DTL).

Universities in England are obligated by law to position undergraduates as consumers, which entails that universities engage them in relation to their legal rights. The institutional documents from both universities are littered with intertextual references to legal discourse commonly associated with markets and businesses. In the General Regulations of University A, undergraduates are given 'a formal means' to 'channel any complaint' that they might have concerning the 'services provided by the University' (2018b). Although the discourse does not explicitly position undergraduates as consumers, the phrase 'services provided' (University A, 2018b) has connotations of consumerism, furthered by other references to 'educational services' and 'provision of such services' (University A, 2018d) in another policy.

At University A, there was a clear recognition that 'students now are [...] legally consumers, with very clear consumer rights' (A, P and former DTL). The same academic felt strongly that the rhetoric of placing undergraduates 'at the heart of the system' (Browne et al., 2010) was emphasising the positioning of them as consumers and highlighting the legality of the relationship between them and universities:

Putting them there causes lots of problems in terms of [...] students being *forced* into a particular position, an antagonistic position. So, they might be at the heart but it's an antagonistic relationship of entitlement through their legal right (A, P and former DTL).

However, there was a sense from the discourse of the policy documents that University B is attempting to lessen the impact of the antagonism created by legality. Although the Student Complaints Procedure from University B emphasised that ‘the student has the right to’ (2018c) exercise different powers based on their legal entitlement, it did not draw on intertextual references to legal and business discourse as strongly as University A. The same policy document explains that undergraduates are considered to be ‘important partners’ in the ‘resolution of complaints’ with an expectation of ‘active participation’ (University B, 2018c), which suggests that University B, whilst adhering to legal imperatives, is attempting to negate engaging undergraduates through emphasis on their legal right and emphasise their position as partners instead.

Nevertheless, the policy documents from both institutions position undergraduates as consumers through an emphasis on the legal contract between them and the university:

The arrangements [...] define the basis of the contractual agreement between you as the student and us as the University (University B, 2018d).

These terms and conditions represent an agreement between the University [...] and you, a prospective student (University A, 2018c).

As such, the majority of the institutional documents referenced the expectation of provision of service. University A agrees to ‘provide educational services’ (2018d), which includes ‘academic services and facilities’ (2018d). Legally speaking, the university ‘agrees to be bound by these Regulations’ (University A, 2018d) and expects the same from the other party: ‘the student agrees to be bound by the University’s Regulations’ (University A, 2018d). The legal positioning of undergraduates as consumers of the university is emphasised by admission being ‘subject to [students’] complying with the terms of the Contract’ (University A, 2018c). The capitalisation used for ‘Contract’ emphasises that the agreement is a binding legal document. Similarly, University B’s institutional documentation demonstrates their commitment

‘to take all reasonable steps to provide educational services’ (2018e). Unlike University A, though, there was less intertextuality of appropriated legal discourse in the documents of University B.

The legal positioning of undergraduates at the macro level filters through into the interpersonal relationships between them and academics; the dialectical relationship between systemic power and constitutive power means that undergraduates are being engaged through reference to their legal entitlement at the systemic level and this is then being exercised as a constitutive form of power, through interpersonal relationships.

One academic argued:

You *have* to start thinking about them as X because that’s the way they’re described or expressed in the documents that govern how we operate [...] I don’t know how to avoid it, because it’s not that the institution is going out and actively seeking to do it (A, SL2).

The discourse being used to engage undergraduates at the systemic level emphasises their legal rights, and although academics are reluctant to encourage this engagement, there is a legal obligation to do so. Certainly, academics were aware of adhering to these legal imperatives when engaging with undergraduates. One academic said: ‘where I *am* conscious of the *legalities* [...] with the CMA requirements of what we can say and what we can’t, I’m much more careful in not making claims’ (B, P) and another said:

We, I, am required to market and think about the programme, it’s presented as a product which has to be delivered in a certain way [...] I very much have to be careful about the way in which we present what we’re doing (B, SL and ProgL).

Universities, and their academics, must remain conscious of the legal imperatives that define their contractual relationship with undergraduates. Engaging undergraduates through an emphasis on their legal rights as consumers has to be constituted at the systemic level because ‘structures of universities and higher education, to some extent, have to be framed by that financial transaction’ (A, PL and ProgL). The financial

transaction follows the logic and legality of our cultural economic system of exchange; universities have no choice but to engage undergraduates in relation to their legal rights and thus, position them as consumers.

6.2.4.2 *The Consumer: Investing in the Future*

The notion of HE being an investment for the future is heavily emphasised by government policy; undergraduates are now ‘portrayed as rational economic actors choosing to invest in education in order to make more money later’ (Cameron, 2003, p.134). According to the Browne Report, ‘a degree is a good investment’ (2010, p.5) and it has been framed as ‘a sound financial and personal investment with a wide range of societal benefits’ (BIS (Department for Business Innovation & Skills), 2016, p.7). This government legislature has influenced both institutions; each place a considerable emphasis on the notion of investing for the future in their institutional documents. The University A prospectus is flooded with statistics concerning graduate employment, but it also explicitly emphasises the correlation between HE and employment, promising to equip undergraduates with everything they need to ‘achieve the future [they] want’ and to ‘get the best start in [their] chosen career’ (2018h). The institution is concerned with providing the ‘strongest possible foundation for [students’] future career’ (University A, 2018h).

Similarly, the institutional documentation from University B places a strong emphasis on the interrelation between learning and employment. According to Tomlinson, this is because the purpose of HE is changing to ‘providing private goods whose benefits are referenced against their potential future economic exchange value’ (2016, p.2). Undergraduates are encouraged to choose a degree that will be considered a future

investment; one which will aid employment. The Learning and Teaching Strategy is inundated with references to graduate employability; the first aim of the strategy, which comes before aims regarding teaching or learning, concerns ‘produc[ing] graduates’ who can contribute to ‘wider social purposes’ (University B, 2018a). The strategy goes on to elaborate that ‘graduate employability and global citizenship’ should be key characteristics of a graduate from University B and that ‘initiatives to support’ employability should be ‘embedded in curricula’ (2018a). As with University A, learning and employability are intertwined, which is made more explicit in the prospectus, whereby undergraduates are told that a degree will ‘make a huge difference to [their] future’ and ‘set [them] on the road to a successful future’ (University B, 2018e). Moreover, the institution promises to ‘launch [students] into the world of work’ through opportunities because each degree ‘opens doors to a variety of careers’ and has ‘employability built in’ (2018e). Both University A and University B engage undergraduates through the emphasis on graduate employability and as such, reiterate the notion that a degree is ‘now considered to be a private contractual investment between individuals and institutions’ (Naidoo and Williams, 2015, p.216).

Academics are well aware of the imperatives surrounding employability and they recognise that undergraduates ‘have to feel there’s an economic benefit’ (A, PL and ProgL). According to the same academic,

We *do* think a lot about employability now, and try to incorporate into our styles of teaching, and what we ask students to *do* and how we assess them, we have in mind *skills* that are transferrable to work contexts (A, PL and ProgL).

Framing a degree as an investment from the systemic level means that academics are more conscious of ‘encouraging them to be *invested* in their learning experience’ (A, SL and ProgL) and as such, there is a need to communicate to undergraduates, ‘in terms

of their longer term career ambitions why it might also be useful and relevant' (A, SL). However, this focus on learning for the sake of employment, rather than for the sake of learning, was reflected as a concern in the discourses of the academic interviews:

It encourages the view that you're here to get a *job* [...] that it leads to a certain *output* or, *result* (A, SL2).

I think we should be encouraging them to think about being here for the sake of education, for the sake of becoming better citizens, for the sake of learning things that *are* transferrable into the workplace once they *leave*, but they're not necessarily about, "This skill will get me this job. Tick" (A, SL2).

To get that level of engagement from the student, it has to be something that they can put on their CV, and that's what it boils down to, "Is it going to help me find a job in the real world?" Again, I'm not dismissing it, it's a *real* concern (B, R).

There was a general concern from academics that engaging undergraduates in terms of employability was superseding the emphasis on learning. Williams notes: 'school children receive the message that the aim of HE is to enable them to get a job and earn money. Education is presented [...] as an essentially private investment from which material rewards can be accrued' (2013, p.70). The message that studying for a degree is a necessary prerequisite for securing a job was considered detrimental to the purpose of HE:

I want them to be thinking about themselves as *learners* and potential researchers, as people that are excited to explore new *things*, as opposed to, "Give me the information, tell me how to write this essay so that I can get the grade I need, to get this, to get that, to get the job" (A, SL2).

This concern was not unfounded; the discourses of the undergraduate interviews reflected the perception that the purpose of a degree is to secure a successful career.

A large number of undergraduates internalised the framing of HE as 'the step to getting a career' (A, 2, F, E and H) or as 'a means to an end' (B, 3, F, EL and MC), emphasised by the appropriation of the verb 'to invest' which was used by a number of participants (A, 2, M, E; B, 1, F, EL and CW; B, 3, F, EL and MC). As described by Williams, the

perception of HE as beneficial to wider society has changed to a more individualised benefit and has thus led to ‘an increasingly instrumental perception of the purpose of HE as being directly linked to future employment prospects’ (2013, p.38). The majority of undergraduates at University A perceived their study to be ‘a pathway to a much more fruitful career’ (A, 2, M, E), which was exemplified in this participant’s drawing of his relationship with the university:

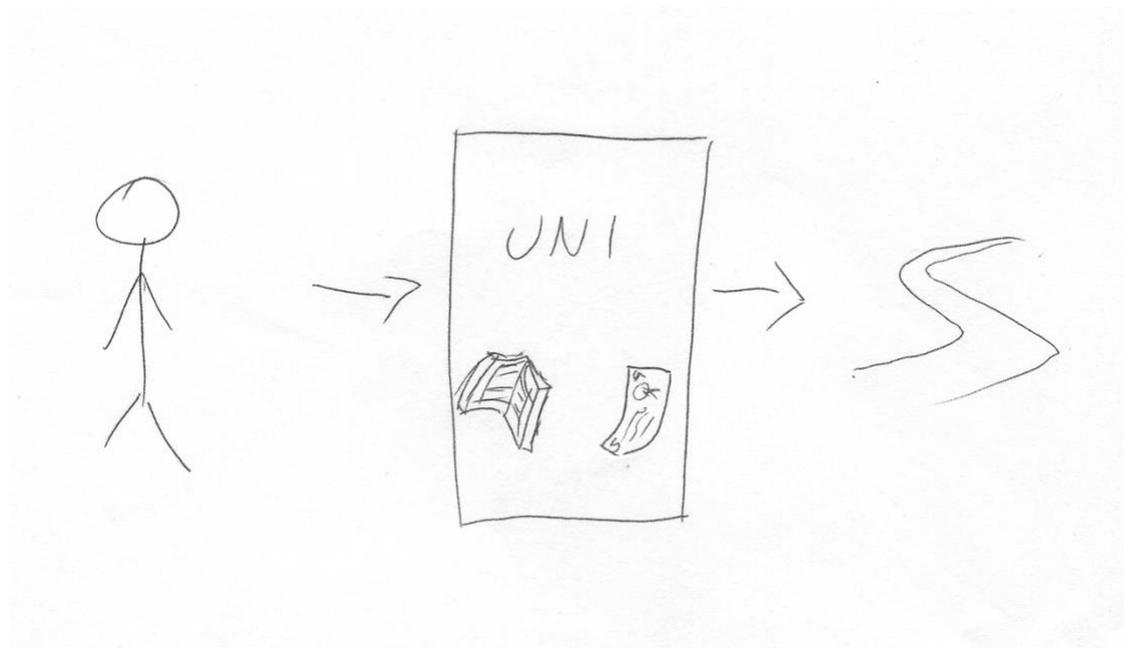


Figure 6.8 Drawing of the relationship between undergraduates and the university (A, 2, M, E)

The university is drawn as a mid-section between the undergraduate and their future, suggesting that a degree is framed as being a necessary ‘stepping stone’ (B, 3, F, EL and MC). This idea was reiterated by another participant who argued that ‘you can’t put a price on what [...] doors this is going to open for me’ (A, 1, F, E and J); the common idiom ‘open doors’ is being employed here, which emphasises the perception of a degree as a means to securing a better future.

Another reflected on the methods of engagement employed by academics to emphasise studying in HE as an investment for future employability:

As much as [...] I enjoy *not* having to talk to other people and just sitting and doing my work, I think it's important that we are forced to do other types of assessment, I think it's important to do those interview things, or presentations, or group work because at the end of the day, that's the real world (A, 2, M, E).

The above participant, whilst emphasising the importance of being forced into developing skills through different assessment methods also recognised that there was more to attending university than employment:

Investing in future is part *of* it, but ultimately for me, it's because I enjoy learning and I have a real issue with people who say, "Well, what are you going to get out of it at the end? What's [...] the *reward* afterwards?" and I'm like, "Well, the reward is learning and having a bit more knowledge about something that I enjoy" (A, 2, M, E).

Some undergraduates admitted that they chose to study as 'more of a passion thing, rather than preparing [...] for work' (B, 3, M, CW). Another said: 'I chose English because I loved it. I wasn't thinking about my career prospects' (A, 3, F, E). Despite a few anomalies, the majority of undergraduates perceived a degree to be a stepping stone to greater employment prospects, demonstrating the cogency of the methods of engagement that highlight this notion. Engaging undergraduates through an emphasis on the degree being an investment in the future was strong in both universities, through both institutional documentation and methods employed by academics in sites of learning and teaching.

6.2.5 Conclusions

Both universities have specific institutional characteristics that engage undergraduates in ways that position them as partners and consumers at the systemic level. Although the institutions do not explicitly engage undergraduates through modes that position them as traditional learners, the familiarity of the educational context coupled with

academics' methods of engagement in sites of learning and teaching work to position them as traditional learners. Although academics were aware of the necessity in adhering to modes of engagement that emphasise undergraduates' legal rights, they generally tried to negate these methods so as not to position them as consumers. They do, however, encourage the positioning of undergraduates as partners through the formation of interpersonal relationships at the constitutive level.

From a theoretical perspective, the naturalisation of subjectivities, which is created through the dialectical relation between systemic and constitutive power, creates discord for undergraduates. It seems natural for an undergraduate to adopt a traditional learner subjectivity because they are in an educational setting, but by the same logic, it seems natural for them to adopt a consumer subjectivity because they are paying money. Equally the positioning of undergraduates as partners dictates a distinct relation that is constituted through equal responsibility and shared authority by the individuals within the dynamic. So whilst it appears natural to adopt a traditional learner subjectivity because of the educational context, and it appears natural to adopt a consumer subjectivity because of the fee-paying context, it also appears appropriate to adopt a partner subjectivity because of the encouragement of this dynamic for HE learning by both institutional discourse and academic interaction.

The emphasis on all three of these subjectivities, at both the systemic and constitutive levels, creates conflict in the positioning of undergraduates and threatens the established power relationship between them. This chapter will now relate the findings to the second research question and discuss how undergraduates and academics perceive this

power relationship, in order to better understand how these conflicting subject positions are transforming the undergraduate-academic power relationship within universities.

6.3 PART II: Discussion in Relation to Research Question Two

6.3.1 Introduction

The first research question in this study provided an understanding of the ways in which undergraduates are engaged during their studies and their subject positionings, which provides a foundation for allowing me to consider the second research question:

What regularities are evident in undergraduate student and academic staff perceptions of the power relationship between them and how it manifests in sites of learning and teaching?

This question draws from the theoretical foundation of power in order to understand and analyse undergraduate and academic perceptions of the power relationship between them, as well as the ways in which the perceptions have been shaped by causal mechanisms and social practices. Its purpose is to evaluate these perceptions in order to better understand how new and conflicting subjectivities are transforming the power relationship, which will be addressed by the third research question of this study. There were a number of regularities in the discourses of the interviews across both institutions that depicted what this thesis refers to as the ‘traditional’ power relationship, the perceived characteristics of which were shared by the majority of the interviewees.

This section will discuss the perception of the traditional power relationship and its characteristics, before discussing how this traditional power relationship is perpetuated between undergraduates and academics and manifested within sites of learning and teaching in HEIs.

6.3.2 *The Traditional Power Relationship*

Consistent in the discourses of the interviews was a recognition that the social identities of ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’ exacerbated the characteristics that defined the power relation between them. Hayward argues,

Imagine a position in a power relation that is defined by some set of rules or laws or norms. [...] If, by the norms that define this particular power relation, those who occupy this particular position do or should behave in way *x*, or if, by those terms, they do or they should exhibit characteristic *y*, then the other actors who participate in the relation will tend to treat those agents in ways informed by the relevant expectations (2008, p.15).

The interactions between undergraduates and academics are defined by those rules, laws and norms that constitute the expected behavioural characteristics: ‘the *lecturers* aren’t intimidating, but I think it’s just the situation that is *more* so’ (B, 1, F, EL and CW), which implies that the social identity of teacher is what emphasises the power relation, rather than the individual in that role. Hayward argues that ‘teachers and students have differential capacities and dispositions by virtue of their participation in the teacher-student relationship itself’ (2000, pp.28–9). The systemic configuration of the traditional learner and teacher subjectivities means that there are expected characteristics and behaviours that are present in any relation consisting of those roles; these expected behaviours constitute the traditional power relationship as ‘*unavoidable*’ (B, SL).

6.3.2.1 *The ‘Unavoidable’ Dynamic*

The traditional power relationship is made cogent through its seeming naturalness. The discourses from the interviews suggested that the power relationship between learners and teachers is a *natural* relation: ‘the silos that are naturally in higher education between students and academics [...] are quite difficult to break down’ (B, FDLT). One

described the power relationship as ‘*unavoidable*’ (B, SL) and another thought that ‘there is inevitably going to be a division’ (A, AL and ProgL). The discursive terms ‘naturally’ (B, FDLT), ‘*unavoidable*’ (B, SL) and ‘inevitably’ (A, PL and ProgL) emphasise the unquestioning naturalness of the traditional power relationship. The majority of undergraduates had similar perceptions, except their understanding was often framed in terms of respect: ‘you, kind of, know it’s there just because [...] I think it’s drilled in during your secondary education that it’s *respect*’ (B, 2, F, EL). One said: ‘obviously, they’re still lecturers and there’s still a level of respect there’ (B, 1, F, EL and CW) and another said: ‘there’s obviously a hierarchy’ (B, 3, M, CW). The use of the word ‘obviously’ implies inevitability, which was reiterated by another, who said: ‘I think naturally, there probably is’ (B, 2, F, EL).

Analysing the interview discourses using CDA allows for a better understanding of the social practice, or causal mechanism, that has influenced the perception. The above responses, that perceive of the power relationship as natural, are influenced by the system of knowledge and belief, or ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1979b, p.47), which emphasises the ‘unilateral authority’ (Shor, 1996, pp.11–2) of the teacher subjectivity; this was pointed out by one academic in their argument that ‘the power’s in the structure, not in the relationship’ (A, P and former DTL). Because the relationship is systemically constructed, it is perceived of as a *natural* relationship, and so, it seems *inevitable* or *unavoidable*. The seeming naturalness of the relationship makes it easier to perpetuate and strengthens its familiarity and establishment in sites of learning and teaching. The relationship itself is formed of different expectations, characteristics and behaviours, all of which are perceived of as natural. The constitutive conception of power aids the perpetuation of the systemically constructed characteristics that define

the relationship through the interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics.

This thesis draws on a number of perceived characteristics that define the traditional power relationship. First, I explore the authority bestowed to the role of a teacher, with an emphasis on learners' deference to this authority. Secondly, I examine the concept of affirmation, focusing on self-esteem and the teacher's ability to build or damage learners' confidence. Thirdly, I discuss the notion of reliance, with an emphasis on responsibility, age and maturity. Finally, this section concludes with a better understanding of the ways in which the traditional power relationship and the associated behavioural expectations are present in interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics and manifested within HEIs.

6.3.2.2 *Authority*

One behavioural expectation of the traditional learner subjectivity already discussed is the passive consumption of authoritative knowledge. As a power dynamic, this gives the teacher role dispositional power to 'tell [students] what things mean, what to do' (Shor, 1996, pp.11–2). The spatial dynamic that perpetuates the notion that the teacher role provides authoritative knowledge was founded in the observational data of this study; academics consistently positioned themselves at the front of the learning space, with undergraduates positioned further away and facing them (A, 2, Lec; A, 1, Lec; A, 2, Sem; A, 1, Sem; B, 3, Lec; B, 3, Sem; B, 2, Lec; B, 2, Sem). Kreisberg conceptualises the normalised behaviour of the traditional learner in terms of transmission teaching; he argues that, what Freire termed 'banking education' (1985), 'cultivates passivity, conformity, obedience, acquiescence, and unquestioning acceptance of authority. It

makes objects out of students, it dehumanizes, it denies students' experiences and voices, it stifles creativity, it disempowers' (1992, p.8). There was a consistent recognition in the findings of the expectation that academics are the holders of finite knowledge; the internalised passivity of the traditional learner subjectivity 'makes them feel safe because they're being *told* what it is they need to know' (B, PL) and this is what they are familiar with. The findings illuminate that undergraduates 'perceive that [academics] know a lot more about the topic than they do and they want [them] to *tell* them about it' (B, SL).

As part of their '*action-environment*' (Wartenberg, 1990, p.80), individuals understand and evaluate the context in which they find themselves and act accordingly; because universities implement similar practices to other educational institutions and because it appears 'so similar to [...] school' (B, 3, F, EL and MC), undergraduates naturally adopt the traditional learner subjectivity and follow the rules of the associated power relationship. Isaac argues:

To say that teachers and students are in a certain structural relationship is only to say that there are people called teachers and students who characteristically do the things which the relationship involves. If social power is never exercised, it can hardly be said to exist. But its exercise is always shaped and constrained by certain enduring relations (1987, p.23).

The subjectivities of the traditional learner and teacher have solidified over years of continuance in educational contexts and as such, the dispositional power of each subjectivity has also been solidified. As Haugaard argues, 'the socially competent actor becomes constrained internally, without having to experience external implementation of constraint, because he or she knows what to expect' (2012, p.39). As socially competent actors, undergraduates have internalised the behavioural characteristics of the traditional learner subjectivity, and its associated power relationship, which dictates that academics are 'more educated than [undergraduates] are, and they're there to teach

[them]' (A, 2, M, E). Resulting from this internalisation is a need to act accordingly and accept that academics have 'a prowess' (A, 2, F, E) over undergraduates because of their expertise.

This authority is internalised as a natural and appropriate element of the traditional power relationship, which was corroborated by the perceptions of the undergraduates. One said: 'I think because some of them are so intelligent, that I just feel like anything I'm going to say they're going to be, like, "*Really? Really?*"' (A, 2, M, E) and another said: 'you always feel *stupid*, literally, you could have the *best* point ever and they, sort of, look at you as if to say, "What?" [...] it's almost like they've already thought of it when they're brushing their teeth' (A, 1, F, E and J). The perception of these participants suggests the acceptance of an academics' authority because of their intelligence. As Hargreaves notes, traditional learners are used to abiding by the mantra of 'what the teacher says goes' (1972, p.139) and this becomes more pertinent for undergraduates because of the increased expertise of the academics. One said: 'you have to put trust in the fact they're academics, and that they are top of their field, and they know what they're doing, and [...] you do just have to sit back and accept that' (A, 1, F, E and J). As a social practice, this acceptance of, and deference to, the authority of knowledge that the academic possesses is in virtue of their social role and the expectations that 'they know what they're doing' (A, 1, F, E and J).

This notion of expertise was accepted by most undergraduates as a natural part of the power relationship because they have 'finished their study and, in that sense, have a prowess over you' (A, 2, F, E) and 'they are more intelligent than you' (A, 3, F, E). It was considered to be natural because, as Shor notes, 'they expect the teacher to be a

unilateral authority. They expect an authoritarian rhetorical setting: teacher-talk, teacher-centered standard English, an official syllabus with remote subject matter, and unilateral rule-making' (1996, p.16). However, despite it being accepted as a natural expectation of the power relationship, some undergraduates felt frustration at the power differential engendered by the academic's authority of knowledge.

There was a general sense of frustration when academics exercised their authority of knowledge to undermine an undergraduate's opinion:

We're not on the same level, we're not, *intellectually* we're not equal because they have PhDs and higher qualifications [...] there have been a couple of occasions where they've been like, "No, [...] I don't think that's the case", I'm like, "Well, that's my opinion" so, in terms of a hierarchy, I'd say there are occasions when tutors would say that *their* opinion is more *valid* (A, 2, M, E).

Although this participant recognised that academics have greater knowledge due to their qualifications, he still felt frustration at being undermined. As a social practice, individuals are socialised into deferring to authoritative knowledge during compulsory schooling:

I absolutely *hated* being spoon-fed information at school because a lot of the time I didn't agree with it [laughing]. I was sat there thinking, "Yes okay, but you're reading this and I'm reading this" and there was no argument about it, there was no, kind of, alternate readings (A, 2, F, E and H).

Another participant felt this was perpetuated within universities through academics' dismissal of ideas that countered their own:

I think there was one tutor that we all struggled with last year, because every, sort of, interpretation we put forward they were, kind of, like, "No, that's not right" and we were all just getting frustrated like, "You can't just turn everyone down" (B, 2, F, EL).

The authority of knowledge that constitutes the traditional power relationship, although accepted by undergraduates, was resented by some because it can impact their willingness to participate in the learning exercise: 'it can be really difficult to then want

to put anything forward because it's intimidating, because you're fully aware that academically, they're above you' (A, 2, F, E).

Despite this frustration, though, the internalised expectation that undergraduates should defer to the academic's authoritative knowledge was expressed by the majority of the interviewees and perceived to be a necessary characteristic of the traditional power relationship. Generally, academics endorsed the notion of the expert. One said: 'I do believe in the notion of the expert as well, it's not terrifically fashionable but I do' (A, PL and ProgL) and another said 'I am willing to *listen* but ultimately, I am the specialist [...] sometimes, the experts really do know best' (B, R). Shor argues that the socially structured subjectivity of the teacher requires social agents, performing in that role, to adopt expected characteristics and behaviours:

This in-process invention calls upon me to behave like an authority who is a legitimate teacher, someone who knows something worth learning, who knows how to teach what I know [...] These are some minimal markers that reassure students of my competence and of the intellectual seriousness of the course. If I deny these professional signs of authority, I will broadcast incompetence or carelessness (1996, p.20).

Academics in general, perpetuated these expectations as natural characteristics of their roles as academics, and thus natural characteristics of the power relationship.

However, there were two academics, in particular, who disagreed with this notion of authority. The first academic said: 'I don't have a PhD for example, I don't have a, kind of, sense of [pause] my academic authority as being *higher* or *separate* [...] there's *maybe* some people that believe that the students are not equal' (B, FDLT). The same academic went on to argue:

At the start of your learning and teaching career, you're, kind of, worried about looking like a serious academic, and slowly, I've, sort of, dropped a lot of those masks and layers and, I think that that can be helpful for lecturers. And students really appreciate that authenticity as well (B, FDLT).

The above emphasises the expectancy of adhering to the characteristics of authority and expertise, because of its association with the role of ‘academic’. The second academic, who interestingly did not have a PhD either, perceived the unnecessary perpetuation of an academic’s authority to be caused by the traditionalism of the English discipline: ‘traditionally, we see ourselves as an *academic discipline*, and I know that many colleagues are very reluctant to change, and that’s partly because frankly, we consider ourselves a little bit *elite* and it’s a very silly idea’ (A, SL and SEA). The same academic saw no reason why undergraduates should not have greater control over the curriculum and assessment design of their courses, which suggests that the socialisation of the teacher’s unilateral authority is perpetuated, not only by the systemically constructed subjectivity, but also by the socially constructed context in which the subjectivity of the teacher participates. Despite these anomalies, there was a cogent perception in the findings that the teacher has an ‘*unavoidable*’ (B, SL) authority over knowledge.

6.3.2.3 *Deference*

Related to the authoritative knowledge that constitutes the traditional power relationship is the behavioural expectation of deference from the traditional learner. Hargreaves argues that ‘the majority of pupils accept the teacher’s definition of the situation and are relatively content to conform to the teacher’s role expectations of them’ (1972, p.164); this was corroborated by the findings. Academics recognised that ‘students are *deferent* and they are in different ways’ (B, PL) from addressing academics by title and ‘putting their hands up’ (A, SL) to being ‘very polite, very respectful’ (A, PL and ProgL). The findings also suggested that deference was perceived of as a natural characteristic of the traditional power relationship and there was no sense in which

academics expected ‘unnecessary deference’ (A, PL and ProgL). A number of undergraduates in this study perceived of deference in terms of ‘respect’ (B, 2, F, EL; B, 1, F, EL and CW) and most were happy to ‘put trust in the fact they’re academics’ (A, 1, F, E and J). This deference is constituted through the widely accepted notion that ‘the power resides with the authority of the lecturers’ (Allin, 2014, p.97) because ‘they’re more educated’ (A, 2, M, E). Shor argues: ‘I cannot instantly shed or deny the authority I bring to class. Many students won’t allow that. They expect me to install unilateral authority; in some ways, they prefer it or want it, more than just expect it’ (1996, p.18). The deference that characterises the traditional power relationship engenders the notion that academics are ‘powerful’ (A, 2, M, E) and there was a recognition in the findings that it emphasises for undergraduates the idea that “‘*They’re right. I’m wrong*’” (A, SL and SEA).

Traditional learners are socialised into accepting and reciting the teacher’s opinion because it represents an authoritative position. As one academic noted, in compulsory school, ‘there’s a lot more of, kind of, getting essays back and doing them again and again until you get them right, and it’s almost as much the teacher’s responsibility’ (A, SL). The unilateral authority of the teacher encourages the power differential because it emphasises the learners’ deference: ‘the whole process of education is actually designed to keep people in a position of inequality and the teacher tells the students, “You are never going to be me”’ (A, P and former DTL). This academic was drawing from Rousseau (1968) in his conceptualisation of the traditional power relationship; the authority of the teacher works to keep people in a state of oppression, which ‘transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power’ (Freire, 1996, p.58).

Deference to authoritative knowledge, then, perpetuates the power differential, whereby learners have little power to express or create their own knowledge.

This deference establishes learners' fear of being wrong, which engenders a lack of confidence and many learners internalise this as part of their interactions with teacher roles. One academic said:

We find that they just lack confidence and also, that notion of hierarchy and discipline. Now I think in compulsory education, that *has* to take place, actually, in mainstream. But nothing could be *further* from the truth, here, at universities (A, SL and SEA).

The discourses of the undergraduate interviews reflected the association between deference to the authority of the teacher role and fear: 'you always think that they're going to be really scary and not want to help you' (B, 2, F, EL). The term 'scary' was mentioned by a number of undergraduates, which emphasises the fear that they associate with the social identity of the teacher: 'some lecturers are very scary' (A, 3, F, E) and 'if you have a scary tutor, then nobody wants to talk to them in case they're wrong' (A, 3, F, E). One academic reflected:

Where I think it's most noticeable are when students haven't done the work and so, there's that, kind of, thing about they're apologetic or defiant, and nervous [...] I suppose that, kind of, that might reinforce the fact that there's a hierarchy because it makes it very clear that *you're* the tutor and they're the student (A, SL and ProgL).

As a social practice, learners are expected to respond appropriately when they have failed to complete a task set by the teacher; because the teacher role has the power in the classroom, learners are expected to obey and if they do not, then they are expected to be apologetic or deferent. This was made apparent during one observation, where there was repetition of the word 'sorry' from undergraduates despite there being no need for an apology (B, 3, Sem). The notion of deference, and the subsequent fear that

exists in the traditional power relationship perpetuates the authority of the teacher role and propagates the power differential.

Despite undergraduates and academics subconsciously maintaining particular behavioural characteristics associated with the traditional power relationship, there was recognition that deference is altered within HEIs. One undergraduate reflected: ‘obviously school will go, “Okay have a detention”, but here it’s, it’s much more independence’ (B, 3, F, EL and S) and another said, ‘they do make such a point of the fact that they’re here to help you rather than punish you’ (B, 2, F, EL). Because of the association between deference and fear, academics actively emphasise that their role is not to punish, but to encourage. One undergraduate said: ‘if I was to talk to my younger self or something, definitely go and speak to your teachers because they’re not there to criticise you or *bash* you [laughing], they want you to do well’ (B, 2, F, EL and MC). Analysing this statement as a social practice, the characteristics of the teacher role caused this undergraduate to avoid seeking help because of the fear that they will ‘criticise’ or ‘bash’ her. However, she also recognised that this fear is unfounded in university because there is less emphasis on deferring to authoritative knowledge and more on developing as independent scholars. This conflict is exacerbated by learners’ internalised desire to seek affirmation from teachers. The power distributed to the teacher role to build self-esteem is matched by their ability to damage self-esteem, and the learner’s struggle between seeking praise and fearing criticism is perceived to be a pervasive characteristic of the traditional power relationship.

6.3.2.4 *Affirmation and Self-Esteem*

Undergraduates' reliance on academics for affirmation was evident in the observations, whereby the majority of undergraduates sought affirmation after giving their responses to questions (B, 3, Lec; B, 2, Sem; A, 2, Sem). Some academics perceived the traditional power relationship to be a 'safety net' (A, SL and ProgL) which encourages undergraduates to 'look for that affirmation' (A, SL and ProgL). Lecturers, performing as teachers, can 'provide pleasure and gratification [...] and inflict pain and suffering in their roles as judge' (Nixon, Scullion and Hearn, 2016, pp.13–4); undergraduates internalise the dispositional power awarded to teachers to both affirm and deny ability. This need for affirmation was most evident through the concept of self-esteem.

The reliance on academics to build confidence and increase self-esteem was a recurrent theme in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews. Solomon notes that 'self-esteem is often related to acceptance by others' (2016, p.160); for traditional learners, acceptance from the teacher is important for feeling valued and for building confidence. There was consistent recognition in the discourses of the academic interviews that undergraduates seek validation: 'sometimes they actually, they're not stuck at all, they just don't think they can do it and they just want you to say for 5 minutes, "You can!"' (A, SL and SEA). Another felt that 'you need to show belief in students to help them believe in themselves' (B, FDLT); as Hargreaves notes, 'the majority of pupils become addicted to the teacher's approval during the process of formal schooling. When they learn, it tends to be as a means of obtaining approval rather than as an end in itself' (1972, p.200). Although Hargreaves is referring to compulsory schooling, the same expectations and behaviours are evoked in HE because of their similarity:

Sometimes you *do* just need a pat on the head, and you do just need somebody to say, “You’re doing really good” [...] I think the one thing I do miss about secondary school is having that teacher who does say sometimes, “You’re doing a really good job, well done” (A, 1, F, E and J).

As Hargreaves notes, ‘almost everyone has expectations about the behaviours appropriate to such common roles as mother, teacher and clergyman because we have extensive experience of interaction with them’ (Hargreaves, 1972, pp.72–3) and the above undergraduate demonstrates how these expectations are pertinent to the traditional power relationship.

Some academics felt that the desire for affirmation was a hindrance to the learning in universities:

That hierarchy engenders certain things: lack of confidence, “They’re right, I’m wrong”, “I need to work out what this member of staff wants me to write in this essay. Once I’ve worked it out, I’ll get a tick and I’ll pass (A, SL and SEA).

The same academic said,

We almost say, pretty much the first 18 months [...] “*Don’t* give us what you *think* that we want, because we are not teachers. You can actually give us what you think we *don’t* want, but as long as you support it, that’s great” (A, SL and SEA).

The hierarchy that engenders a lack of confidence in undergraduates’ ability to learn autonomously has been developed over years of compulsory schooling, whereby learners seek to please teachers in order to maintain higher levels of self-esteem and avoid risk-taking because this holds the possibility of reprimand or embarrassment:

In pleasing the teacher the pupil protects himself and maintains his self-esteem. He keeps the stream of approval flowing towards him, and avoids the embarrassment, shame, disapproval, trouble and punishment which follow when he does or says the wrong thing (Hargreaves, 1972, p.186).

It becomes difficult, then, for academics to eradicate these expectations that undergraduates have about the traditional power relationship. As noted by Fazey and Fazey, ‘for learners to be self-determined or autonomous, they must have a sufficiently

high self-perception of competence to be prepared to risk short-term failure at a task which they feel is important' (2001, p.347); the characteristic of seeking validation from teacher roles has the potential to prevent undergraduates from developing as autonomous learners.

It was apparent in the majority of the discourses of the academic interviews that there is a need to build undergraduates' confidence in order for them to be able to learn autonomously. One academic believed that 'if a student thinks their lecturers don't care, they won't care' (B, FDLT) and 'sometimes students really, really want to do something and they really need a lot of help to make what they want to do, happen' (B, FDLT), which emphasises the responsibility on academics to build an undergraduates' confidence. Another said:

We have power in the classroom, we can say and do things that can impact a young student's career, we can change the course of their studies positively, but we can also say or do things that change the course of their studies, or their life, or the things they do, *negatively* (A, SL2).

The perception of the above academic emphasises the power that academics, performing in teacher roles, have to build or break confidence. This was felt strongly by one undergraduate, who had experienced a blow to her self-esteem through criticism:

I had a lecturer tell me once that I was vague, unable to express myself – what did he say? Erratic! He went through this whole list of things about my essay, and then at the end he goes, "Yeah, just like you in seminars!" I was like, "This is – that was not very nice" (A, 3, F, E).

The ability for teacher roles to damage self-esteem was evident in a number of the 'bad' relationship drawings produced by the undergraduate interviewees:

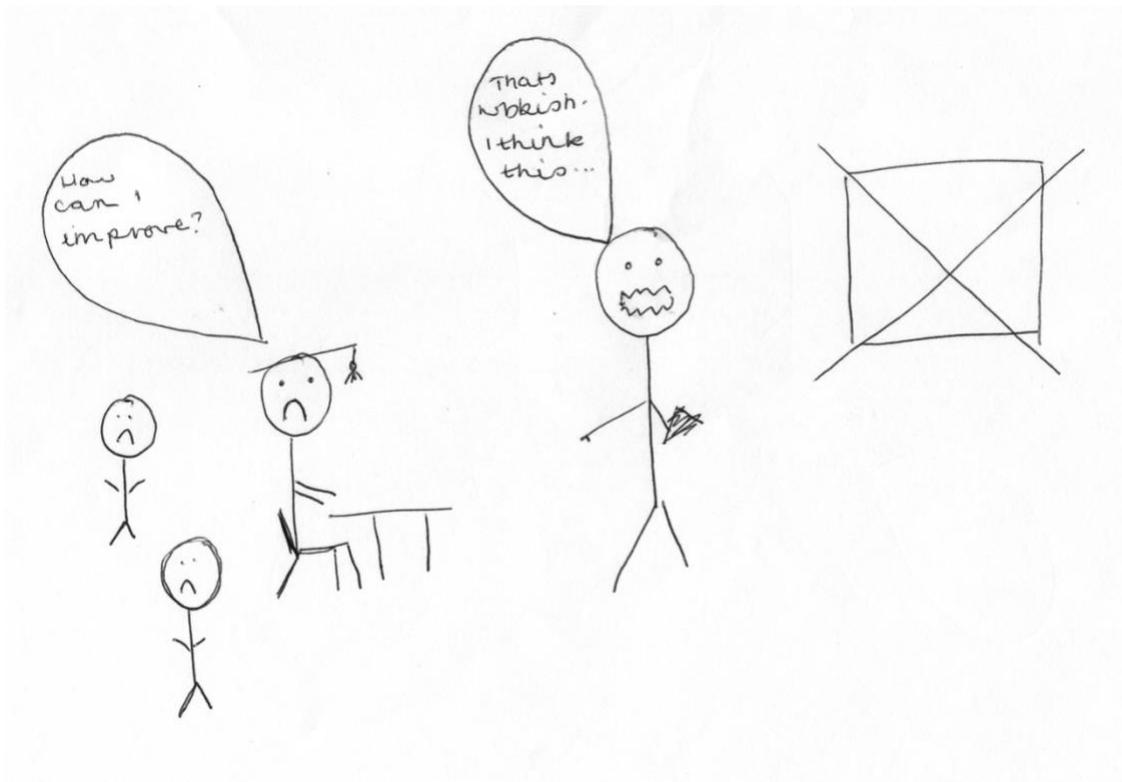


Figure 6.9 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 2, F, EL and MC)



Figure 6.10 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 1, F, EL and CW)

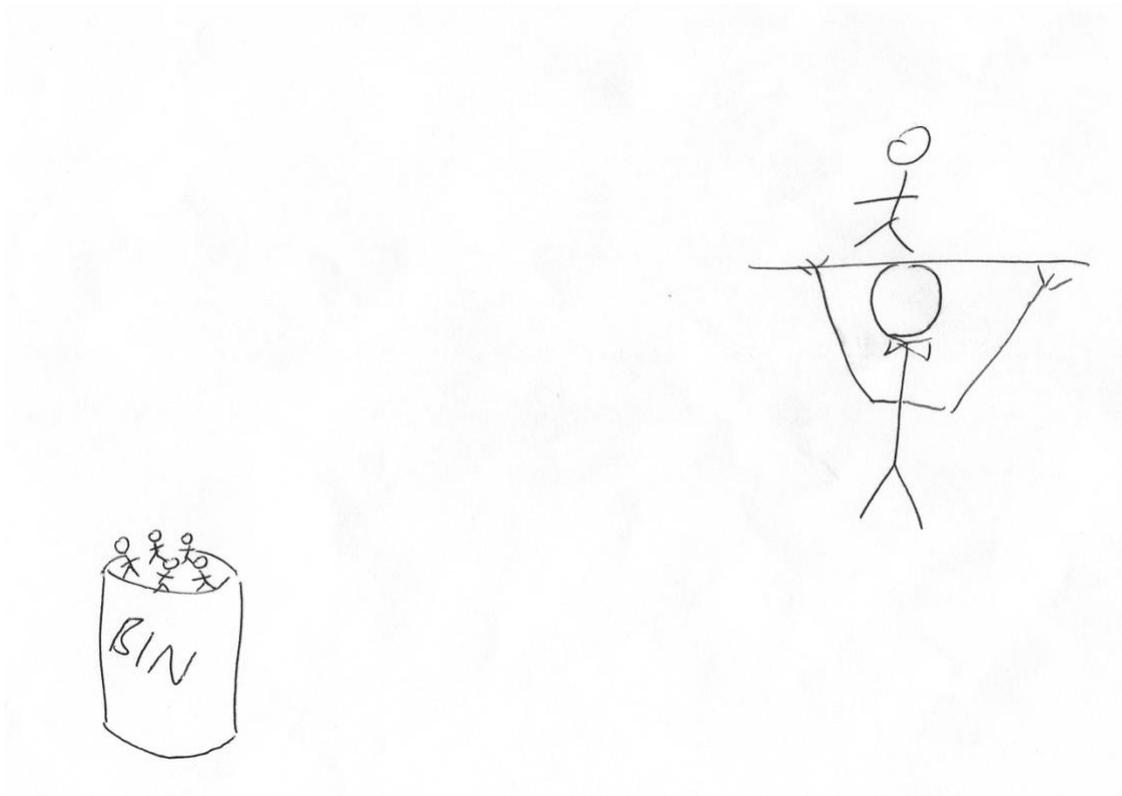


Figure 6.11 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 3, M, CW)



Figure 6.12 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (A, 3, F, E)

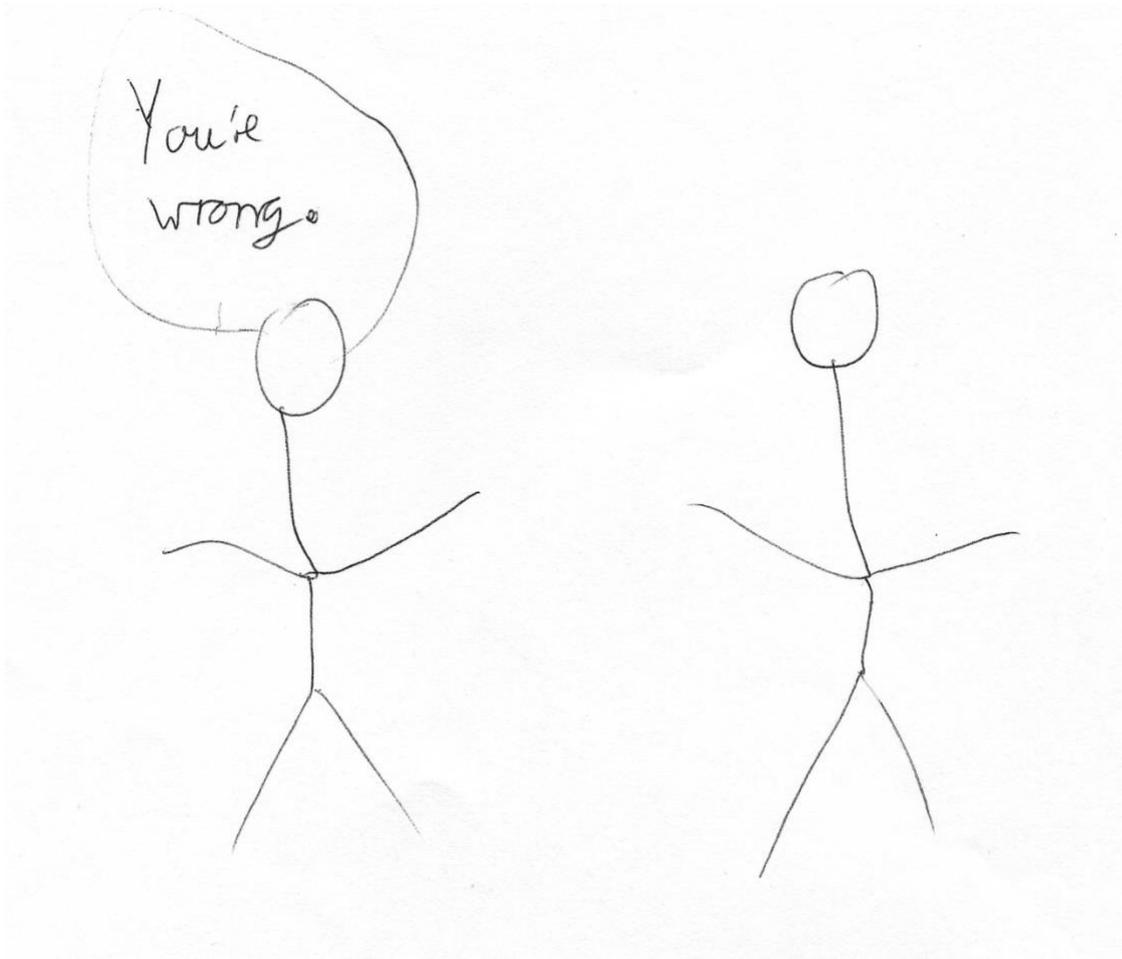


Figure 6.13 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (A, 3, M, E)

Despite recognition that seeking an academics' affirmation in order to develop confidence was a negative characteristic of the traditional power relationship, undergraduates still acknowledged its pervasiveness when interacting with academics and this was demonstrated in a number of 'good' relationship drawings:

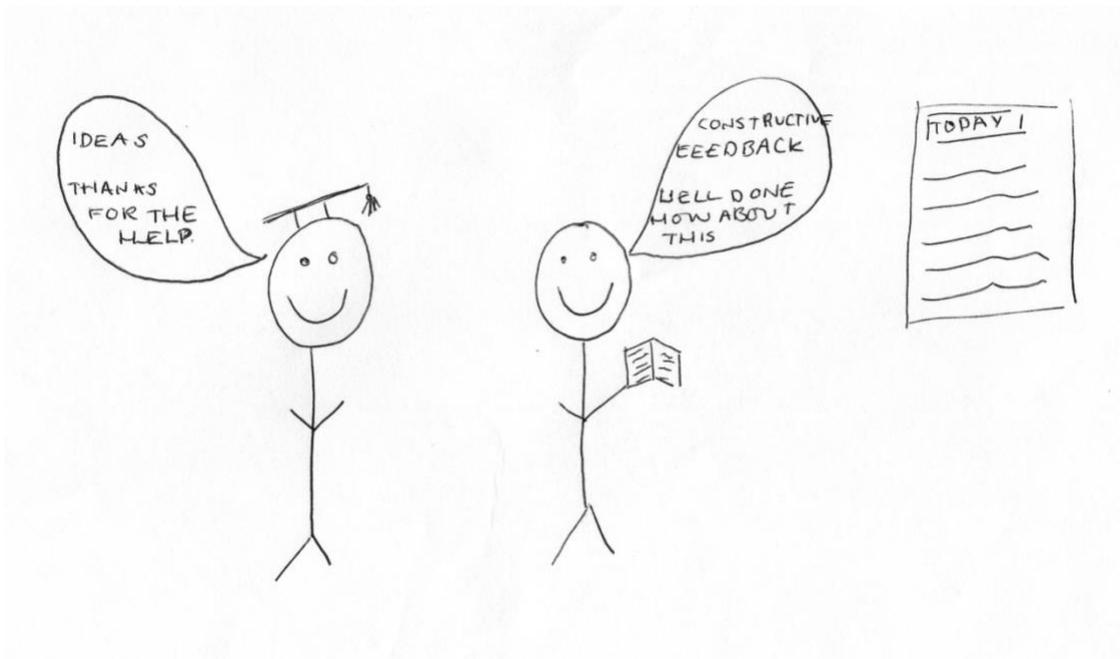


Figure 6.14 Drawing of a 'good' relationship with an academic (B, 2, F, EL and MC)



Figure 6.15 Drawing of a 'good' relationship with an academic (B, 1, F, EL and CW)

For one academic at University A, this internalised lack of confidence that engenders a reliance on affirmation was associated with an undergraduate's social background:

If it was different kinds of institution, the issue might be “Actually, I might need to assert authority over, kind of, cocky, people who have had a certain, kind of, education” but here, that’s not the case at all, it’s actually about building them up (A, SL).

This academic is suggesting that low levels of self-esteem are more apparent in universities with lower entry requirements and less prestige. The same academic argued that ‘because we have, almost entirely, kind of, state school students [...] many of whom are the first people in their family to go to university, confidence is probably the *biggest* issue’ (A, SL). As a result, he recognised that ‘there are some really, really, really, smart people but they have *no*, sort of, self-belief or confidence’ (A, SL). Because the majority of undergraduates from University A are from state schools, there is, it appears, a greater reliance on teacher roles to build confidence. This trend was also apparent in University B, where the majority of undergraduates are from state schools, but they, generally, had more self-confidence in their ability than those at University A. Although there was one undergraduate who admitted that ‘all you need is a little bit of reassurance, [...] just coming in and they’re like, “It’s going to be okay” [...] I need that all the time’ (B, 2, F, EL), the majority, particularly those in the later years, recognised that ‘it’s supposed to be that much more independent that hopefully you *can* get on with it’ (B, 3, F, EL and MC). Regardless of how reliant undergraduates felt on academics for belief in themselves, though, there was still a very apparent expectation that academics, performing as teachers, can impact an undergraduates’ self-esteem.

One undergraduate reflected on this expectation in both of her drawings:

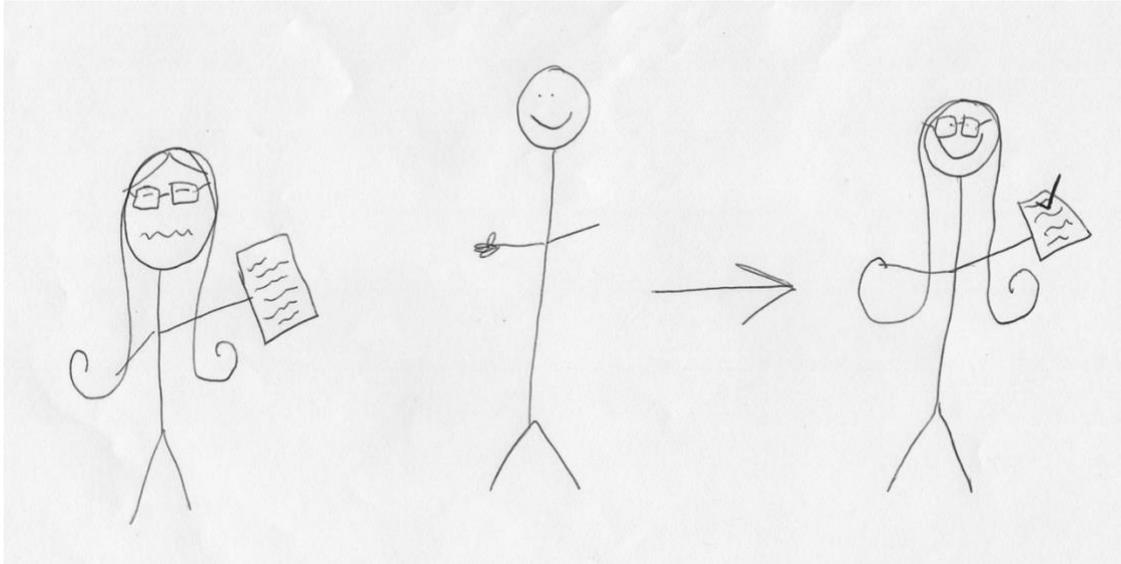


Figure 6.16 Drawing of a 'good' relationship with an academic (B, 2, F, EL)

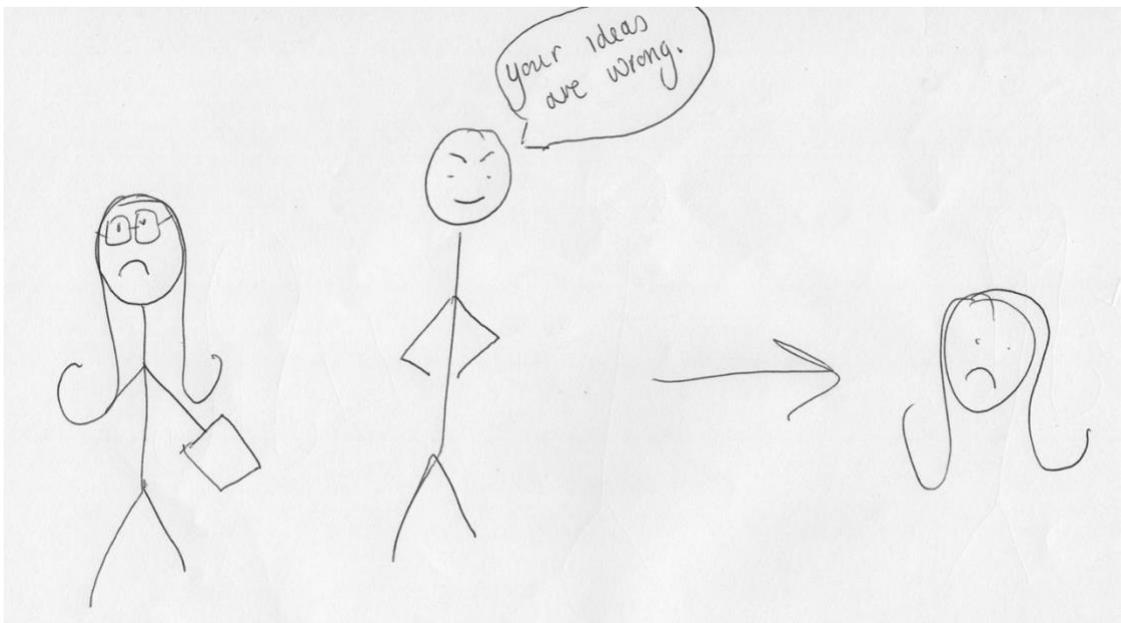


Figure 6.17 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (B, 2, F, EL)

In both, the figure representing the academic is larger and positioned as a central point. In the 'good' drawing, the academic is smiling and giving the undergraduate a 'thumbs up' and so, she transitions from miserable to happy; the happy version is visibly taller, which suggests the academic has boosted her self-esteem. In the 'bad' drawing, the academic is frowning and telling the undergraduate that her ideas are wrong and so, she transitions from sad to miserable; the miserable version has no body, which suggests

that her confidence has diminished to extreme levels. As Hargreaves notes, ‘the majority of pupils accept the teacher’s definition of the situation and are relatively content to conform to the teacher’s role expectations of them’ (1972, p.164). The need for affirmation to boost self-esteem is a pervasive characteristic of the traditional power relationship.

6.3.2.5 *Teachers as Parents*

The characteristic of affirmation is reinforced further by the close association between teacher roles and parent roles. One academic argued that the ‘relationship is there to *reassure*, to encourage them to step out of their comfort zone, to *learn*, to grasp opportunities’ (B, PL), which are similar characteristics of the child-parent relationship. Another academic reflected on the relationship with undergraduates and noted another characteristic associated with a parental role: ‘as I’ve gotten older [...] I see more instances that need – I feel like I need to *nurture*’ (A, SL2). There was a strong feeling among academics, particularly female academics, of the association between teaching and nurturing. One academic captured this in a drawing:

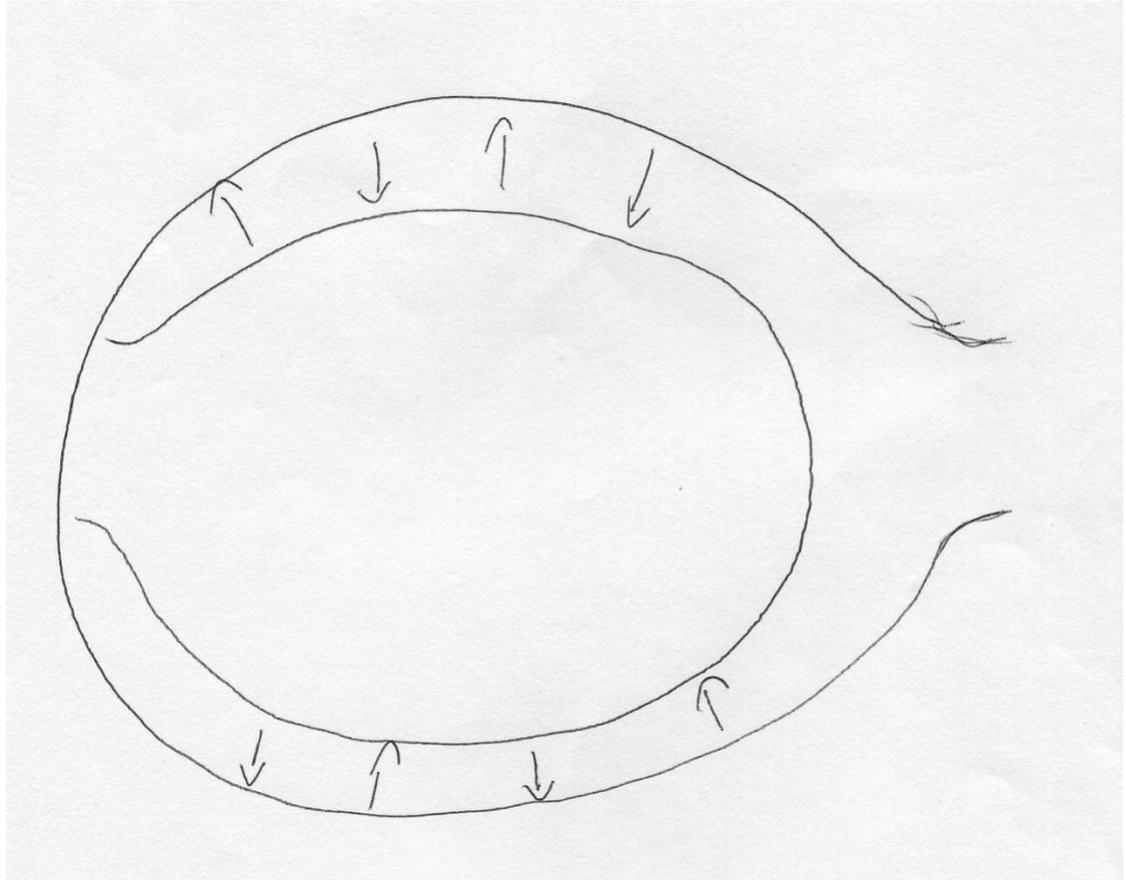


Figure 6.18 Drawing of a 'good' relationship between undergraduates and academics (A, SL and SEA)

The academic explained:

This is a safe space and as I was doing it, I thought, “Shit, that’s womb-like” and this is almost, sort of, foetal, isn’t it? So, this is me as a safe space ideally, this is what I *hope* I achieve with my students, and this is them being nurtured (A, SL and SEA).

References to ‘womb-like’ and ‘foetal’ suggest an association between teaching and parenting; both the undergraduate and academic interviews made use of discourse associated with parenting. The above two academics referenced the term ‘nurture’, one of which was pitted alongside ‘womb-like’ and ‘foetal’ and one undergraduate said that communication from academics seems ‘*nice* and [...] nurturing’ (B, 2, F, EL and MC). There was recurrent use of the term ‘spoon-feeding’ (B, 3, F, EL and MC; A, 2, F, E and H) and one undergraduate used the term ‘mollycoddle’ (A, 1, F, E and J). The intertextuality of parenting discourse suggests that there is an instinctive association

between teaching and parenting. This association reinforces the reliance that undergraduates have on academics, which hinders their willingness to take sole responsibility for their learning. This association was referenced by other participants, however, there was a consistent feeling that the parental similarities should be avoided rather than encouraged.

One undergraduate recognised the similarities but was reluctant to blur the two roles: ‘they’re more of a – I want to say *parental*, but not [...] in *that* way’ (B, 2, F, EL). The same academic whose drawing alluded to a womb argued: ‘I certainly don’t think my job is to be in loco parentis [...] that’s not my job [...] I’m not their mother’ (A, SL and SEA) but argued that academics ‘should be central to that transition, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually if you like, as well as academically, that they undergo over 3 years’ (A, SL and SEA). One undergraduate felt that academics should ‘lift us up and make us feel like we are them’ (B, 3, M, CW), which he emphasised in the following visual representation:

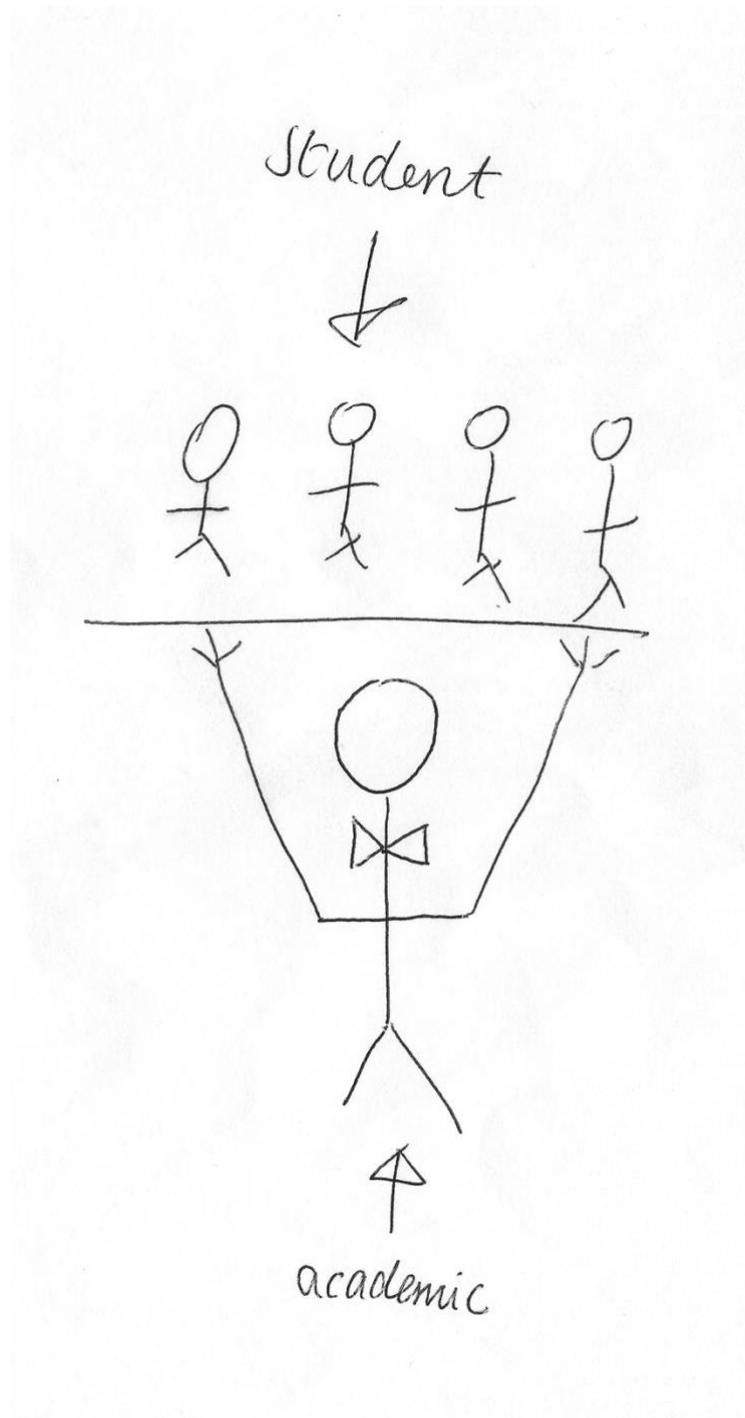


Figure 6.19 Drawing of a 'good' relationship with an academic (B, 3, M, CW)

As undergraduates undergo a period of transition, similar to the transition from childhood to adulthood, they seek praise and validation from those they consider as caring, but also more experienced. In the absence of a parent, a teacher is the role who exhibits the most similar characteristics. Indeed, there was a strong recognition that 'as

a tutor, as a teacher, as a lecturer, you *care* about your students' progress [...] you feel *invested* in them, you want them to do *well*' (A, SL and ProgL). Another academic reflected: 'we're not necessarily doing the direct teaching, we're coaching *them* [...] it's a shepherding almost' (A, SL2). The association between the roles of teacher and parent evokes the characteristic of dependence; they rely on academics to affirm their ability in much the same way that they do their parents.

6.3.2.6 *Reliance: Age, Maturity and Responsibility*

As was discussed in the first section of this chapter, institutions and academics attempt to engage undergraduates through an emphasis on their independence and responsibility for learning. Despite this, there was a consistent regularity in the interview discourses which emphasised a reliance on teacher roles because of their advanced experience, which reinforces the traditional power relationship and negates responsibility.

There was a recognition of 'the *younger* student versus the *adult* professor' (A, 2, F, E), which is engendered through the age difference in compulsory schooling. Most participants felt that the age difference in compulsory education encouraged the power differential because of the legal, social and cultural differentiation between children and adults: 'there's a literal divide of being a child and an adult' (A, 2, F, E). Moreover, the age difference engendered certain behavioural characteristics, which were felt quite strongly by academics from both institutions:

I think if [...] you're perceived to be the, kind of, young one, they might trust you or go to you with certain things, but [...] it might take a little bit more time to build up the respect, and I think that flips the, kind of, older I get (B, SL).

As I get older, they get *more* scared of me [laughing]. Well, it's just *natural* (B, R).

It's tricky because I don't want to come across as being "down with the kids", especially when I'm 45, just *no*, no, no, no. But equally, I need them to be interested enough in what I'm saying to listen and that's a continual process of negotiation (B, P).

The wider the age gap between undergraduates and academics, the greater the divide. One of the above academics perceived undergraduates' reaction to the age difference as '*natural*', which, as a social practice, can be understood as a perpetuation of the established expectations of certain social identities and relations. The discourse of age in Western culture posits that, as people get older, they are inevitably more experienced, wiser and more intelligent. In regard to a power relation, this accepted superiority grants greater capacity to exercise power when interacting with someone who is younger and inexperienced. A big age difference encourages a greater power differential because it mirrors the learner-teacher relationship in compulsory schooling, whereby teachers are '*big, scary people*' (A, 1, F, E and J) and learners are the '*little people who don't know anything*' (A, 1, F, E and J). It feeds the associated expectations of the traditional power relationship, whereby the capacity to exercise power is based on the teacher being an adult and the learner being a child and the perception that '*they don't know what's best for them*' (A, SL), which also reinforces the association between teacher roles and parent roles.

One undergraduate considered the expectations associated with the age differential as a hindrance to her learning experience: '*I think people are too quick to generalise [...] that the younger you are [...] the less aware you'll be of things like your study*' (A, 2, F, E). The assumption that the younger you are, the less mature you are in grasping the importance of education, was considered by this participant to be unnecessary and she felt that because people in HE are '*all adults respectively [...]* it should be *easier* to

have an actual conversation with people without worrying about things like age difference' (A, 2, F, E). Another said:

I love that you're treated as an adult, like you're [...] the lecturer's equal. Not necessarily in academic knowledge, otherwise you wouldn't be there, but in adult, just your adult life, which I *really* like, because I hated being patronised (B, 2, F, EL and MC).

The above participant associates the age difference with being 'patronised' which emphasises the superiority that is engendered by an expected age difference. However, there was a common perception that in university, the age differential and the subsequent power differential was disbanded to a certain extent:

Some students aren't, sort of, 18, 19, 20, fresh out of school [...] And so I think there's quite a, sort of, importance to the relationship not being, sort of, student-teacher like in a school context, I think it is more as peers (B, 2, F, EL and AS).

Because the age differential is lessened in HE, there was a general feeling that undergraduates are 'treated as an adult, as opposed to a child' (A, 2, F, E), which would suggest a move away from the teacher-parent association; because of this, there was a positive reflection on the increased responsibility given to undergraduates for their own learning: 'I think having people trust you to be independent with your study, is actually a really *good* thing' (A, 2, F, E). Nevertheless, there was a strong perception that the traditional power relationship is constituted through a distinction in age, maturity and thus, responsibility.

One academic considered the familiarity of the traditional power relationship in that there is an expectation of responsibility on the teacher role rather than the learner: '[university teaching] doesn't have quite the same safety net that they get at A-Levels, and that's difficult for some of our students' (B, SL). Another reflected on this in their attempts to get undergraduates to lead the discussions in seminars: 'I think that it makes them feel a little bit *nervous*, but it means that they get used to, I guess kind of, taking

ownership of what it is that they're learning about' (A, SL and ProgL). Academics felt strongly that it was important for undergraduates to take responsibility and be treated as mature adults in the learning process. One said: 'I think it's good, at the upper years, to give them some flexibility and to figure out different ways that they can express their ideas' (A, SL2) and another said, 'I'm trying to steer *them* to do something not do it *for* them' (B, P). The idea that academics are trying to 'steer' undergraduates as opposed to telling them what to do, emphasises the move away from the traditional power relationship based on the differential of age and experience. This is emphasised by the non-compulsory nature of HE: 'the student has chosen to be here, and so there's an emphasis on them taking responsibility for their own learning. This is their *choice* and they're *adults*' (A, SL and ProgL). The traditional power relationship, though, is characterised by a distinction in age, maturity and responsibility, which can be problematic for attempts to lessen the reliance on teacher roles. Although there is a recognition of the difference in universities based on undergraduates being adults, there are still underlying behaviours that are evoked, such as the reliance on academics because of their experience and the separation engendered through age differentiation.

6.3.3 *The Perpetuation of the Traditional Power Relationship in HE*

Generally, the discourses of the interviews reflected a recognition that the traditional power relationship was not as pervasive in universities as it is in compulsory schooling. Academics admitted that they 'work quite hard to reduce that [hierarchy] to an extent' (A, SL), however, the majority of academics were explicit in informing that it was only 'to a *certain* extent' (B, SL) and that there should still be a power differential in place. Certainly, there were still characteristics of the traditional power relationship that were apparent in both perception and practice.

A strong causal mechanism behind the perpetuation of the traditional power relationship in universities is the immediate recognition of the social identity of the teacher. The discourses of the interviews reflected that undergraduates automatically perceive of academics as teachers because ‘you can’t go from just one way of doing education’ (A, SL); undergraduates will bring the associated characteristics and behaviours that they have internalised into universities. As a result, the same academic admitted that ‘they see us as teachers sometimes perhaps, slightly more hippy teachers’ (A, SL). Despite a continuous and frequent use of the verb ‘to teach’ throughout the discourses of the academic interviews, there were a significant number who associated the noun ‘teacher’ with compulsory schooling. One academic reflected on the moment when undergraduates realise that the role of an academic does not entail the same behavioural characteristics as that of a teacher: ‘it’s interesting, students, for some of them, you can see the penny really drops, it’s like, “Oh” because they see us, primarily, as *teachers* they don’t see us as researchers’ (B, R). As a social practice, undergraduates associate academics with the teacher role because they provide instruction. As such, when they begin their studies, and sometimes throughout the duration of their degree, ‘they think the role of *any* of their lecturers is to *teach* them and to prepare them for assignments’ (B, P) and despite a number of academics shying away from the behavioural expectations of the teacher role, they were still cogent for a number of undergraduates.

One admitted: ‘I said before that they don’t spoon-feed us but they, kind of, *do* in a way. They provide us with everything that we need’ (A, 2, F, E and H). As has already been established, traditional learners rely on teacher roles to validate knowledge and this characteristic is applied within universities just as pervasively as it is in schools; the

validation of knowledge stems from academics' adopting the behavioural expectations associated with a teacher role, which override the expectations associated with an academic role. The notion of 'spoon-feeding' (B, 3, F, EL and MC; A, 2, F, E and H), which emphasises the reliance on teachers, was associated with compulsory schooling and the same participant reflected on its pervasiveness within universities:

Students don't always take that responsibility, which I think comes from what I mentioned before about being spoon-fed in school. It is difficult to, kind of, I expect, to get out of that, kind of, mentality of, "You *should* be providing me everything I need to know, and it should all be in front of me in pretty colours so that I can take it immediately, rather than *looking* for it" (A, 2, F, E and H).

Teachers, as part of their role, provide authoritative knowledge to learners to apply in assessments; this expectation was perceived to be apparent in universities, despite the emphasis on undergraduates taking responsibility for their own learning and creating knowledge for themselves. One participant recognised that other undergraduates continued the attitude of wanting to be spoon-fed within universities: 'they're just like, "I really can't be asked, I want people to spoon-feed me"' (B, 3, F, EL and MC) and one academic said:

The worst kind of tutorial are the ones that come, sit down and say, "I don't know what question to do and I don't know what novel to do and I don't know what theory to do and what should I do?" because that's not what we do here (A, SL and SEA).

Another said, 'I was finding that students were coming in and they'd be here for maybe 15 minutes or 20 then, and it isn't useful at all, because they are just asking me, "Oh what should I do for my essay?"' (B, SL). Both of these perceptions suggest that undergraduates expect academics to provide finite knowledge because, as a social practice, the role of the teacher is characterised by this authoritative knowledge.

There was a strong expectation that academics should share their expertise with undergraduates: 'there's a certain part of their higher education that they believe should

be me telling them about things. I am an expert, they perceive me as an expert' (B, SL) and, of course, the role of the academic shares many similarities with the role of the teacher. One academic reflected that the hierarchy existed 'in the sense that I'm telling them what they need to do' (B, SL and ProgL), which suggests that the traditional power relationship is perpetuated because academics still have to perform certain behaviours that are characteristic of teacher roles. For some undergraduate interviewees, the power to validate knowledge was frustrating for autonomous learning: 'I'd say there are occasions when tutors would say that *their* opinion is more *valid*' (A, 2, M, E) but, for others, it perpetuated the authority of knowledge that is possessed by social agents in teacher roles: 'you're often apprehensive to note down what other students have said in seminars *until* the lecturer's gone, "That's a good idea"' (B, 2, M, EL). The observations corroborated undergraduates' reliance on academics to validate their peers' responses; linked closely to this, is the reliance on academics to build confidence.

There were instances in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews that demonstrated the perpetuation of the traditional relationship, whereby the teacher builds the learner's confidence. One reflected on an interaction with an academic, in which the ability to validate knowledge was used negatively:

If no one responds to his question, [...] he will just stand there for ages. He won't say anything, and I've timed him before and it took him 3 minutes, an *entire* 3 minutes of *silence* [...] and then he'll just go, "Woo hoo" and it's, like, that doesn't encourage anyone to talk, that just makes people feel nervous (A, 2, F, E and H).

The above recollection demonstrates this particular academic's perpetuation of the traditional power relationship, characterised by the authority of knowledge possessed by the teacher role. However, the propagation of this characteristic was not perceived of as being conducive to HE learning. One undergraduate reflected on the positive

learning outcome of one academics' emphasis on handing over the authority of knowledge to undergraduates:

She said, "Here's some, sort of, directions that you could go in, but I want you to form your own thesis, I want you to do your own research, present something that interests *you*", which was great because it was *different* (A, 2, M, E).

In this instance, the academic is refuting the expected authority of knowledge and, instead, giving that power to the undergraduate, which he recognised as '*different*'. This experience was framed as both positive and unusual by this participant, because generally, the familiarity of teaching contexts, like the 'top-down dynamic of the lecture' (A, SL and ProgL) subconsciously perpetuate the traditional power relationship.

One academic felt strongly that 'the transmission model of teaching generally [...] it's not a great model for higher education' (A, P and former DTL) because it maintains the notion that teacher roles have unilateral authority over knowledge and thus, inhibits undergraduates' willingness to learn autonomously. The same academic reflected that 'if we change the way in which we think about the situation, then we could think of students as *part* of the production, not only of research but also of teaching' (A, P and former DTL) and there should be 'a way of making it more apparent what the whole process is and *why* we're doing it, and what's the role of students' (A, P and former DTL). For this academic, the characteristics associated with the traditional power relationship were propagated by the familiarity of the sites of learning and teaching within universities and the lack of differentiation:

I think the way in which more would be helped would be at the beginning to really have a process where students are, almost, trained into what the university is *doing*, what the purpose of it is, what their roles – so they're not just coming into it and not knowing what it is (A, P and former DTL).

Another academic agreed and reflected:

I think for students when they start university, it's about saying, "Well, this is a seminar and this is a lecture. This is, you know, this is how these things work", and so, if you're responsible for delivering seminars, you, kind of, have to train the students up to know how to work with you in that situation or context (B, FDLT).

Both of these academics recognised that the familiarity of the sites of learning and teaching within universities caused undergraduates to assume certain behaviours based on their socialisation in schools; there are, though, different behaviours expected within HEIs and undergraduates need to be re-socialised into understanding these.

The familiarity of the sites of learning and teaching also aids the perpetuation of deference from the undergraduate based on their inexperience and lack of knowledge. According to one academic, this division is demonstrated through distinct behaviours associated with the traditional power relationship in schools: 'for weeks, you're still Miss, and they're still putting hands up in seminars' (A, SL and SEA). The discourses of the undergraduate interviews also demonstrated this deference; one admitted that 'it's very difficult when you're, especially a first-year, feeling like you have the right to go and knock on a lecturer's door and take up their time' (A, 1, F, E and J) and another said 'you can turn up unannounced, but that's just very awkward for me so, I'd rather just email' (A, 2, F, E). Generally, undergraduates maintained the traditional power relationship by upholding deference to the academic.

One undergraduate felt that the divide constituted through deference was the same in universities as it is in schools: 'on the whole, I feel as though it's very much student and teacher and there's that separation' (A, 2, M, E). The same participant conceptualised this in his drawing:



Figure 6.20 Drawing of a 'bad' relationship with an academic (A, 2, M, E)

He explained the drawing as: 'almost like *segregation*, they're like, "Stay away from me, you're a horrible student, I'm an academic". Yeah, I think it just seems a bit cold' (A, 2, M, E). There is a negativity surrounding the divide between undergraduates and academics, suggested by the choice of 'segregation' and 'cold' to describe the interaction. Another undergraduate said 'I think a bad bond would be the, kind of, tutor that's a bit more shut off and has that, kind of, divide of tutor, student' (A, 2, F, E).

Undergraduates generally perceived a distinct separation as negative:

If you go into a seminar room and you really do see a divide between the students and then the person who is just *teaching* you the stuff you need, that's not a very good relationship (A, 2, M, E).

I'd be less inclined to go to one that was – there was a barrier between the pupils and the lecturer because that would just really not make me want to speak to them about anything (B, 2, F, EL and MC).

I don't like professional attitudes to relationships. I think human connection is good (B, 2, M, E).

The findings suggested that this division is exacerbated by the social subjectivities of learners and teachers and the expectation of deference to authoritative knowledge that constitutes the traditional power relationship. There were a number of occurrences whereby the characteristics of the traditional power relationship were perceived of as negative within HE, nevertheless, the dynamic remains pervasive within universities.

6.3.4 Conclusions

This section has considered the ways in which participants from both institutions perceive the power relationship between them. It has detailed the regularities as characteristics of a traditional power relationship, internalised throughout compulsory schooling and considered to constitute natural relations between learners and teachers. I have explored the ways in which this power relationship, and the associated performative characteristics and behaviours, are perpetuated within familiar sites of learning and teaching. More importantly, I have detailed the ways in which the traditional power relationship continues to constitute relations between undergraduates and academics within universities, which dictates, to an extent, the expected behaviours and norms of each. With this in mind, I turn now to my third research question, which seeks to integrate an understanding of the ways in which the traditional power relationship between undergraduates and academics is being transformed by the introduction of market and partnership models within universities.

6.4 PART III: Discussion in Relation to Research Question Three

6.4.1 Introduction

The third research question in this study is:

In what ways are power relationships affected, if at all, by issues of partnership and market orientations in sites of learning and teaching?

This question draws from the theoretical foundation of power, the ways in which undergraduates are positioned by their institutions, which was addressed by the first research question, as well as the perceptions of the undergraduate-academic power relationship, addressed by the second research question. Its purpose is to collate the findings from the first two questions and address the transformation of the traditional power relationship, based on the attempted assimilation of new and conflicting subjectivities.

This section first discusses the implementation of partnership in practice across the two institutions and its impact on the traditional power relationship. I then discuss market orientations and their impact on established power relationships, through a focus on the expectations and power associated with the social role of the consumer.

6.4.2 Partnership and the Traditional Power Relationship

6.4.2.1 Encouraging Responsibility and Reciprocity

In general, the discourses from the interviews at both universities suggested positivity in relation to the changing power relationship based on the increased responsibility for undergraduates. One participant said:

I like the fact that I can go off, do my thing, get what I get, and then come back and we all come together and *share* ideas, rather than it being a *teacher* stood at the front saying, “This is what this means and you will agree with me, or you will fail” (A, 2, F, E and H).

Another said: ‘I see it as a two-way relationship. They’re not just standing there saying, “Oh, because I’ve published books, I’ve done research, I’m better” [...] it is a two-way system [...] they’re not an *authority* too much’ (B, 3, F, EL and S). The increased responsibility given to undergraduates encourages them to have confidence in their own discovery of knowledge, rather than relying on academics to provide predetermined knowledge. The equal contribution to knowledge works to lessen the power differential between undergraduates and academics and limit the behavioural norms associated with the traditional power relationship. It encourages undergraduates to acknowledge ‘that what we’re doing is a continuum, that actually what I’m asking them to do [...] is on a smaller scale of what I’m doing’ (B, R). Academics felt it was very important for this notion of reciprocity to be emphasised:

It’s important, I think, to understand that the people who are teaching them are engaged in the same things that they’re doing (B, SL and ProgL).

Getting students to, kind of, engage with research and realise that staff are involved in the production of knowledge on an ongoing basis would be *very* productive (A, SL).

The reciprocal aspect of relations between undergraduates and academics and the emphasis on an undergraduate’s responsibility for learning means that the learning process is ‘*more* democratic and *more* open to insight’ (B, PL). It is not characterised by the unilateral authority of the teacher role because, as one undergraduate argued, ‘the lecturer’s do learn from [undergraduates], to an extent’ (B, 2, F, EL and AS) and as another noted: ‘they make us work as a team to learn and bounce off each other, instead of just being this person with all these qualifications who just talks at you’ (A, 1, F, E and J). There was, in general, then, a positive reflection on the increased responsibility

on undergraduates and the reciprocal nature of the relationship with academics to produce new knowledge.

However, whilst participants generally felt that a partnership model which increased undergraduates' responsibility was positive, there was also hesitancy. The internalisation of the behavioural expectations of the traditional learner subjectivity manifests in HE sites of learning and teaching because of the familiarity of context: 'they are above you essentially, which is fine, you, sort of, have to have that in a professional setting' (B, 1, M, EL). The traditional power relationship is characterised by the teacher's ability to break or build a learner's self-esteem through affirmation. As such, it is difficult for undergraduates to take responsibility for their own learning because they are used to relying on teacher roles for validation. One undergraduate reflected: '*leader's* not the right word, but they're in *more* control than I am [...] it'll be typically *me* getting *guidance*, and obviously the person that can *give* that, is the person more in power' (A, 3, M, E). The authority of the academic, one of the 'structurally distributed powers' (Isaac, 1987, p.24) that belong to the social role of the teacher, is part of an undergraduates' internalised understanding of educational contexts and as such, they believe that they are 'not *on* the same level' (A, 2, M, E) as academics.

The responsibility encouraged by institutions and academics, as already noted, is not always accepted by undergraduates. The notion of 'spoon-feeding' (B, 3, F, EL and MC; A, 2, F, E and H) aligns with the unilateral authority of the teacher role; this internalised reliance on academics for knowledge dissemination led one academic to reflect that undergraduates 'struggle with independent, structuring their time, all the freedom, all the spare time they have, it can be a challenge for them to stay on task' (B,

SL). As Shor discovered, there is a sense in which undergraduates ‘don’t want to share authority (it’s easier for them to do it the old-fashioned teacher-centered way; it’s more demanding to take responsibility for their education)’ (1996, p.18). The responsibility for learning that is given to undergraduates within both institutions is transforming the traditional power relationship. Undergraduates are used to relying on teacher roles to not only provide them with predetermined knowledge that is either met with affirmation or refutation, but also to help them structure their time to aid their learning. Because of the strength of the traditional power relationship and the strength of the traditional learner subjectivity as a social role, it is difficult for undergraduates to accept the increased responsibility for their learning and many of them continue to rely on academics in ways that constitute the traditional power relationship.

The implementation of reciprocal relationships is also transforming the traditional power relationship because it contradicts the separation between undergraduates and academics. The distinction between the two social roles that was reflected in the majority of the interviews is difficult to negotiate when reciprocity is being encouraged.

One undergraduate argued:

It’s very much, we are told to do this and we have to do this and, the only time we ever get to really talk to our tutors and stuff is if we have a problem with assessments. It would be really cool actually to be able to do something as a collaboration (B, 3, M, CW).

This participant felt as though reciprocity was non-existent between undergraduates and academics: ‘there’s this whole thing about when you come to university, you’re treated as an equal, as the tutors and things like that, but it’s definitely not the case’ (B, 3, M, CW) and this was reiterated by another participant who reflected that ‘on the whole [...] it’s very much student and teacher and there’s that separation’ (A, 2, M, E). Undergraduates, generally, felt as though part of the necessary power relationship is

that academics should be more intelligent and as such, distinct and separate from undergraduates. The findings illuminate the difficulty of emphasising a relationship based on reciprocity when the traditional dynamic is characterised by a distinct separation that belies the ability for undergraduates to reciprocate in the production of knowledge.

6.4.2.2 *Authority of Knowledge and the 'Expert'*

The discourses from the academic interviews at both universities generally suggested discomfort at the thought of a genuine partnership between undergraduates and academics. It was perceived of as impractical because 'they don't know what's best for them' (A, SL) and because academics 'know a lot more about the subject and about the teaching and learning of it than they do' (B, SL). At the heart of educational settings is the act of learning; being given the opportunity to share authority belies the distinction between the learner and the teacher and as one undergraduate argued: 'we shouldn't be given a choice because we don't know what we're choosing' (B, 1, M, EL). The subjectivity of the teacher and its association with expertise was very prominent for the majority of participants. As this thesis has already discussed, the teacher is perceived by society, and therefore undergraduates, as 'the unilateral authority who tells them what things mean' (Shor, 1996, pp.11–2). An attempt to redefine the role of the teacher as one who partakes in an equal partnership is met with resistance because it contradicts the 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1979b, p.47) that dictates how the social roles of learner and teacher should behave and interact, and what capacity for exercising power they should possess.

This overriding sense of authority was expressed by a number of interviewees. One said: ‘I am willing to *listen*, but ultimately, I am the specialist’ (B, R), which suggests that although there is a willingness to dialogue with undergraduates, there was a cogent perception that the teacher’s authority or expertise should take precedent. Another said: ‘they *cannot* have free reign [...] but that doesn’t mean that new voices can’t come and shake *you* up, make *you* re-evaluate [...] as long as it falls within those parameters and frameworks, then yeah, absolutely’ (A, SL and SEA). For the majority of academics at both institutions, the perception of partnership was accepted only to an extent and the most common reason was the implications of a presupposed expertise or authority. As a social practice, the authority of the teacher subjectivity is embedded as a social practice and constitutes a natural and rational part of the relationship between traditional learners and teachers. So, although a number of academics were willing to consult with undergraduates and listen to their feedback, the notion of a partnership of shared authority was countered by the very prominent system of belief surrounding the authority of the teacher, which encourages academics to, consciously or subconsciously, endorse the traditional power relationship.

The institutional discourse of University A suggests a partnership model which counters the notion of the expert and the traditional power relationship. The Student Collaboration Policy encourages undergraduates to ‘work alongside staff’ in the ‘design and delivery’ of teaching and learning practices across the institution (University A, 2018f). It positions undergraduates as ‘collaborators in the production of knowledge’ (University A, 2018f). This undermines the positioning of the learner and teacher in the ‘*enduring relations*’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22) of the traditional power relationship because it gives undergraduates ‘greater responsibility’ (University A, 2018f) in pedagogical

decision-making. The discourses of the undergraduate interviews from University A suggested significant discomfort at the thought of having responsibility for pedagogical decision-making or even being involved in the production of knowledge:

I think the notion of working collaboratively *sounds* a lot nicer, but then I don't know how that would work really, because we're not *on* the same level [...] I would see myself as a student, I wouldn't see myself as a researcher [...] I think those two things are a world away from each other (A, 2, M, E).

The discursive metaphor 'world away from each other' emphasises the complete separation between teaching and research, and thus between the subjectivity of a learner and a partner, a dichotomy that has been considered to be problematic for the purpose of HE (Brew, 2006). The associated characteristics of the traditional learner subjectivity are so well established as a system of knowledge and belief that any attempt to undermine or modify that subjectivity is met with resistance.

A traditional learner is positioned as hierarchically lower than a teacher, based on the difference in purpose and qualifications. This established dynamic is transferred into universities because of the familiarity of the educational context and as such, the familiar subjectivities, and subsequent relations, are adopted to suit. Despite academics being involved in the same process of the production and discovery of knowledge that undergraduates are involved in, albeit at a more sophisticated and experienced level, both the discourse and the context of HE are so familiar that they belie any difference in purpose between that of the traditional teacher and learner and that of an academic and undergraduate. Haugaard points out that 'if an actor can be socialized into taking certain structural practices for granted, as part of the natural order of things, any practice that contravenes these structures are perceived as unreasonable, which constitutes a powerful structural constraint' (2015, p.153). Indeed, the majority of undergraduates conceived of a partnership approach as unreasonable based on the traditional power

relationship that they were already familiar with. One said: ‘I don’t feel that we are at a high enough level to, kind of, *add* to what they already know’ (A, 2, F, E and H) and another perceived the purpose of the relationship with an academic was ‘to suck knowledge from them, to *steal* what’s in their heads’ (A, 1, F, E and J). This implies an inability to differentiate university education from compulsory education; there is a sense in which undergraduates believe the dynamic between them and academics to be the same as it is between traditional learners and teachers in schools, whereby learners consume finite knowledge rather than work collaboratively to produce new knowledge.

The institutional discourse for University B, which outlines the premise of undergraduates as partners, encourages undergraduates to see themselves as ‘co-constructors of curricula’ and ‘co-producers of knowledge’ (University B, 2018a). Similar to University A, undergraduates were uncomfortable with being positioned in this way. One said: ‘I guess you could be a partner in that [...] you might contribute an idea that the teacher’s never thought of’ (B, 3, F, EL and MC). The use of the modal verbs ‘guess’ and ‘might’ imply uncertainty about an undergraduate’s ability to either be a partner, or contribute an idea that the academic has never considered, which reinforces their authority of knowledge. Another participant thought that undergraduates should only have a small amount of control in terms of decision-making: ‘only a small level of input because obviously the lecturers have been through a lot more education than we have, they have more experience in the university’ (B, 2, F, EL and AS). This participant’s response highlights the close association between partnership and undergraduate feedback and evaluation; partnership is often considered as synonymous with feedback, which adds to the ambiguity of the concept because of the association between feedback and consumer power.

There was also a suggestion that a partnership model was too difficult to implement in the discipline of English:

It probably doesn't fit with English as well as it does with other subjects I would say. So yeah, in terms of that, I mean I don't know if we've ever done that to be honest. I mean, my research – I mean my research is individual for one thing, or mostly it is, and, how I would get a student to actively engage with a piece of writing that I was doing on Tennyson or something, I mean, they couldn't (A, SL).

The humanities, and English particularly, are established academic disciplines and as such, one academic felt this made people 'very reluctant to change' (A, SL and SEA).

Evron argues:

In contrast with the articles produced by our colleagues in the sciences, the texts that we produce – for which "research" always seems like the wrong word – are rarely co-authored. They also stand in different relation to our social and professional identities. As Foucault pointed out, the "author function" in humanist discourse is much closer to what one finds in the literary sphere than in the scientific world (2018).

There was a general feeling in the discourses of the interviews that a partnership approach within the discipline of English was more difficult than that of STEM disciplines, because of the emphasis on self-authorship and individual research.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the only academic who emphasised the true principle of the partnership model was the creator of the Student Collaboration Policy, who acknowledged the need to 'change the way in which we think about the situation' (A, P and former DTL). Because of the prevalence of the traditional power relationship, the partnership model is perceived of as impractical: 'just putting students into a room and just saying, "Let's work as a group" or "Let's do this collaboratively" is, kind of, rigorous. You don't just know how to do that [...] people need roles and they need to know what they're doing' (A, P and former DTL). The traditional subjectivities of learners and teachers and their familiarity prevents people from understanding the

partnership model fully because they naturally adopt subjectivities which contradict a collaborative process.

It is the misconception surrounding the authority of the expert which prevents undergraduates and academics from understanding the model. But as the creator of the Student Collaboration Policy points out,

Authority is what we represent, so I'm not in authority, I represent the authority of the subject and I don't want to get rid of that, because that's the method, that's the science, that's what we *know* of ourselves [...] and then recognising that we each have a contribution to make to that knowing (A, P and former DTL).

The authority of knowledge which is associated with the traditional teacher subjectivity is adopted in HEIs because of the familiar educational context. However, the authority of the academic, as demonstrated above, is different to that of a teacher; they do not possess unilateral authority of knowledge in the same sense because the original purpose of the modern university was centred on the production of knowledge, not just the sharing of established knowledge. With the strength of the '*enduring relations*' (Isaac, 1987, p.22) and the traditional subjectivities of learner and teacher, though, it is problematic for undergraduates to consolidate two conflicting subjectivities, each of which possess opposing characteristics, behaviours and dispositional powers.

The discourses of the interviews from both institutions suggested a strong misrepresentation of the concept of partnership through a lack of practical implementation or experience, intertextual relations in the word, and a lack of clarity in the definition of the concept. What was quite clear, though, was the conflict between the traditional learner subjectivity and its associated capacity for exercising power and the subjectivity of the partner, which entails that undergraduates have greater power and responsibility in the learning process and less reliance on the authority of the teacher.

Both undergraduates and academics, for the most part, were hesitant in encouraging a partnership model in practice because it undermines the traditional power relationship.

6.4.3 *Market Orientations and the Traditional Power Relationship*

6.4.3.1 *The Expectations and Rights of the Consumer*

Not only is the traditional power relationship affected by partnership models in universities, but it is also affected, quite strongly, by the introduction, and adoption, of the consumer subjectivity and the consumer-provider relationship. The majority of academics perceived market models as having a massive impact on their relationship with undergraduates and this has implications for the traditional power relationship. Whilst being positioned as partners, undergraduates are simultaneously being positioned as consumers of the institution, which is an opposing subjectivity. According to one academic:

The university is in danger of doing two contradictory things. One is *allowing* them to think that they're customers [...] and the other is, *rightly* saying, "This is a partnership in which you have equal responsibility" and the trouble is that I think students are listening to one more than they do the other sometimes (B, P).

There were a few academics who thought the emphasis on consumerism, and the negative consequences, were perpetuated by institutional structures: 'the university's structures of things like constant surveying, can produce a, sort of, *demanding student model*' (A, PL and ProgL). This suggests that the demanding student model is exacerbated by the institutional structures that emphasise an undergraduate's legal entitlement as a consumer, rather than an inevitable consequence of undergraduates' legal positioning as consumers.

The legal rights of the consumer social role entail a logical response for undergraduates to demand more from academics as a direct result of their financial transaction with the institution:

I know students are bringing universities to court and saying, “The teaching was inadequate therefore I only got a 2:1” and that is the logic of all of this [...] the whole context within which they are operating, *pushes* people into that direction (A, P and former DTL).

The expectations of undergraduates is ‘not just an attitude of entitlement’ (A, P and former DTL) but their legal rights as consumers, which means they are ‘literally entitled to make a claim against the outcome of their exchange relationship with the university’ (A, P and former DTL). Underpinning the relationship, then, is an awareness of the power undergraduates have to impact on the sustainability of the university and as such, there is ‘an anxiousness around how you deal with that entity’ (A, SL). The reference to undergraduates as an ‘entity’ implies their separation and the employment of the noun ‘anxiousness’ suggests a discomfort at interacting with undergraduates because of the transformation of the traditional power relationship. As a social practice, there is a strong association between consumerism and increased anxiety to provide consumer satisfaction; this is working to transform the traditional power relationship.

There is a tentativeness around communicating with undergraduates because of the ‘constant threat of student litigation and complaints, together with requirement to comply with extensive external monitoring procedures’ (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, p.275). The discourses from the academic interviews at both institutions recognised a number of instances of undergraduates exercising their power as consumers and being ‘slightly litigious’ (B, P). One thought that there was a ‘*bit* more, kind of, pushing back against grades when students aren’t happy’ (A, SL) and another said ‘there was sometimes a sense that people were grieved that they weren’t getting [...] the product

that they thought they'd bought' (B, PL). Another mentioned how undergraduates apply the logic of consumer power to their interactions with academics:

I have occasionally heard other, kind of, colleagues and academic acquaintances, say things about, how someone has said, "Well I pay your salary" or something like that, as a kind of idea, that well then, "So you should be doing more for me" (A, SL and ProgL).

Undergraduates' power as consumers is conflicting with the traditional power relationship because undergraduates are beginning to question the established authority of the academic.

There was a consistent recognition in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews at both institutions that they had greater dispositional power as consumers:

If you feel like you're not getting out what you *should* of your degree then, I think you are entitled to ask for *more*' (B, 2, F, EL and MC).

It gives you more of a right to complain if the lectures aren't up to standard, or you're being taught in a way that isn't beneficial, you, kind of, aren't being taught at all, then I guess since you're paying for it, you can, sort of, complain about that (B, 1, EL and CW).

We are basically funding everything so, we should, to an extent, have a say in how things should be better or if they're going wrong (B, 2, F, EL).

Although undergraduates' perception of their power as consumers was attributed mainly to the ability to make 'improvements or suggestions' (A, 3, M, E) rather than having 'the ultimate say' (A, 3, M, E), there was a shared feeling that undergraduates had the right to participate in decision-making, which was reinforced by institutional documents through emphasising 'the right of students to participate in the governance of the University' (University A, 2018c) as well as repeatedly employing the phrase 'the student has the right to' (University A, 2018b; University B, 2018c).

Despite the consistency in undergraduates' perception of their increased entitlement, though, there was still reluctance to attribute that entitlement solely to consumer power:

‘regardless of whether you’re paying for it or not, you have a right to call tutors to account and say, “I’m not happy”’ (A, 2, M, E). Another said: ‘we should be getting at least basic satisfaction, we do have rights. But I do think they should be in place, regardless of the fees’ (A, 3, F, E). The power that undergraduates felt they had was mostly associated with voicing their opinion, rather than using legal influence or force, which is perhaps why the majority felt they should have that power regardless of their status as consumers. According to a report by Universities UK,

Only 62% [of students] thought they were protected by consumer law when engaging with their university, in comparison with 93% who believed they were protected in their relationship with their bank or building society (2017, p.6).

The same report noted that ‘participants did not believe they had the same bargaining power with their university as with a bank or mobile phone company. The members of the group did not feel they could “negotiate” with their university’ (2017b, p.6). This emphasises undergraduates’ reluctance to position themselves as consumers because it undermines the traditional power relationship.

6.4.3.2 *Value for Money*

As Tomlinson notes, ‘consumerism is not a neutral term that objectively characterises social relations – it is instead imbued with numerous connotations and signifiers; some of which can be used to empower actors, while reducing the autonomy of others’ (2016, p.13). For both institutions, there was a clear recognition and understanding from academics that because of the connotations of empowerment associated with consumerism, undergraduates will expect more for their money. The inflated fee encourages undergraduates to question the economic benefit of their financial investment; there’s a recognition from academics that it ‘*utterly, utterly* changes how they understand university education’ (A, PL and ProgL) because ‘they have to feel

there's an economic benefit' (A, PL and ProgL). There was an assumption that undergraduates would be 'questioning the value of their experience' (B, FDLT) because being a consumer is associated with receiving value for money.

The emphasis placed on value for money, from both inside the institutions and from external pressures, has the potential to transform the traditional power relationship. As part of the '*enduring relations*' (Isaac, 1987, p.22) of the traditional dynamic, the traditional learner has little power to demand; they accept the authority of the teacher and in so doing, accept what the teacher provides, whether it aligns with their expectations or not. Positioning undergraduates as consumers allows them to expect more, particularly because the fee is so extravagant. However, because value for money is subjective within an educational context, what undergraduates expect of their institutions, and the academics they interact with, is open to interpretation. As a result, the power relationship is under strain because of the imperatives to satisfy undergraduates' increased expectations to avoid them exercising their consumer power and potentially damaging the reputation or financial sustainability of the university.

The increased expectations associated with the consumer subjectivity were considered to be a concern by the majority of academics: 'students feel that if they're paying money, they're paying for a grade. They're paying for a good grade, they want a really, really solid 2:1 and ideally, a First' (A, SL and SEA). Another said:

The idea of consumer makes the student a client, which would suggest that a university is a *mill*, or a *shop*, you can go in, you pay for what you want, and you'd get that result. It's [...] the idea that you can pay for your degree and therefore, you will get it (A, SL and ProgL).

Like the above participant, who likened the university to a '*mill*, or a *shop*', other academics equated the degree or the university experience with a 'product' (B, SL and

ProgL) or ‘like putting 20p in a slot machine and seeing a product come out’ (A, SL and SEA). The use of familiar metaphors to explain consumer logic suggests the concern that academics felt about undergraduates misunderstanding the nature of learning. Academics generally perceived consumerism to be ‘*passive*’ (B, P) in that it encourages an attitude of “‘I *paid* for this, I’m going to get my *money’s* worth. It’s your fault if I don’t *deliver*” (B, R). The expectation of receiving something in exchange for money, as a guarantee, works to reverse the traditional power relationship because it allows undergraduates to think ‘it’s the tutor’s responsibility to do the work for [them]’ (A, SL). This places pressure on academics to provide for undergraduates because of the anxiousness surrounding their power as consumers:

Students see higher education, and the outcomes it produces, as a “right” based on the increasingly “private” nature of their contribution. This is likely to place considerably more power in the hands of the “paying customer” who expects their providers to deliver their services and products in ways commensurate with their demands (Tomlinson, 2016, p.2).

As Tomlinson argues, the power awarded to the paying customer places more pressure on providers to deliver a high quality product or service, which in HEIs, rests on academics’ shoulders: ‘certainly in the last 5 years, there’s *more pressure* on lecturers’ (B, R). Undergraduates taking this approach are perceived to be ‘more instrumental’ (A, P and former DTL) because they have ‘the wrong *mind-set* about what to *expect* and what they can *bring* to it’ (A, SL2). There was a strong perception of the consumer subjectivity promoting the passive provision of knowledge with little engagement or effort from undergraduates because ‘the onus is on the *institution* to provide a *service*, so [academics] have become *service providers*, instead of educators’ (B, R).

However, there was recognition by a few academics of the positives of the consumer concept: ‘it *forces* them to be customers, and that then *forces* us to give them value for money, and I don’t necessarily think that’s a *bad* thing because it makes us think about

what *we're* doing' (A, SL and SEA). One said, 'I think the customer model is, to some extent, useful, it's more, kind of, *contractual*, rather than assuming a teacher authority is inevitable' (A, PL and ProgL). For this academic, the consumer subjectivity transforms the traditional power relationship in a positive way, by undermining the assumed authority of the academic. Another felt that 'the idea that students are customers can prompt us to be better because [...] there's a feeling that one has to give value for money' (B, PL). As Mark notes, 'a customer focus does not carry with it a mandate that educators must pander to students. Rather, it provides a framework for ensuring satisfaction by embedding quality into the learning process' (2013, p.8). Whilst academics were more willing to accept the behavioural characteristics of a *customer*, and the notion of providing satisfaction and a duty of care, this did not negate their perception of the characteristics of a *consumer*, which the majority considered to be quite different. Generally, the label 'consumer' was considered to encourage the reversal of the power relationship, with too much power being given to undergraduates to demand a passive provision of the degree they have purchased, whereas 'customer' was perceived to be more concerned with the development of quality of provision, which many academics felt was reasonable. On the whole, the discourses of the academic interviews from both universities reflected the danger of incorporating the consumer subjectivity, its increased expectations and its association with receiving value for money.

There was a clarity in the concerns expressed by academics regarding undergraduates' expectations as consumers, which did not fully align with the expectations expressed by undergraduates. Academics' perceived expectations were far more drastic than the expectations that undergraduates themselves held. There was a considerable variation

in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews in terms of defining their expectations and what they perceive to be value for money. One described it as ‘having the contact with the tutors and having them be interested in contacting you, because sometimes I feel like that’s not the case’ (A, 2, M, E). Having tutors ‘be interested’ in contacting undergraduates is a subjective emotional expectation and therefore, immeasurable. Another defined it as: ‘each lecture and seminar, or workshop, that I do, I can take something away from, that I can put towards my grade later on’ (B, 1, F, EL and CW). Again, ‘take something away’ is ambiguous and difficult to measure; it could refer to a physical or tangible element or an emotional experience. Another perceived that it meant feeling ‘supported all the way’ (A, 3, F, E) and another thought it was more about ‘how you feel about approaching people, and the support they can actually give back [...] [and] that they have time for you’ (B, 3, E and MC). These are both emotional in nature and, therefore, difficult to guarantee and even more difficult to prove; they require an individualised and subjective assessment of one’s emotional response and as such, they will be different for every undergraduate. Another believed that ‘the time that you have with a pupil should be of the highest quality because that’s your contact and that’s what they’re paying for’ (B, 2, F, EL and MC).

There was not a single undergraduate who believed that their fees entitled them to receive a particular grade, or the degree itself, which might suggest that undergraduates have not taken the consumer connotations to the extreme level that academics fear they might. The above perceptions of value for money provide some insight into what undergraduates expect from academics in a practical sense, and the majority of the expectations are those associated with learning relationships generally. Despite some undergraduates detailing the expectations they had in exchange for the fees, the vast

majority merely understood value for money as ‘getting the upmost’ (A, 2, F, E), which suggests that undergraduates are relying on the social practice of consumerism to influence their understanding of value for money, despite being unclear as to what that entails in practical terms.

6.4.3.3 *Satisfying the Consumer*

Despite little clarity or consistency in detailing undergraduates’ increased expectations, the majority of undergraduate interviewees shared the belief that there is an increased entitlement to expect a satisfactory quality of provision:

Because we’re paying for it, we would then expect the [pause] I don’t want to say product, but the tuition that we receive to be of a good standard because we’re paying for it, and I think if we weren’t paying for it, then we wouldn’t be able to argue, when it’s not up to standard, “Well, I’m paying for this” (A, 2, M, E).

Analysing this as a social practice, the participant is drawing from the established social relations of consumer and provider, whereby the legal and protected rights of the consumer allow that social role to criticise the provider with the reasonable argument of having paid money. This is emphasised by the participant’s automatic use of the word ‘*product*’ because it is natural to associate consumerism with the purchase of a product, just as it is natural to associate consumerism with expectations of satisfaction. Undergraduates were aware that they were ‘paying for a service’ (A, 3, M, E) with a recognition that ‘there’s a, kind of, customer service almost, aspect, because you are paying for a service, rather than being given a service’ (B, 2, F, E), which positions academics as those providing the service and undergraduates as those using the service. As such, a large number of undergraduates related their situation to the social practice of established consumer relations. This drastically impacts the traditional power relationship; according to the ‘*enduring relations*’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22) of the traditional

dynamic, learners do not possess the power to question or criticise the authority of the teacher. In consumer-provider relations, though, the power is reversed and the undergraduate (as a consumer) has the power to criticise the academic (as a provider), who has a legal obligation to provide satisfaction through the ‘educational services set out’ (University A, 2018d).

As a social practice, the behaviours that dictate the consumer-provider relationship are well established and it seems appropriate to apply those behaviours to relations within universities. Indeed, the social practice of consumer-provider relations was evident in many other undergraduates’ perceptions: ‘if they don’t turn up, can I get my money back? Or, if I don’t think it’s good enough, can I get a refund?’ (A, 2, F, E). Another said:

When you pay more money, you’re like, “Ok well, I’ve paid for this seminar and it’s, what? £70 for a whole hour, and I want you to be here on time and teach me properly, because it cost a lot of money”. If you *were* using a customer thing, you wouldn’t just pay a lot of money for something that’s *faulty* (A, 3, F, E).

Despite the difference in defining what would guarantee satisfaction, the majority of undergraduate interviewees perceived undergraduates as having greater rights and entitlement to expect more from their institutions, and their academic tutors, because of the recognition that they deserve customer satisfaction. This encourages an emphasis on demand and undergraduates were often aware that they were more critical of the provision they were receiving.

Tomlinson argues that ‘if students internalise dominant messages of their consumer prowess, this will inform their behaviours’ (2016, p.3); undergraduates’ increased entitlement influences their inclination to complain or voice dissatisfaction with their institution or individual academics, which belies the deference that characterises the

traditional power relationship. One admitted that ‘now we probably expect more, I know sometimes in lectures, me and my friends have gone, “God [sigh] we’re paying £9,000 for this”’ (B, 2, F, EL) and another said: ‘I think with the amount that we’re paying for student loans and things, I think that it’s fairly hard to get value for money at *any* uni’ (B, 1, M, EL). Another undergraduate, when asked if she felt that she was receiving value for money, replied: ‘no I don’t because there’s so many problems that you just think, “Well, what am I actually paying for?”’ (A, 2, F, E). One academic perceived this as ‘an encoded part of the discourse of complaint, “If I’m paying this, why isn’t this happening?”’ (B, SL and ProgL), which emphasises the consumer logic being applied to HE and the power that undergraduates now have to demand satisfaction from academics.

Furthermore, there was recurrent criticism about the value for money that English undergraduates received compared to other disciplines:

Some of my friends have *loads* and loads of lectures and they do placements and things like that, so I feel like they’re getting a better value for money (B, 2, F, EL and MC).

As an English student, probably get *less* value for money than *many* other courses [...] the Science courses, you think, they use all this expensive equipment and our main equivalent to equipment is *books*, and we have to pay for them ourselves [...] realistically, I don’t think we get our money’s worth with an English degree (A, 3, M, E).

Being an English student, I’m paying £9,250, why am I buying books? (A, 1, F, E and J).

Interdiscursivity recognises the social context in which the text is produced and for the above statements, there are strong external influences, such as the media and the OfS, which encourage undergraduates to question value for money:

That media message, again, just constantly – it’s that consumer model! “*You’re* paying this, therefore, you ought to be getting *that*” and no they shouldn’t be getting whatever *that* is, but in fact we’re offering lots of other things that they then don’t *engage* with (B, P).

The criticality and dissatisfaction present in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews is transforming the traditional power relationship because it is a demonstration of undergraduates' exercising their power as consumers to demand what they think they are entitled to; this undermines the '*enduring relations*' (Isaac, 1987, p.22) that undergraduates and academics are familiar with. As the social practice of consumer relations are being drawn on and because consumerism is often associated with the purchasing of tangible products, there is a strong association of value for money with products or services that can be *measured*, hence the emphasis on contact hours and books. As a result, undergraduates look to academics to compensate for the lack of perceived value from equipment and contact hours and this is alluded to in the discourses of the interviews; there is an increased expectation of high quality teaching, support and care, as well as dedication and commitment from academics to aid undergraduates' success, which places more pressure on academics to ensure satisfaction.

6.4.3.4 *Pressures on Academics as Providers*

The legal imperatives surrounding student satisfaction increases the pressure on academics to satisfy their undergraduates, and to deliver what they are expecting, as they are the ones who are doing 'the coal-faced work' (B, SL and ProgL). As pointed out by Naidoo and Jamieson, the introduction of a consumerist framework entails that undergraduates will 'demand high quality provision and will apply pressures on universities to make courses more relevant to the skills they require for the workplace' (2005, p.268). The financial imperatives encourage undergraduates to pressure institutions, and thus academics, into providing what they feel they have paid for.

In general, academics perceived a greater pressure to keep undergraduates happy. One said: ‘it’s made students demand more of us. There are *real* times, I know colleagues, from other institutions as well, feel like we’re social workers and we’re here 24/7’ (A, SL and SEA) because ‘they think they’re paying you’ (A, SL and SEA). Academics are under more pressure to provide for undergraduates’ increased expectations, which can lead to them feeling like ‘social workers’ (A, SL and SEA). Generally, academics felt under pressure to provide increased pastoral support in order to satisfy undergraduates. Because of the reliance on teacher roles, perpetuated through the traditional power relationship, academics are the central focus for undergraduates in the learning process, so it is logical that they would direct their expectations from their financial investment towards their tutors. One academic argued that ‘there’s the endless, relentless drive to make sure students are happy and of course you want them to be happy but equally, there can be a tendency to let staff martyr themselves in the cause’ (B, P). Academics become the providers of the educational services that the institution offers; they feel the pressure to ‘meet the needs of [...] students’ (University A, 2018e) and as such, they are responsible for satisfying undergraduates’ entitlement to high quality provision. This is in conflict with the traditional power relationship because teachers are normally in the position to both challenge and demand more from learners, not cater to their demands.

A number of academics were concerned about the pressure that they were under to provide undergraduates with services that are not covered by the academic role:

I joke about, I have two doctor hats, right, so the Dr [name removed] is the academic doctor and then I have the Dr [name removed] that I feel like I’m a *counsellor*, right, or a *parent* (A, SL2).

The personal tuition system here was introduced [...] to give the students a, kind of, sense of a value-added type of thing [...] they’re coming to speak to

us about mental health problems and bad things that have happened to them and [...] we are *not prepared* for it (A, SL).

There've been instances in the past where it has *sounded* like academics are the, sort of, the donkeys that make the wheel of the mill go round [...] so that [...] students' *needs are met* (B, PL).

The increased expectations of undergraduates, coupled with the institutions' impetus on satisfaction, has placed a greater amount of pressure on academics to fulfil roles that they are either uncomfortable with, unprepared for, or for which they are underappreciated. Feeling like a '*counsellor*' or '*parent*' (A, SL2) accentuates the traditional power relationship because it emphasises the reliance on the teacher role. But as already discussed, the academic role is actually different to that of a teacher and so, academics are feeling unprepared to engage in these behaviours. One undergraduate said: 'there's always been someone there here for me to rely on in terms of if I'm struggling with *anything* [...] I've probably used it a bit too much in terms of therapy' (B, 3, M, CW). Pressuring academics to perform as counsellors or parents places considerable emphasis on aspects of the traditional power relationship that undermine undergraduates' desire or willingness to take responsibility for their own learning.

Moreover, the use of the discursive metaphor 'donkeys that make the wheel of the mill go round' (B, PL) suggests a feeling of being both overworked and underappreciated. One academic argued that some decisions made by senior management 'purport to be about students and ultimately, all they are, are increased workloads for staff' (A, SL2). The impetus on satisfying undergraduates' needs, now that they are positioned as consumers, undermines the authority of the academic performing within the traditional power relationship; they have to adhere to decisions made by senior management, even if they are considered to be damaging to pedagogical development or quality. Academics, rather than being figures of authority and superior intellect, have become

the ‘donkeys’ (B, PL) who are feeling ‘exhausted or burnt out, or struggling’ (A, SL2) trying to satisfy the expectations of undergraduates, some of which stem from undergraduates and some of which are perpetuated by senior management on the basis of the power and expectation associated with the consumer subjectivity.

The pressure to satisfy undergraduate demand was perceived as damaging to the relationship between them and academics:

It really does destroy the relationship between students and lecturers because if they think they’re buying something then I sometimes remember how many hours I’m actually being paid for and what they have a right to expect and what they don’t [...] there’s sometimes quite a big *gap* there (B, P).

The power relationship, defined by legal right, is an antagonistic one based on self-purposive entitlement which becomes difficult to negotiate in a context of supposed collaborative learning. The founder of the Student Collaboration policy argued:

The university will say students are at the heart of the system but again, it’s not my opinion, it’s the *nature* of the institutions, they can’t be. And putting them there causes lots of problems in terms of [...] students being *forced* into a particular position, an antagonistic position (A, P and former DTL).

The transformed power relationship is one characterised by antagonism because each party is concerned with their own objectives, as pointed out by Williams: ‘lecturers and students, presented as service users and service providers, appear pitted against each other with competing interests’ (2013, p.49). This has been exacerbated by the introduction of the OfS, which entails a ‘presumed need for an external regulating body to protect the interests of “vulnerable” consumers against “exploitative” academics’ (Williams, 2013, p.49). The social practice of consumer-provider relations is familiar to most and is characterised by each party being self-interested and self-serving; in a HE context, this relation is invoked because of undergraduates’ legal entitlement and their potential to exercise that power of entitlement against the institution in order to serve their own interests.

6.4.4 *The Significance of the Traditional Power Relationship*

The interview discourses reflected a recognition that the traditional power relationship negated the negative influence of the consumer subjectivity. One academic argued: ‘for the most part, when I’m talking to students and they’re talking to me, we have a teacher-student relationship, so there isn’t that sense of, “I’m paying your wages”’ (B, SL and ProgL). Formed through systemic power, the traditional power relationship has become part of ‘a way of ordering the world’ (Haugaard, 2015, p.151) and as such, its continuation is not questioned. Despite the introduction of the consumer subjectivity, and its associated powers, undergraduates perceived it as having little impact on their relationship with academics. One said, in response to whether they felt like a consumer: ‘not really. Your lecturers have no problem kicking you out or whatever’ (A, 3, F, E) and another argued: ‘I don’t feel like a consumer, I feel like a *partaker*. I feel like I’ve come here and it’s very much the lecturers have this relationship with us where, “I will help you as hard as you work”’ (A, 1, F, E and J). There was a strong sense in which undergraduates perceived their position as that of the traditional learner, as opposed to a consumer, which was generally corroborated by academics: ‘I like to see their engagement *primarily as learners*. And then yes, it’s important that they hold us *accountable* [...] But, they are *students*, they should enjoy being students’ (B, R). The majority of undergraduates agreed that they are positioned as learners before being positioned as consumers. One said: ‘I think we’re considered students still, because at the end of the day, we are all here to get a degree and that’s probably the first thing’ (B, 2, F, EL) and another said: ‘we’re definitely treated more as a student than a consumer because the lecturers are always really encouraging and they want you to do your best’ (B, 1, F, EL and CW). Both perceptions highlight the traditional power relationship

whereby learners are concerned with learning and teachers are concerned with encouraging and developing that learning and the two roles are separate and distinct.

Furthermore, the discourses of the undergraduate interviews, mostly, reflected the cogency of the traditional dynamic in that undergraduates should be awarded less dispositional power: ‘I don’t think we should be able to come in and be like, “This is how it should be” but I think if something went really wrong, we should be able to help change it’ (B, 2, F, EL). This participant’s response implied a reluctance to exercise consumer power in determining what goes on within the university because, traditionally, that is the responsibility of the teacher role. Instead, the participant limited input to ‘help’, which suggests a return to the traditional power relationship. Another undergraduate expressed a similar reluctance: ‘I don’t think we need *more* control. I think we have *enough* control, they already take in our considerations quite significantly’ (B, 2, M, EL). Indeed, the majority of the undergraduate interviewees were reluctant to have more power because it would undermine the authority of the academic, which would then undermine the traditional power relationship. One pointed out the conflict between the subjectivities of a traditional learner and a consumer in terms of exercising power:

There is this person providing this service but they’re more knowledgeable than you [...] but then you are [...] *using* the service, so you have the *right* to go – question them. But at the same time, they’re more knowledgeable than you so you’re like, “Can I?” (B, 2, M, EL).

The conflict between a consumer subjectivity and a learner subjectivity is due to the difference in dispositional power, reflected by this participant as a contradiction concerning appropriate behaviour within interpersonal relationships.

Overall, the discourses from the interviews at both institutions, as well as the institutional documents, suggested that partnership and market orientations have a considerable influence on the traditional power relationship. There was noticeable conflict between the different subjectivities and the subsequent power relations, and this was reflected through ambiguity about an undergraduate's position within the university and uncertainty as to how they should behave when interacting with academics.

6.4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has considered the first three research questions of this study. It has outlined an understanding of the ways in which undergraduates are engaged as traditional learners, partners, and consumers by both institutions and academics and the ways in which these subject positionings are enacted in practice. It has also outlined the characteristics and behavioural expectations of the traditional power relationship as perceived by undergraduates and academics. It has explored the way in which this traditional power relationship has been affected by the engagement of undergraduates as partners and consumers and their subsequent positioning in those social roles. This chapter has provided an integrated understanding of these complicated social practices; as such, this thesis will now turn to addressing the fourth research question of this study, which discusses the impact that these findings have on concepts and theory associated with undergraduate subjectivities, power, and partnership within HEIs.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION – ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the findings illuminated by the data; this chapter discusses those findings in relation to the fourth and final research question of this study:

What is the significance of the findings for concepts and theory associated with undergraduate subjectivities, power, and partnership in higher education contexts?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the significance of the findings for undergraduate subjectivities within universities. I argue that the competing subjectivities of learner, partner and consumer are diametrically opposed and have differing dispositional power as well as different associated characteristics and behavioural expectations. This leads on to a discussion of the significance of the findings for the theory of power in HE contexts. It considers the conflicting and complex power relationships between undergraduates and academics in the current climate and discusses the importance of acknowledging the traditional power relationship in the formation of new power dynamics. I then discuss the significance of the findings for the concept of partnership, arguing that the expectations associated with partnership models are diametrically opposed to those associated with both the traditional learner-teacher model and the consumer model. Ultimately, this chapter discusses the need for a more integrated understanding of the multiple and transforming undergraduate subjectivities and power relationships within HE, in order to better evaluate, and ultimately improve, the experience of undergraduates in the current university climate.

7.2 Student Subjectivities

7.2.1 Introduction

Williams argues that ‘what it means to be a student in the UK appears to have changed radically within the space of a generation’ (2013, p.1); the subjectivity of the undergraduate student in the current university climate is being reconstituted. With the massification of HE, the legal imperatives of the consumer role and the imperatives of its opposition, the partner role, are working to reposition undergraduates within universities. Whilst these two subjectivities are in conflict, there is another pervasive role in universities which is often overlooked: the traditional learner subjectivity, which involves behaviours that are in direct conflict with both the consumer subjectivity and the partner subjectivity. The subjectivities of the learner, partner and consumer are irreconcilable, which is problematic for undergraduates. Being positioned within three conflicting subjectivities, each of which have divergent behavioural expectations, creates confusion and ambiguity in terms of how undergraduates should behave within HE sites of learning and teaching. An understanding of the three conflicting subjectivities and their associated behavioural expectations is necessary for reframing the resultant power relationships between undergraduates and academics in a meaningful and appropriate way for the modern climate.

Subjectivities are socially constructed and as such, they are impermanent and malleable. Davies argues: ‘people exist at the points of intersection of multiple discursive practices, those points being conceptualized as subject positions. *The individual is not fixed at any one of these points or locations*’ (2004, p.7). The undergraduate student is

a socially structured role which is currently under negotiation. Undergraduates are faced with conflicting subjectivities that they must negotiate and attempt to assimilate in order to establish a foundation of interpersonal relationships within which learning can take place. Hargreaves notes, 'attached to any position are a set of expectations about what behaviour is appropriate to the person occupying the position' (1972, p.71). The three subjectivities in which undergraduates are positioned have been socially constructed; they form 'historically enduring relation[s]' (Isaac, 1987, p.22), in which the actors positioned within these subjectivities play out the behavioural expectations of their given roles. These behavioural expectations are 'not their unique characteristics as individuals, but their social identities as participants in enduring, socially structured relationships' (Isaac, 1987, p.21).

Solomon notes, 'we tend to pattern our behaviour on the perceived expectations of others, as a form of *self-fulfilling prophecy*. When we act the way we assume others *expect* us to act, we often confirm these perceptions' (2016, pp.162–3). The findings of this study corroborate the notion that undergraduates behave according to the ideal type, or social role, they feel they are expected to perform within. Because they are within an educational context, undergraduates adopt a traditional learner subjectivity and behave in the expected manner. But, equally, because they are paying money and because the institution positions them as consumers, undergraduates also adopt the behaviours that are expected of a consumer. Academics and institutions also position undergraduates as partners, but, because this role conflicts with the subjectivities of learner and consumer, and because the behavioural expectations of a partner are less familiar, the undergraduates in this study tended to avoid performing within this role. The impact of conflicting subjectivities is considered by Kitchener, who argues:

Conflict occurs when expectations associated with one role require behavior of a person that is to some extent incompatible with the behavior associated with another role [...] When roles conflict or compete, individuals frequently have difficulty in deciding which behavior is appropriate (1988, p.218).

It is problematic for undergraduates that the roles of learner, partner and consumer, and their behavioural expectations, are irreconcilable. The attempted assimilation of these three opposing subjectivities creates volatility within relationships with academics, leading to conflict and confusion for undergraduates about how to behave.

Both undergraduates and academics recognise the incompatible behaviours of each subjectivity. In order for universities to evaluate, and improve, the undergraduate experience in the current university climate, there must be a greater understanding of the opposing subjectivities of learner, partner, and consumer and the ways in which these subjectivities influence undergraduates' adoption of specific behaviours. I will now discuss the significance of the findings for illuminating the conflicting characteristics and behavioural expectations associated with each of the three subjectivities.

7.2.2 *The 'Traditional Learner'*

The traditional learner subjectivity is internalised throughout compulsory schooling and as this thesis has argued, the behavioural expectations are not only familiar, they are naturalised within educational contexts. From a critical pedagogical perspective, the traditional learner subjectivity engenders the 'banking' method of learning, whereby:

Educators are the possessors of knowledge, whereas learners are "empty vessels" to be filled by the educators' deposits. Hence learners don't have to ask questions or offer any challenge, since their position cannot be other than to receive passively the knowledge their educators deposit (Freire, 1985, p.100).

Undergraduates are used to passively receiving knowledge from teachers. This characteristic is part of the pervasive dynamic throughout compulsory schooling and thus, internalised by individuals as natural and necessary behaviour in educational contexts. As Atkins notes, ‘taking up a subject-position in a certain social discourse provides the individual with knowledge and rationale for actions with which the individual unwittingly identifies’ (2005, p.208). The findings suggest that undergraduates identify strongly with the traditional learner subjectivity and consider the role and its behavioural characteristics to be necessary within an educational context, which constitutes ‘assuming a teacher authority is inevitable’ (A, PL and ProgL).

*7.2.2.1 Behaviour Expectations: The Traditional
Learner*

7.2.2.1.1 Authority of Knowledge

The traditional learner has little responsibility, instead relying on the teacher to impart necessary and authoritative knowledge in order to pass a set of standards also prescribed by the teacher. This dynamic ‘cultivates passivity, conformity, obedience, acquiescence, and unquestioning acceptance of authority’ (Kreisberg, 1992, p.8). The internalised behavioural expectations of the traditional learner subjectivity elucidates undergraduates’ adherence to this subjectivity in universities.

The familiarity of the sites of learning and teaching in universities invokes a natural inclination to adopt the traditional learner subjectivity. The findings suggest that university spaces can perpetuate the invocation of the traditional learner subjectivity because ‘they’re all sat round and they’re looking at [the academic] and there’s that

expectation that [the academic is] going to give them and they will just consume' (A, SL and SEA). The familiarity of the behavioural expectations of the traditional learner causes undergraduates to rely on the passive transmission of authoritative knowledge; this was corroborated by the findings in the recognition that 'some students want to be lectured at because [...] it makes them feel safe' (B, PL). A powerful characteristic of the traditional learner subjectivity is an expectation that teachers will transmit authoritative knowledge to learners as and when they need it. There was a predominant perception that undergraduates are not as knowledgeable as academics and, therefore, this should constitute the passing of knowledge from 'the one who knows [to] the one who doesn't' (Foucault, 1979a, p.70).

The expectation that teachers will transmit authoritative knowledge to learners constitutes 'the "taken-for-granted" way of approaching education, which sees the teacher as expert and the student as inexperienced listener' (Tong et al., 2018, p.315). The observations illuminated the strength of this behaviour; some undergraduates only made notes on their peers' contributions once they had been validated by the academic in some way (A, 1, Sem; B, 2, Lec) and this was confirmed in the interviews whereby one participant admitted to being 'often apprehensive to note down what other students have said in seminars *until* the lecturer's gone, "That's a good idea"' (B, 2, M, EL); the internalised authority of knowledge possessed by teacher roles, then, makes transmission teaching more appealing to undergraduates because of its seeming naturalness for educational contexts.

7.2.2.1.2 Deference

Deferring to the teacher's authority is a powerful behavioural characteristic of the traditional learner subjectivity and much other research has recognised it as a barrier when attempting to alter the dynamic between undergraduates and academics:

In terms of learning and our relations with students, therefore, the power resides with the authority of the lecturer and is often reinforced through our social practices of teaching and our interactions. The reality of greater knowledge and expertise of lecturers in many areas of learning needs to be recognised (Allin, 2014, p.97).

Danaher argues that 'we make sense of ourselves by referring back to various bodies of knowledge' (2000, p.50); as the findings of this study suggest, undergraduates refer back to the knowledge that constitutes the appropriate ways to act within a relationship with a teacher and they draw on what they have internalised from other educational contexts. Undergraduates have internalised the notion that teachers are more intelligent than learners, which causes them to 'always feel *stupid*' (A, 1, F, E and J). The intelligence associated with the academic role posits that they will naturally hold a greater authority over what is correct knowledge. As a social practice, deferring to the academics' authority of knowledge is in virtue of their social role as a teacher and the expectation that 'they know what they're doing' (A, 1, F, E and J).

Deferring to 'correct' knowledge is a prominent component of the relations that form the learner-teacher dynamic within compulsory education: learners do not constitute the knowledge 'necessarily as "right or "wrong" but rather as authoritative' (Shor, 1996, p.51). This deference was illuminated in the findings where there was a pronounced emphasis on 'spoon-feeding' (B, 3, F, EL and MC; A, 2, F, E and H). Despite the level of learning being elevated, there is still a reliance on academics to provide authoritative knowledge that undergraduates defer to and repeat appropriately in assessments.

Throughout compulsory schooling, individuals are positioned as traditional learners and the social role is constituted through specific rules, laws and behavioural norms, which have become internalised as appropriate within educational contexts.

The findings of this study corroborate the notion that the traditional learner subjectivity is naturalised to the extent that individuals do not question the adoption of the associated behaviours and characteristics. It is understood to be part of ‘the silos that are naturally in higher education’ (B, FDLT) and therefore ‘*unavoidable*’ (B, SL). Very few undergraduates and academics in this study questioned the relevance of the behaviours of the learner subjectivity within universities and whether they are appropriate. According to Hargreaves, ‘teacher-pupil interactions are typically *asymmetrically contingent*: the pupils’ behaviour is much more contingent on the teacher’s behaviour than the teacher’s behaviour is contingent on the pupils’ behaviour’ (1972, p.139); this is the normalised dynamic between learners and teachers and constitutes a powerful way of acting within educational contexts. However, as will be discussed in the next section, this asymmetrically contingent relationship, based on the behavioural norms of the traditional learner subjectivity, is diametrically opposed to the behavioural norms of the partner subjectivity, in which undergraduates are also positioned. The findings of the study suggest that undergraduates and academics struggle to consolidate these opposing subjectivities, which leads to confusion and conflict in the process of establishing appropriate behaviours within interpersonal relationships.

7.2.3 *The ‘Partner’*

Despite being ‘in vogue at the moment’ (Matthews, Cook-Sather and Healey, 2018, p.30), the social role of partner is less established than that of the traditional learner and

as such, it is more ambivalent. Nevertheless, a common thread in partnership models is the emphasis on ‘reciprocity, mutual respect, shared responsibility, and complementary contributions’ (Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017, p.720). These characteristics conflict significantly with the behavioural expectations of the traditional learner subjectivity.

Brew argues:

When students are treated as students, it appears that they are kept in a subordinate place [...] However, when students are thought of as junior colleagues, the dynamic of their relationship to their teachers and to the university changes (2006, p.96).

Whilst the traditional learner is granted little to no power, the partner subjectivity is expected to share power equally and this was frequently met with confusion by participants: ‘partnership can be a bit misleading because we’re not *equals*’ (B, SL). The idea of equality was often cited as a concern when considering implementing a partnership approach. The traditional power relationship is constituted through unequal dispositional power on the premise of a teacher’s expertise; as Isaac notes, ‘powers to act are part of the nature of the relationship’ (1987, p.22) and constitute ‘routinely performed and purposeful activities’ (1987, p.22). Despite the tentativeness surrounding partnership and its implications, the findings illuminated a strong encouragement of particular behaviours as part of the subjectivity: responsibility for learning, active participation in the learning process, and reciprocity.

7.2.3.1 Behaviour Expectations: The Partner

7.2.3.1.1 Responsibility for Learning

Taking responsibility for learning is a development from the traditional learner subjectivity, whereby a passive approach to learning encourages undergraduates to ‘think it’s the tutor’s responsibility to do the work for [them]’ (A, SL). A partnership

subjectivity ‘implies shared responsibility and cooperative or collaborative action, in relation to shared purposes’ (Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010, p.1). The discourses of the documentation from both institutions reflected an emphasis on undergraduates’ responsibility for learning, encouraging an understanding of ‘respective responsibilities’ (University A, 2018e) and an expectation that undergraduates should ‘take responsibility for [their] own learning and research’ (University A, 2018e) through ‘developing confidence’, ‘accepting uncertainty’ and ‘challenging accepted thinking’ (University B, 2018a).

The majority of academics supported the emphasis on undergraduates taking responsibility for learning because of the recognition that ‘it’s about *their* learning experience’ (A, SL and ProgL) with most academics emphasising their encouragement ‘to steer *them* to do something not do it *for* them’ (B, P). The majority of academics in this study emphasised their focus on ‘making [undergraduates] take *responsibility* and ownership’ (A, SL and SEA). This was achieved in a number of ways, from ‘encourag[ing] them *not* to accept everything they read’ (B, PL) to ‘giv[ing] them more independent tasks’ (A, PL and ProgL). The majority of undergraduates acknowledged the attempts to cultivate responsibility for learning and reflected that academics ‘encourage [them] to do [their] own thing’ (A, 1, F, E and CW) as well as to ‘do independent study’ (B, 1, F, EL and CW), which is prominent ‘in English, particularly’ (A, 2, F, E and H).

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that there is still a strong emphasis on the distribution of authoritative knowledge in universities. Despite the emphasis on undergraduates being ‘co-creators’ (University B, 2018a; University A, 2018g) of knowledge, the

undergraduate interviewees reflected that academics ‘basically give [them] everything that [they] *need* for essays’ (A, 2, F, E and H) and some academics reflected on the instinct of ‘launching into, kind of, lecture mode [...] because it’s hard not to’ (A, SL). The responsibility for learning encouraged by the partner subjectivity contradicts the natural deference to the unilateral authority of the teacher, which characterises the traditional learner subjectivity. Undergraduates recognised that the responsibility for learning went beyond the behavioural expectations of the traditional learner because ‘nobody’s holding your hand’ (A, 3, F, E). Taking responsibility for learning was perceived of as ‘quite difficult’ (A, 2, F, E) by some undergraduates because of the familiarity of being provided with finite and authoritative knowledge: ‘you’re used to, “Right, A, B, C, got it”’ (A, 1, F, E and J). The emphasis on undergraduates taking responsibility for their own learning was closely associated with the notion of active participation.

7.2.3.1.2 *Active Participation*

Being active in the discussion and sharing of ideas in a collaborative way was considered an essential characteristic of the partner subjectivity. The discursive nature of seminars meant that the majority of participants considered lectures to be less engaging ‘*because* they aren’t interactive’ (A, SL and ProgL). The format of the traditional lecture is well established and both undergraduates and academics acknowledged the passivity of this method of learning, reflecting that ‘lecture theatres are *hopeless* for engaging anybody’ (A, P and former DTL). Undergraduate and academic participants recognised that the physical space of the lecture theatre supported the system of knowledge and belief surrounding the lack of active participation required in a lecture.

The passive acceptance of knowledge that characterises the traditional learner, coupled with the passivity of lectures poses a challenge for the adherence to the partner subjectivity. Undergraduates are having to negotiate two opposing behaviours: one which they are familiar with, in which they are expected to passively listen and absorb the teacher's knowledge; and another which is unfamiliar to them, in which they are expected to collaborate with the teacher to actively produce knowledge. Adherence to the partner subjectivity, because it conflicts so heavily with what appears to be the more natural subjectivity of the traditional learner, was framed as an attempt to 'try and *force* an opinion' (A, 2, M, E) which was not perceived of as 'necessarily useful' (A, 2, M, E). The observations reflected the drive for active participation but also demonstrated undergraduates' unwillingness to interact when they were not comfortable doing so (A, 2, Lec; A, 2, Sem; A, 1, Sem; B, 3, Lec; B, 3, Sem; B, 2, Sem). It was clear that academics were keen to get undergraduates to actively participate during lectures, and particularly seminars, but as reflected in the discourses of the undergraduate interviews and the behaviour during observations, attempts to force active participation were often met with resistance or silence.

7.2.3.1.3 *Reciprocity and Shared Authority*

The partner subjectivity is also associated with reciprocity and shared authority. A number of academic participants reflected on this behaviour in their drawings of positive relationships, framing those interactions as 'something that's reciprocal' (B, FDLT) where 'the conversation is two-way' (B, FDLT). Mutuality or equal contribution where undergraduates and academics have '*both* got things to say, equally' (A, SL and ProgL) was cited frequently as being a necessary characteristic and this notion is

pervasive throughout the literature on student-staff partnership (Little, 2010; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). In response to defining the term engagement, a large proportion of undergraduates also argued for a sense of mutuality, arguing for ‘*interaction* between two people [...] open both ways’ (A, 3, M, E). The phrase ‘two-way’ was employed by a number of undergraduates in conceptualising a positive and engaging relationship with academics (A, 2, F, E; B, 3, F, EL and MC; B, 3, F, EL and S). This discursive phrase emphasises the importance of reciprocity, which was reiterated in the discourse at the macro level of both institutions, encouraging undergraduates to be ‘co-creators’ (University B, 2018a; University A, 2018g) and to ‘work collaboratively’ (University A, 2018g) to negate positioning them as ‘recipients of “received wisdom”’ (University A, 2018g).

Although undergraduates and academics perceived reciprocity to be a positive behaviour of the partner subjectivity, there was still ambivalence towards sharing authority because of the internalised expectation of the teacher’s unilateral authority that stems from the traditional learner subjectivity. Academics are perceived as ‘so intelligent’ (A, 2, M, E) and ‘experts in their fields’ (A, 3, M, E) which means that ‘they’ll know *everything* [...] already’ (A, 3, M, E). As Metcalfe *et al.*, note, ‘undergraduates do not perceive themselves as potential contributors to knowledge’ (2010, p.175) because they lack expertise. This perception illuminates the strength of the traditional learner subjectivity in that undergraduates assume the impracticality of a partner subjectivity; an academics’ intelligence and an undergraduates’ lack of expertise means they ‘always feel *stupid*’ (A, 1, F, E and J) in comparison.

Generally, undergraduates felt as though academics held the authority of knowledge; as a social practice, the subjectivity of the teacher is characterised by possessing a ‘*discreet*’ body of knowledge that’s, kind of, in a box’ (B, PL). This idea is subsumed into HEIs, despite the fact that ‘at university, there’s no box’ (B, PL). As such, there was a sense in which undergraduates felt there was an expectation of unilateral authority, where it was expected that “‘*They’re right. I’m wrong*” (A, SL and SEA). Because of the difference in levels of expertise, undergraduates generally considered their purpose at university to be different to that of an academic. Ribéreau-Gayon argues:

A researcher is, by definition, in an empirical process, in a dynamic of discovery; their conception is that not everything is known so far, and nothing is finite. The natural tendency of a student, however, is to expect eternal knowledge, finite verities (2018, p.140).

The undergraduates in this study felt as though they were at university in order to get their degree, which required learning and understanding an authoritative body of knowledge and applying that knowledge in assessment. The partner subjectivity emphasises the positioning of undergraduates as independent researchers in their own right and a considerable number felt that behaving as a traditional learner and behaving as a researcher were ‘a world away from each other’ (A, 2, M, E).

The partner subjectivity, with its emphasis on responsibility, active participation and reciprocity, was met with ambiguity by the participants in this study. Although many felt the characteristics of the partner subjectivity were positive behaviours, there was still a reliance on the behavioural expectations of the traditional learner subjectivity, whereby ‘the experts really do know best’ (B, R). The strength, and seeming naturalness of the traditional learner subjectivity, creates stark challenges for the implementation of the partner subjectivity and the willingness of undergraduates to adhere to its behavioural norms. Not only do undergraduates have to negotiate the conflicting

subjectivities of the traditional learner and the partner, but they must also attempt assimilation with the consumer subjectivity.

7.2.4 *The 'Consumer'*

This thesis has already demonstrated that universities are legally obligated to position their undergraduates as consumers. The consumer subjectivity is well established and, as a social practice, it has specific behavioural norms and rules which govern its recognition as a social role; positioning undergraduates as consumers inevitably encourages them to adopt these behavioural norms. As the findings elaborate, there is recognition of the unavoidable imperative in positioning undergraduates within a consumer subjectivity because 'the legal relationship [...] undercuts everything' (A, P and former DTL). The legal framework of consumerism has emphasised the entitlement of undergraduates and what they can expect from their universities; this expectation was highly apparent in the data from both universities. As discussed, the discourse of the institutional policies from both institutions is littered with intertextual references to legal discourse, which actively positions undergraduates as legal consumers of 'educational services' (University A, 2018d).

As a result of this positioning, undergraduates adopt the appropriate behaviour to a university context and there was a clear recognition that 'students now are [...] legally consumers, with very clear consumer rights' (A, P and former DTL). Undergraduates are forced into the position of consumer because of the legal imperatives facing institutions and, as such, they are put into a position in which adherence to the appropriate behavioural norms of the consumer seems both appropriate and expected. Solomon argues:

Much of consumer behaviour resembles action in a play, where each consumer has lines, props and costumes that are necessary to a good performance. Since people act out many different roles, they may modify their consumption decisions according to the particular “play” they are in at the time (2016, p.6).

The performative behaviours are perceived differently in universities because ‘they’re not buying a result and they can’t take their degree back if they don’t get the degree they want’ (A, SL). The findings suggest that undergraduates are torn between acceptance of their positioning as consumers and behaving in regard to being ‘a lot more critical’ (B, 2, F, EL) and ‘expect[ing] a certain service’ (A, 2, F, E and H) and their inclination to behave as traditional learners.

Despite the ambivalence of performing within a role that negates the traditional learner subjectivity, the characteristics that constitute a consumer subjectivity are still influential because of their strength as intrinsic components of the enduring social identity (Isaac, 1987). Of the characteristics associated with being positioned as a consumer, the ones that are most incompatible with the subjectivities of the traditional learner and the partner are: increased expectation and entitlement; an emphasis on receiving value for money; and, the pressure to perform placed on undergraduates as a result.

7.2.4.1 Behaviour Expectations: The Consumer

7.2.4.1.1 Increased Expectation and Entitlement

The increase in expectation and entitlement is in direct opposition to the characteristics of both the traditional learner and the partner subjectivity. The legal rights of the consumer social role ‘pushes people into that direction’ (A, P and former DTL) of

demanding more as a direct result of their financial transaction with the institution.

According to Williams,

The concept of the student as consumer is associated with someone who, as a result of financial exchange, considers themselves to have purchased, and is therefore entitled to possess, a particular product (a degree) or to expect access to a certain level of service (staff and resources) (2013, p.6).

The increased expectation that constitutes the behaviour of the consumer subjectivity is based on undergraduates' legal right, which was recognised by participants as undergraduates being 'literally entitled to make a claim' (A, P and former DTL). The behaviours encouraged by expectation and entitlement contradict the characteristic of taking responsibility for one's learning that is part of the partner subjectivity. As a social practice, consumers place responsibility on providers to deliver whichever goods have been purchased, which is reinforced by a legal entitlement to expect those goods in accordance with the price paid for them. In HEIs, this translates to undergraduates placing responsibility on academics to provide 'the upmost' (A, 2, F, E) to the equivalence of the fees, which negates the responsibility for learning encouraged by the partner subjectivity.

Furthermore, the increased expectation and entitlement of the consumer contradicts the characteristic of deference associated with the traditional learner subjectivity. The discourses from the academic interviews at both institutions recognised a number of instances of undergraduates behaving in a 'slightly litigious' (B, P) way, in terms of 'pushing back against grades' (A, SL) more than they had before. Undergraduates' entitlement as consumers is conflicting with the traditional learner subjectivity; instead of deferring to academics, undergraduates are beginning to question their authority, which leads to 'the wrong *mind-set* about what to *expect* and what they can *bring* to it' (A, SL2). Tomlinson notes:

The potential discord between having more authority over the nature, content and form of their formal provisions and having to work within structured imperatives and expectations set by institutions, locates students in a more ambivalent position than is presented in much of the policy discourse (2015, p.577).

The findings reflected this ambivalence in the variation of perceptions regarding how undergraduates should behave in regard to their increased entitlement as consumers. Some undergraduates emphasised the ‘customer service almost, aspect, because [they] are paying for a service’ (B, 2, F, E), whilst others felt that they ‘have *enough* control’ (B, 2, M, EL) and being positioned as a consumer did not entail the ability for undergraduates to ‘come in and be like, “This is how it should be”’ (B, 2, F, EL). The findings, then, emphasised a discord between the behavioural expectations of the consumer subjectivity in relation to those associated with the traditional learner subjectivity. There was a lack of consistency in the undergraduate interviews regarding their expected behaviour in relation to the increased entitlement that characterises the consumer subjectivity.

Despite this ambivalence, the findings reflected the perception that their positioning within the consumer subjectivity encouraged an emphasis on demand; undergraduates accepted that they ‘are entitled to ask for *more*’ (B, 2, F, EL and MC). Saunders and Ramírez argue that ‘a customer approach to teaching, like other service providers, focuses on satisfaction’ (2017, p.400); the findings corroborated this emphasis on demand, showing a consistent recognition that undergraduates are ‘a lot more critical’ (B, 2, F, EL) because ‘they want to get the best and they expect it’ (B, 2, F, EL). The consumer subjectivity is characterised by an emphasis on demanding to receive what one is entitled to because of the logic that ‘if you pay money you expect a certain service’ (A, 2, F, E and H). This contradicts both the traditional learner subjectivity and the partner subjectivity. As a learner, individuals defer to the authority of the teacher

and rarely question or demand and as a partner, reciprocity emphasises that neither party is in a position to demand unilaterally of the other.

7.2.4.1.2 *Value for Money*

Williams argues that ‘once students are told that value for money is what they should expect to receive, they understandably seek to obtain it’ (2013, p.86). As consumers, undergraduates expect to receive value for money which is framed by institutions and government policy as an investment in the future; the findings corroborate that undergraduates perceive value for money to be equated with an investment in their future employability. As Tomlinson argues, ‘if value is derived largely from higher education’s capacity to propel students towards desired future employment, it often follows that goals will be orientated towards maximizing this value’ (2015, p.583). Academics recognised that because of the increase in fees, undergraduates ‘have to feel there’s an economic benefit’ (A, PL and ProgL) and ‘it has to be something that they can put on their CV’ (B, R); they are more conscious of communicating why learning might be useful ‘in terms of their longer term career ambitions’ (A, SL). However, this focus on employment was considered worrying because ‘it encourages the view that [they’re] here to get a *job* [...] that it leads to a certain *output*’ (A, SL2) or that ‘if they’re paying money, they’re paying for a grade’ (A, SL and SEA). There was a general concern from academics that the emphasis on employability was superseding the emphasis on learning. This contradicts the characteristic of active participation and risk-taking within the learning process; undergraduates are less concerned with the creation and discovery of knowledge than they are with securing a degree for the purpose of getting a job.

A number of undergraduates admitted that their reason for undertaking a degree was ‘the step to getting a career’ (A, 2, F, E and H) or to ‘get a better job’ (B, 3, F, EL and S). There was an emphasis on ‘getting something *tangible*’ (B, P) from their time at university, in order to use it for exchange in the labour market. Both institutions frame HE as an individual investment for the future and as such, undergraduates have internalised the notion that a degree is for the purpose of employment, which places more pressure on undergraduates to perform to secure a degree that holds value in the labour market. This opposes the behaviours of active participation and risk-taking that characterise the partner subjectivity.

7.2.4.1.3 *Pressure to Perform*

There was a consistent recognition of the ‘obsession with performance’ (B, R) because of the need to make the most of their investment as consumers. Undergraduates reflected that they were ‘being assessed at all angles’ (A, 2, F, E) and the pressure on undergraduates to adhere to the performance imperative was felt to be hindering their willingness to learn for learning’s sake and take risks during the learning process ‘because they feel under pressure to *perform*’ (B, R). Risk-taking and learning for learning’s sake are both important characteristics of the partner subjectivity and are both negated by the behavioural expectation of performance associated with the consumer subjectivity. Williams notes that ‘students cannot trust that intellectual risk-taking will be rewarded when they constantly receive messages to work in a particular way to secure a certain grade’ (2013, p.95). The findings emphasise that undergraduates ‘feel anxiety about not knowing how to do well’ (B, SL) in less conventional forms of assessment. The anxiety about performance was perceived to be a hindrance to the development of undergraduates as ‘independent learners and thinkers’ (B, R) because

they are ‘*subliminally* encouraged to play it *safe* because what matters is *performance*’ (B, R). Taking risks in the production of knowledge and enjoying learning for learning’s sake both constitute the partner subjectivity and are threatened by the performance imperative.

Moreover, the pressure to perform contradicts the characteristic of reciprocity because it places greater reliance on pre-determined knowledge necessary for assessment. Molesworth *et al.*, surmise that, ‘in reducing their degree to preparation for their first job, some students focus on assessment and on material they judge most relevant in this quest’ (2009, p.281). The notion of ‘spoon-feeding’ (B, 3, F, EL and MC; A, 2, F, E and H) was mentioned by a number of undergraduates and it was framed as a characteristic that negates their willingness to take responsibility for learning because ‘it is difficult to [...] get out of that, kind of, mentality of, “You *should* be providing me everything I need to know” (A, 2, F, E and H). Spoon-feeding knowledge is encouraged by the performance imperative of the consumer subjectivity, but it also emphasises the deference to authoritative knowledge that constitutes the traditional learner subjectivity; both contradict the characteristics of risk-taking and reciprocity associated with the partner subjectivity.

The findings suggest that this pressure to perform is heightened by the mantra that ‘a degree’s not actually enough’ (B, 3, F, EL and MC). There was consistent recognition in the undergraduate interviews that ‘your degree isn’t enough, and that you have to have other stuff as well’ (A, 2, F, E). Undergraduates recognised that there was a necessity in spending their time and effort on activities that were not directly related to their degree because ‘it’s important to have more than just, “I went to university and I

got a degree” (A, 3, M, E). This emphasis was felt to contribute to the ‘inordinate amount of pressure’ (B, R) that undergraduates in the current university climate are under and this pressure has stemmed from their positioning within the consumer subjectivity, and the expectation that they need to receive something valuable in return for their money. Adhering to the behavioural expectations of the consumer subjectivity ‘allows students to negotiate the perceived “easiest” route through the degree, thus the opportunity for and discomfort of intellectual challenge and personal transformation is minimised’ (Nixon, Scullion and Molesworth, 2011, p.203). Undergraduates are preoccupied with securing an experience that is valuable in the graduate market, which necessitates an emphasis on selecting the least onerous route, particularly now that they are undertaking more extra-curricular activities and thus, have greater strain on their time and energy. This encourages the “cult of the grade” (Tomlinson, 2018, p.722) and negates the possibility for risk-taking and the ‘*pleasure in learning for the sake of learning*’ (B, R) because, as the findings demonstrate, undergraduates evaluate and prioritise what is most important for their future.

The behavioural characteristics of the consumer subjectivity conflict with the characteristics of both the learner and the partner subjectivity. The consumer role is associated with entitlement and authority to demand provision from academics fitting to the amount of money spent; it encourages an attitude of “I *paid* for this, I’m going to get my *money’s* worth. It’s your fault if I don’t *deliver*” (B, R). The learner subjectivity, on the other hand, is characterised by deference to the authority of the teacher role. Added to this is the encouragement for undergraduates to adhere to the partner subjectivity, which entails an entirely different set of behaviours and creates further ambivalence. Attempting to negotiate three opposing subjectivities, each of which suggest ‘different modes of responsiveness and responsibility in students’

(Tomlinson, 2015, p.574) is difficult for an individual to do. It involves what Kitchener refers to as ‘role conflict’ (1988, p.218) and can lead to undergraduates feeling confusion regarding what is expected of them and uncertainty about how to behave in given situations.

7.2.5 *Conclusions*

Undergraduates are positioned within three diametrically opposing subjectivities in universities: traditional learner, partner, and consumer. According to McCulloch, ‘these metaphors/models each bring with them an implied student role and have important implications for both student and institution’ (2009, p.171). As Morrissey argues, ‘the first challenge in reworking conditioned agency is recognising it’ (2015, p.628); acknowledging the conflicting subject positions for undergraduates is essential, without which we can hardly hope to reconfigure undergraduate behaviour and expectation within universities. It is widely accepted that ‘we need to depart from the old-fashioned model of passive information transmission, in which the student is viewed merely as a receptor and mirror’ (McMillan and Cheney, 1996, p.13) and move towards a partnership model based on ‘shared responsibility and cooperative or collaborative action’ (Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010, p.1). Whilst most authors recognise that ‘there is considerable tension between the ideal of partnership and the effects of consumerist discourse and academic hierarchy’ (Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010, pp.2–3), they fail to examine what this means in practical terms. In order to implement new approaches to learning through new subjectivities, there must be an understanding of the conflicting behaviours encouraged by the divergent subjectivities present in HEIs.

Institutions across England are positioning their undergraduates as both consumers and partners through institutional discourse and policies with little regard to the incompatibility of the two positions. Moreover, there is little attention paid to the pervasiveness of the pre-existing subjectivity of the traditional learner and the way in which it negates the adherence to both the consumer and the partner roles. Hargreaves argues: 'if an actor is simultaneously occupying two positions with roles which are likely to conflict he can solve such a conflict by giving one of the roles a priority over the other' (1972, p.85). Because the traditional learner, the partner, and the consumer are constituted through adherence to contrasting behavioural expectations, undergraduates have little option but to prioritise one subjectivity over the others. The prioritised role differs for each individual, with external factors influencing their choice, and this leads to ambiguity and variation across undergraduate behaviour. The adherence to different subjectivities, and thus behaviours, has the potential to cause discord, with undergraduates adopting different approaches and seeking different outcomes.

This divergence in adopting conflicting behaviours has led to the transformation of the power relationship between undergraduates and academics. What was once a widely accepted power dynamic, constituted as part of the '*enduring relations*' (Isaac, 1987, p.22) of the learner-teacher relationship, is now under negotiation because of the positioning of undergraduates within conflicting subjectivities. These subjectivities have different dispositional power and thus, each one constitutes a conflicting power relationship with academics.

7.3 Power

7.3.1 Reframing Power within Higher Education

This thesis has outlined a '*family resemblance* concept' (Haugaard, 2010, p.427) of power that emphasises a dialectical relationship between two theories: systemic power and constitutive power. I have emphasised the necessity of considering *power to* as a compelling form of social power, as opposed to a conception of *power over*. The dialectical relation between structure and agency is important for understanding power relationships between undergraduates and academics; it highlights the ways in which the power dynamic is constituted at the systemic level, through the establishment of subjectivities, and maintained or challenged at the constitutive level, through the adherence to, or rejection of, subjectivities.

Considering systemic power allows for an understanding of the ways in which 'given social systems confer differentials of dispositional power on agents, thus structuring their possibilities for action' (Haugaard, 2010, p.427); this theoretical formation of power highlights the capacity for exercising power which is distributed to the conflicting social roles that undergraduates are positioned in. The constitutive conception of power provides greater insight into a critical analysis of the ways in which undergraduates accept or challenge the subjectivities that they are positioned within. The social roles being perpetuated at the systemic level in the current context are not only constituted through conflicting behavioural expectations, but they are also granted incompatible dispositional power; the power awarded to the subjectivities of the traditional learner, partner, and consumer are divergent and as such, they constitute contradictory power relationships. Each subjectivity forms a distinctive power

relationship with unique behaviours; each one has a conflicting ability to exercise power because ‘they act in contexts that are structured by rules and laws and norms: social boundaries to action’ (Hayward and Lukes, 2008, p.14). The power relationship between undergraduates and academics is precarious within the current university climate; it is under constant negotiation because of the conflicting dispositional powers granted to the subjectivities within the dynamic. There are three power relationships being negotiated within the universities in this study: the traditional power relationship, the consumer-provider power relationship and the partnership power relationship. This section will discuss each of these in turn, utilising the findings for highlighting significant conflict for undergraduates and academics in attempting to assimilate their differing capacities for exercising power within each dynamic.

7.3.2 *The ‘Traditional’ Power Relationship*

The traditional power relationship is the most prominent dynamic within the two universities in this study. The subjectivities of the traditional learner and teacher have different dispositional power based on the definition of them as socially structured roles. Isaac argues that this power is ‘distributed by the various enduring structural relationships in society and exercised by individuals and groups based on their location in a given structure’ (1987, p.28). As systemically structured subjectivities, they have their own capacities to exercise power: ‘powers to act are part of the nature of the relationship. They are not regularities, strictly speaking, but are routinely performed and purposeful activities’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22). Those performing in the role of the traditional learner and teacher carry out these routine activities because of the ‘*indirect* form of power in which power is mediated by, and instantiated in, structures’ (Hay, 1997, p.51). When they carry out these routine behaviours, they form power

relationships that are constituted in relation to the dispositional power granted to each subjectivity.

The traditional power relationship, then, is established at the systemic level and ‘drilled in during your secondary education’ (B, 2, F, EL) through the constitutive level, which has established its status as a systemically constructed ‘*enduring relation*’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22). As a result, it is perceived of as ‘naturally’ (B, 2, F, EL; B, FDLT) appropriate within educational contexts. As Trigwell and Ashwin argue, ‘in any act of learning, evoked prior experiences, perceptions, approaches and outcomes are simultaneously present in a student’s awareness’ (2006, p.244); the participants in this study felt as though the traditional power relationship was ‘*unavoidable*’ (B, SL) because of their prior experiences in educational contexts.

The specific characteristics and behavioural expectations of the traditional learner subjectivity constitute a specific power dynamic, which this thesis has outlined as the traditional power relationship. The findings have illuminated the perception of this traditional dynamic as being constituted through a teacher’s authority of knowledge and a learner’s deference to that knowledge, as well as learners’ reliance on teachers for affirmation and a reliance on teachers to hold responsibility for a learners’ success. These characteristics constitute a powerful structural dynamic, which is systemically formed and constitutively perpetuated. The dynamic presents a power differential between undergraduates and academics, based on the teacher’s ‘prowess’ (A, 2, F, E) over the learner in regard to authoritative knowledge and a learner’s ‘respect’ (B, 2, F, EL; B, 1, F, EL and CW) for that authority. Academics are perceived of as ‘powerful’

(A, 2, M, E) within the traditional dynamic because of their role as teachers in the ‘historically enduring relation’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22).

7.3.3 *The ‘Partnership’ Power Relationship*

Undergraduates are positioned as ‘partners’ at the systemic level of both institutions in this study (University B, 2018a; University A, 2018g), which entails a different power dynamic being encouraged at the constitutive level. The traditional power relationship is based on the unilateral authority of the teacher role, exacerbated by sites of learning and teaching which constitute an ‘architecture of control that helps teachers assert their authority to transmit an official syllabus to the students’ (Shor, 1996, pp.11–2). In opposition to this, the power relationship that forms as part of the partnership model is normally constructed around the concept of sharing: ‘shared goals, shared power, shared risks, shared responsibilities, shared learning and shared values’ (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016, p.9). Many undergraduates are unfamiliar with how to negotiate a relationship with a teacher role in terms of sharing: ‘many students have no way of knowing how to take charge of their own education and become independent and engaged learners’ (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016, p.10). This was corroborated by the findings, whereby undergraduates felt as though they were not ‘at a high enough level to, kind of, *add* to what [academics] already know’ (A, 2, F, E and H). The traditional power relationship is ‘exacerbated by long years of school experiences as relatively passive and mechanistic learners’ (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016, p.10) whereby learners listen to the authority of the teacher, which is based on the ‘self-talk of the academic needing to be right and the student needing to wait to be told what is right’ (Hutchings, Bartholomew and Reilly, 2014, p.133).

The findings from this study suggest that despite being positioned as ‘co-creators’ (University B, 2018a; University A, 2018g), participants are hesitant to adhere to the partner power relationship in practice. This is due to their familiarity with the traditional power dynamic whereby ‘tutors take responsibility for creation and delivery of modules and students are expected to navigate through a pre-planned curriculum’ (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016, p.10). Academics felt that undergraduates ‘don’t know what’s best for them’ (A, SL) and that academics ‘know a lot more about the subject’ (B, SL) which undermines the concept of shared authority in the pedagogical process. The findings suggest that undergraduates are happy to partake in reciprocal relationships with academics, emphasising their individual responsibility for learning and the ability to ‘come together and *share* ideas’ (A, 2, F, E and H). There was recognition of ‘work[ing] as a team to learn and bounce off each other’ (B, 2, F, EL and AS) because the power relationship within HEIs is ‘*more* democratic and *more* open to insight’ (B, PL). However, there was still hesitancy in relating this notion of reciprocity to a transformation in the power relationship. Undergraduates consistently perceived that they were ‘not *on* the same level’ (A, 2, M, E) as academics and as such, were unable to share power equally within the dynamic: ‘*intellectually* we’re not equal’ (A, 2, M, E). They perceived that academics ‘are above [them] essentially’ (B, 1, M, EL) and as such, considered them to be ‘the person more in power’ (A, 3, M, E). The concept of the academic as ‘the specialist’ (B, R) who is ‘in *more* control’ (A, 3, M, E) to provide guidance perpetuates the traditional power relationship because it emphasises the unilateral authority of the teacher role to distribute finite knowledge.

Haugaard argues that ‘actors who threaten systemic stability by new and innovative structuration practices are met by the non-collaboration of others in the reproduction of

these new structures' (2003, p.94). The implementation of a power relationship based on the partner subjectivity is diametrically opposed to the traditional power relationship. Some undergraduates in this study reflected on the conflict between the appropriate subjectivity of the learner and the subjectivity of the partner, considering the two a 'world away from each other' (A, 2, M, E). The findings illuminated the strength of the traditional power relationship and the familiarity of the associated subjectivities in regard to implementing a partnership dynamic. There was even acknowledgement that there would be reluctance in implementing new power relationships with differing behaviours because people 'don't just know how to do that' (A, P and former DTL). The hesitancy surrounding the partnership power relationship was caused by the pervasiveness of more familiar subjectivities and behaviours: 'people need roles and they need to know what they're doing' (A, P and former DTL).

The traditional power relationship provides a 'powerful structural constraint' (Haugaard, 2015, p.153) for the successful implementation of the partnership power relationship. However, the unfamiliarity and ambiguity of the partner role provides an equally 'powerful structural constraint' (Haugaard, 2015, p.153) because there is a contradiction between the signified meaning of the term 'partner' and the actual meaning as a social practice:

Students-as-partners approaches aim to engage students in ways meaningful to them by treating them as respected and trusted adults in the teaching and learning endeavour. This does not imply equality in power or knowledge but it is respectful to them as learners and of their life experiences, diversity, individual needs and aspirations (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016, p.10).

The discursive term 'partner' implies equality and reciprocity, however, 'the balance of power should not shift to the students, nor should there be equivalency' (Matthews, Cook-Sather and Healey, 2018, p.38) and so, the term 'partner' within the HE context

implies a nuanced definition. Instead of equivalency, ‘partners should be equally valued by their different areas of expertise’ (Matthews, Cook-Sather and Healey, 2018, p.38). The findings suggest that undergraduates, and particularly academics, felt uncomfortable with the equivalency implied by the discursive term ‘partner’: ‘partnership can be a bit misleading because we’re not *equals*’ (B, SL). This causes ambiguity in terms of understanding what is required within a partnership power relationship because the term implies equality of power, which negates the concept that academics are ‘experts in their fields’ (A, 3, M, E).

Partnership models encourage sharing and reciprocity and yet, this does not imply the sharing of power because that still belongs to the academic performing in the social role of teacher: ‘the principles of respect and responsibility should, and can, inform most of the relationships between students and teachers in higher education, but reciprocity is a more complex issue due to academic staff taking final responsibility for some high-stake issues’ (Bovill, 2017, p.2). The findings suggest that academics are hesitant to share authority with undergraduates because ‘they couldn’t [...] actively engage with a piece of writing that [an academic] was doing’ (A, SL) and projects that encouraged this would seem ‘quite artificial’ (A, SL and ProgL). As such, the implementation of partnership models in practice is characterised by ambiguity and negotiation. One group of academics and undergraduates involved in a partnership project at BCU reflected on this ambiguity and uncertainty in terms of negotiating the new power relationship:

The use of expert power may inhibit the student in taking initiative within the project. For the academic, it may be difficult to find an appropriate balance between allowing the students to develop their ideas and autonomy within the project and ensuring delivery and supporting the student in what may be a new role to them (Hutchings, Bartholomew and Reilly, 2014, p.136).

Participants in this study corroborated this ambiguity, reflecting that undergraduates should only be granted ‘a small level of input because obviously the lecturers have been

through a lot more education' (B, 2, F, EL and AS). The constraint imposed by the traditional power relationship creates a substantial barrier to the successful implementation of partnership models within HE sites of learning and teaching. Not only must undergraduates attempt to assimilate the conflicting powers awarded to them within the traditional power relationship and the partnership power relationship, but they must also attempt to reconcile these power dynamics with the consumer-provider power relationship within which they also find themselves.

7.3.4 The 'Consumer-Provider' Power Relationship

As discussed in the previous section, undergraduates, through being positioned at the systemic level, are adhering to the behavioural expectations of the consumer subjectivity. As such, the consumer-provider power relationship is becoming more pervasive at the constitutive level. Similar to the traditional power relationship, the social roles of 'consumer' and 'provider' constitute 'an historically enduring relation' (Isaac, 1987, p.22). The traditional power relationship awards unilateral power to the teacher role and the partnership power relationship distributes equal capacity for exercising power. The 'consumer-provider' power relationship, by contrast, is characterised by the power possessed by the person positioned in the consumer role because of the internalisation that there should be 'more power in the hands of the "paying customer" who expects their providers to deliver their services and products in ways commensurate with their demands' (Tomlinson, 2016, p.2). Associated with the dynamic is the notion of 'the consumer always being right' (Peseta et al., 2016, p.55) and as a result, there is an emphasis on undergraduates being able to 'control a much larger proportion of the investment in higher education' (Browne et al., 2010, p.29).

The consumer-provider power relationship is familiar because of the prevalence of consumerism in Western culture and as such, it has become a naturalised dynamic. Even though this notion of a naturalised dynamic is pertinent to the traditional power relationship within educational contexts, the financial contract that undergraduates enter into with their institutions provokes the adoption of the consumer social role because ‘the social relationship reflects nature’ (Haugaard, 2003, p.103). If money is exchanged for goods, then it occurs within a consumer-provider relation; this is the basis of the Western world’s economy of exchange. Thus, undergraduates adopt the behaviours of the consumer identity because ‘when actors are inculcated with routinized behaviour then the appropriate actions and reactions become virtually reflex’ (Haugaard, 2003, p.106); the routinized behaviour of consumer-provider interactions dictates the appropriate actions that are required when the exchange of money for goods occurs. As such, ‘structures of universities and higher education, to some extent, have to be framed by that financial transaction’ (A, PL and ProgL). The findings corroborated this in the reflection that undergraduates ‘are paying for this at the end of the day’ (A, 2, M, E) and as such, they have ‘more of a right to complain if the lectures aren’t up to standard’ (B, 1, EL and CW).

In contrast to both the traditional and the partnership power relationship, the consumer-provider power relationship is constituted through a recognition of greater dispositional power awarded to undergraduates. As with the social roles of learner and teacher, the roles of consumer and provider are established identities and are systemically constructed with their own unique set of ‘routinely performed and purposeful activities’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22). Given that ‘consumerism is now taken to be at the heart of modern productive relations in late capitalism’ (Tomlinson, 2016, p.3), both undergraduates and

academics are familiar with the behavioural expectations of the consumer role and, despite the situational difference, the findings suggest that undergraduates adhere to the expectation of being ‘entitled to ask for *more*’ (B, Year 2, F, EL and MC).

The consumer social role is constructed heavily at the systemic level, whereby ‘the university’s structures [...] can produce a, sort of, *demanding student model*’ (A, PL and ProgL). Part of the behavioural characteristics associated with the consumer role is a particular capacity for exercising power, which amounts to ‘increasing stakeholder and bargaining power’ (Tomlinson, 2016, p.7). Scott argues:

At the root of the reluctance of professionals to embrace marketing appears to be fear of a power shift towards the student, as encapsulated in the adage that the “customer is always right”. Professionals tend to equate marketing with advertising and/or “doing whatever is necessary to fulfil lay-persons’ demands regardless of one’s professional judgement” (1999, p.197).

The dispositional power granted to the social role of the consumer is well known and as noted by Scott, perpetuated through the adage of ‘the customer is always right’ (1999, p.197). In a HE context, the power of the consumer role threatens to unbalance the traditional power relationship because the dispositional power is weighted in favour of the undergraduate, which constitutes ‘not just an attitude of entitlement’ (A, P and former DTL) but a legal right to ‘make a claim against the outcome of their exchange relationship with the university’ (A, P and former DTL).

Performing in a consumer role within an educational context threatens to undermine the authority of the expert which is granted through the adoption of the traditional power relationship: ‘because students feel more directly responsible for payment of fees [...] they have greater say in how they are taught, how they are assessed and the overall quality of the services they are entitled to’ (Maringe, 2011, p.146). The findings of this study suggest that not all undergraduates necessarily feel this way, with some feeling

ambiguity in terms of how to behave because of the conflict of dispositional power: ‘you are [...] *using* the service, so you have the *right* to [...] question them. But at the same time, they’re more knowledgeable than you’ (B, 2, M, EL). Nevertheless, there was still a consistent recognition that ‘if you pay money you expect a certain service’ (A, Year 2, F, E and H) and this is because of the dispositional power granted to the consumer as part of the ‘enduring, socially structured relationship’ (Isaac, 1987, p.21) in which that role participates.

Closely aligned to the undergraduates’ stakeholder power, is the ability to exercise power in relation to demand of their increased entitlement. Morley argues that ‘the entitlement culture is more about “what can I get?” rather than “what should I do?”’ (2003, p.141); this was corroborated by the findings of the study, whereby undergraduates and academics recognised the increased entitlement that undergraduates possess as fee-payers. There was acknowledgement of the culture of “‘you should be doing more for me”’ (A, SL and ProgL) and the capability of undergraduates being ‘slightly litigious’ (B, P) as a result of their power to demand. Undergraduates consistently reflected on their power to ‘voice [their] opinion’ (A, 2, M, E) or ‘have a say in how things should be better’ (B, 2, F, EL) as well as their ‘right to complain’ (B, 1, EL and CW). This was also emphasised in the institutional documentation, which explicitly clarified undergraduates’ power to ‘participate in the governance of the University’ (University A, 2018c). Undergraduates are awarded the dispositional power to demand the provision they feel they are entitled to, which leads to ‘the constant threat of student litigation and complaints’ (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, p.275). Like the traditional power relationship, this constitutes a relationship based on an imbalance of

dispositional power. However, in contrast, the consumer-provider relationship awards power in favour of the undergraduate rather than the academic.

This transformation in the power relationship was also illuminated by the findings in recognition of the pressure academics feel to satisfy undergraduate demand. There was consistent perception of ‘an encoded discourse of complaint’ (B, SL and ProgL) that encourages undergraduates to question, and sometimes demand, more for their money. Academics were also aware that ‘there’s much more pressure on the student satisfaction survey’ (A, SL) now that undergraduates have stakeholder power as part of their adherence to the consumer subjectivity. The findings suggest that this pressure to concede to demand is due to the financial imperatives of the consumer-provider power relationship that exists in the current university climate. Some referred to the ‘imperatives [...] about recruitment’ (B, PL) and others framed it as a ‘*game*’ (B, R) played by universities across England ‘because this is a *market*’ (B, R). According to Naidoo and Jamieson, ‘the undercutting of professional knowledge and virtues by consumer demand and satisfaction may, perversely, also have the effect of undermining, rather than enhancing, pedagogical relationships’ (2005, p.247). The pressure to adhere to the consumer satisfaction agenda undermines the traditional power relationship because it encourages the idea that undergraduates have greater power to dictate the decisions made within the pedagogical process.

Equally, it threatens the implementation of the partnership power relationship because, as suggested by the findings, when undergraduates complain or demand, academics feel ‘it’s very hard to sustain a feeling of relationship with somebody who is taking that approach’ (B, P). The consumer-provider power relationship emphasises an opposition

between undergraduates and academics where they are ‘pitted against each other with competing interests’ (Williams, 2013, p.49). The self-serving nature of the consumer-provider power relationship threatens to ‘destroy the relationship between students and lecturers’ (B, P) and negates the potential for reciprocity that characterises a partnership power relationship. The encouragement for undergraduates to exercise their power to complain and demand perpetuates their adherence to the behavioural expectations of the consumer subjectivity: ‘the more universities present themselves as responding to student demands, the more students are encouraged to see themselves as behaving correctly (doing what is expected) in demanding satisfaction’ (Williams, 2013, p.173). Undergraduates are ‘*forced* into a particular position, an antagonistic position’ (A, P and former DTL) which undermines both the traditional and the partnership power relationship because of its emphasis on the consumers’ power and entitlement to demand more from their providers.

However, the findings also suggest that the consumer-provider power relationship is rejected at the constitutive level in a number of instances. Undergraduates, generally, felt that they deserved ‘at least basic satisfaction’ (A, 3, F, E) and a ‘right to call tutors to account’ (A, 2, M, E). However, this was perceived as being apparent ‘regardless of the fees’ (A, 3, F, E); the majority felt that they had no greater capacity to exercise power than they did as traditional learners. Despite the recognition that undergraduates are ‘legally consumers, with very clear consumer rights’ (A, P and former DTL), the majority were unwilling to adhere to the consumer-provider power relationship because it undermined the traditional power dynamic, which undergraduates felt was more appropriate. There was acknowledgement that if undergraduates are ‘not *happy* with something that’s going on, [...] [they] are entitled to say’ (B, 2, M, EL) but this was

negated by it being perceived of as ‘impolite’ (B, 2, M, EL). Complaining about provision undermines the deference and ‘healthy respect’ (A, 1, F, E and J) that constitutes the traditional power relationship and, as such, undergraduates were generally less willing to complain than their power as consumers might suggest. Nevertheless, the findings still illuminate the perception that there is ‘*more pressure* on lecturers’ (B, R) because ‘the onus is on the *institution* to provide a *service*’ (B, R) and the ‘anxiousness’ (A, SL) this creates to concede to undergraduate demand in order to reduce the possibility of litigation and reputational damage.

The consumer-provider power relationship, then, is threatening to undermine both the traditional and the partnership power relationship; first, the increased power granted to undergraduates as part of their consumer subjectivity negates the imbalance of power perpetuated by the traditional dynamic and the shared power encouraged by the partnership dynamic; secondly, undergraduates’ power to demand undermines the unilateral authority of the academic and places more pressure on academics to concede to demand, which inhibits academics’ willingness to foster reciprocal partnerships. As such, an undergraduate’s capacity to exercise power is under constant negotiation; undergraduates are in conflicting subject positions, one which is granted little capacity to exercise power, one which is granted shared power and one which is granted significant dispositional power.

7.3.5 *Conclusions*

Much of the literature that deals with power within HEIs provides sparse understanding of the strength of those subjectivities that constitute different power relationships, attempting to reconcile conflicting power dynamics without understanding fully how

they are formed dialectically between systemic and constitutive levels and the impact this has on their cogency. This study has a significant impact on theories of power in HE.

Firstly, this study has demonstrated the need to reframe power for HE contexts; moving away from a singular definition of power, this study has shown the usefulness of framing power as a '*family resemblance* concept' (Haugaard, 2010, p.427) within HEIs so that concepts concerning *power to* are not overwhelmed by those concerning *power over*. As a family resemblance concept, framing power as a dialectical relation between two forms of power, systemic and constitutive, is highly valuable in HE contexts. It allows a more integrated understanding of the ways in which power is formed, maintained or challenged through structural formation of subjectivities and the adherence to those roles by agents within interpersonal relationships. In HE contexts, there is tension between the systemic construction of subjectivities and their enactment in relationships between undergraduates and academics; whilst undergraduates are positioned as consumers and partners at the systemic level, they are adopting the traditional learner subjectivity at the constitutive level, and many are rejecting the behavioural characteristics expected of them through being positioned as consumers or partners. Framing power through the dialectical relation between systemic and constitutive power, then, illuminates the conflict apparent in the positioning of undergraduates in particular subjectivities and the opposing power relationships that those subjectivities invoke.

Secondly, this section has illuminated the conflicting power relationships that exist within the modern university through the subject positioning of undergraduates in

opposing social roles. This study has highlighted three conflicting power relationships that exist within the two case study universities: the traditional power relationship, the consumer-provider power relationship, and the partnership power relationship. These dynamics award different dispositional power to the social roles that constitute the relationship. The traditional power relationship entails the unilateral authority of the teacher role with little power granted to the learner. The partnership power relationship requires a shared capacity for exercising power, distributed equally to undergraduates and academics. And in opposition to both of these, the consumer-provider power relationship entails greater capacity for exercising power given to the undergraduate positioned in the social role of consumer. Barnes *et al.*, argue that ‘by making explicit what is currently implicit, staff and students could become aware of the pervasiveness of power. This is often the first step in being able to work more democratically and cooperatively’ (2010, p.27). The findings of this study demonstrate the implicit nature of power relationships in educational contexts; the findings imply a need to acknowledge an explicit understanding of the conflicting power relationships that exist within the modern university, in order to construct ways of overcoming the barriers that exist as a result of undergraduates being positioned in irreconcilable subjectivities.

7.4 Partnership

7.4.1 Defining ‘Partnership’ in Higher Education

As this thesis has already discussed, the concept of partnership is widely acknowledged in the field as a successful means of engaging undergraduates in HE: ‘over the last several years, student-staff partnerships have increasingly been portrayed as a primary path towards engagement’ (Bovill and Felten, 2016, p.1). Although the term is ‘difficult

to describe concretely' (Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017, p.725), there are a number of shared characteristics across the various conceptualisations. Most critics argue that partnership models involve engaging undergraduates in a shared process of learning and aim to 'engage and motivate students to study their subjects at a deep level, and focus on learning outcomes' (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016, p.6) as well as 'shared responsibility and cooperate or collaborative action, in relation to shared purposes' (Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010, p.1).

Implementing partnership involves 'the formation of reciprocal relationships between students and academic staff, with the capacity to mitigate traditional hierarchies and benefit all parties involved' (Marquis et al., 2016, p.4) and this reciprocity is 'premised on dialogue, negotiation, and exchange of ideas between partners [which] positions both students and staff as having essential expertise to contribute to the goal of furthering education' (Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011, p.14). The findings of this study highlight a conceptualisation of partnership in terms of reciprocal relationships based on shared responsibility and mutuality, with most undergraduates reflecting on the positivity of a 'two-way relationship' (B, 3, F, EL and S) in that 'the people who are teaching [undergraduates] are engaged in the same things that they're doing' (B, SL and ProgL). The findings suggest that both undergraduates and academics understand partnership in this way, however, the findings also suggest a disconnect between theory and practice and the majority of participants were reluctant to adopt a partnership model in practice, despite acknowledging that 'working collaboratively *sounds* a lot nicer' (A, 2, M, E), because they were unsure of 'how that would work really' (A, 2, M, E),.

7.4.2 *Partnership in Practice*

The concept of partnership is often met with resistance within HEIs and a number of studies reflect this hesitancy: ‘while it appeared that the idea itself was simple and/or appealing, thinking about putting it into action was intimidating’ (Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017, p.725). Healey *et al.*, argue that ‘for partnership to be embedded and sustained beyond documents, projects and initiatives, it needs to become part of the culture and ethos of the institution’ (2014, p.4). Partnership is ‘not a one-off exchange, but an ongoing process that should characterise the whole student experience’ (Carey, 2013, p.258). As an ongoing process, partnership requires institutions to ‘radically revise their systems and procedures as rigid institutional frameworks may exclude students and thwart aspirations for engagement’ (Carey, 2013, p.251).

The findings from this study suggest that, whilst both institutions have strategic plans for implementing partnership models whereby undergraduates are positioned as ‘collaborators in the production of knowledge’ (University A, 2018f), neither one of them has reconstructed the institution to the level required for partnership models to become the normalised dynamic because most still regarded it as an ‘*ethos*’ (A, SL and ProgL) or a ‘concept’ (A, SL). This is not a problem unique to either University A or University B; as Mercer-Mapstone *et al.*, note in their systemic literature review on partnership, it is a barrier encountered across the field:

First, the customs and culture of higher education often make it difficult for both students and staff to take on new roles and perspectives. Second, institutional structures, practices, and norms typically present practical barriers to the kinds of collaboration and shared power involved in partnerships (2017, p.2).

Effecting partnership models in practice entails a radicalisation of the conventions that dictate HEIs. As an ‘unfamiliar territory for students, staff and institutions’ (Bovill and

Felten, 2016, p.2), partnership models are often met with resistance or hesitancy by both undergraduates and academics, which is corroborated by the findings of this study.

Not only do partnership models require a radicalisation of traditional conventions, but they also require an acknowledgement of the impact of the conflicting subjectivities and subsequent relations that are present in HEIs today; it would be self-defeating to depreciate the importance of these subjectivities and relationships when attempting to effect new relationships.

7.4.2.1 Navigating the Traditional Power Relationship

7.4.2.1.1 The Known versus the Unknown

The partnership model is incompatible with the traditional learner and teacher subjectivities and the subsequent dynamic between the two because ‘in research, unknowns are sought, while in teaching the known is taught’ (Topcu, 2018, p.99). Freire argues:

The banking concept does not admit to such partnership – and necessarily so. To resolve the teacher-student contradiction, to exchange the role of depositor, prescriber, domesticator, for the role of student among students would be to undermine the power of oppression and serve the cause of liberation (1996, p.56).

The learner subjectivity is characterised by deference, reliance and dependence on the unilateral authority of the teacher subjectivity. According to Roulston, ‘in traditional learning, students are taught the content they need to know to pass the course, they memorise that content and then a question or problem is set to check whether this knowledge has been retained’ (2018, p.217). Implementing a partnership model undermines this dynamic and ‘inherently subverts the traditional power hierarchy between learners and teachers by re-positioning partners as learners and teachers’

(Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011, p.14). The subversion of the traditional dynamic was perceived by most participants in this study as either an impossibility or, at least, highly problematic because undergraduates perceived that they are at university ‘to suck knowledge from [academics], to *steal* what’s in their heads’ (A, 1, F, E and J) rather than create knowledge themselves.

7.4.2.1.2 *Relinquishing Power from the ‘Expert’*

Marquis *et al.*, note that ‘student-faculty partnerships are not without their challenges, foremost amongst which are the difficulties attached to dismantling entrenched structures of authority and developing means of sharing power meaningfully’ (2016, p.5). The findings from this study would suggest that the strength of the ‘*enduring relations*’ (Isaac, 1987, p.22) that constitute the traditional power relationship is a compelling barrier to the implementation of partnership models in practice. There was consistent recognition that academics are ‘more in power’ (A, 3, M, E) and undergraduates ‘perceive [the academic] as an expert’ (B, SL), which negates the possibility of shared power in the learning process. Marquis *et al.*, discovered the strength of the traditional power relationship in their study on the implementation of partnership models in practice:

Even when individuals are willing to step outside of these pre-existing roles, the unfamiliarity of the process can create uncertainties about how to act. For example, some faculty members described having trouble deciding when to lead and when to fall back to let their partner take on more responsibility (2017, p.726).

The same study illuminated the difficulty in reconstructing relationships that appear natural: ‘some participants questioned whether it is *possible* to fully challenge existing hierarchies, particularly when they are so normalized that we can be blind to their operations’ (Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017, pp.726–7). This was reflected in the

findings of this study; academics were uncertain about sharing power because of the familiarity of the traditional power relationship, whereby undergraduates fulfil a 'customary, and often comfortable, passive role in the classroom, as well as the common academic staff assumption that their disciplinary expertise gives them complete authority over the learning process' (Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011, p.136).

Undergraduates were aware of this authority over the learning process: 'we are told to do this and we have to do this' (B, 3, M, CW). The findings illuminated the lack of actuality in sharing power as partners; undergraduates felt that 'there's this whole thing about [...] you're treated as an equal [...] but it's definitely not the case' (B, 3, M, CW) because the relationship is still 'very much student and teacher and there's that separation' (A, 2, M, E). Moreover, the subjectivities that constitute the traditional power relationship are perpetuated through the continuation of assessment practices where the academic has the final say in the distribution of grades: 'where assessment exists there will always be some power play in operation between staff and students' (Zaitseva et al., 2010, p.128). Certainly, a number of studies have found that the traditional power relationship plays a significant role in the prevention of successful partnerships (Levy, Little and Whelan, 2010; Wuetherick and McLaughlin, 2010; Little et al., 2010; Marquis et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2017; Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017). These same barriers were recognised by the participants in this study because of the 'respect for professional *expertise* from the student' (A, PL and ProgL). Not only is it difficult to traverse the traditional power relationship when implementing partnership in universities, but it is made more difficult through the navigation of the consumer-provider power relationship.

7.4.2.2 *Navigating the Consumer-Provider Power Relationship*

7.4.2.2.1 *Competing Interests*

As Levy *et al.*, tell us, ‘there is considerable tension between the ideal of partnership and the effects of consumerist discourse’ (2010, p.3). Partnership models require the sharing of power and responsibility, which is diametrically opposed to the consumer-provider relationship. As the findings of this study suggest, the consumer subjectivity is perpetuated through institutional discourse and there is a consistent awareness of undergraduates behaving like consumers by ‘pushing back against grades’ (A, SL), being ‘slightly litigious’ (B, P) and feeling ‘grieved that they weren’t getting [...] the product that they thought they’d bought’ (B, PL).

The relationship between consumers and providers is founded upon an ‘antagonistic relationship’ (A, P and former DTL), whereby each have opposing interests. The findings emphasise this opposition; academics felt that the consumer-provider power relationship has ‘made students demand more of [academics]’ (A, SL and SEA) because ‘they think they’re paying [them]’ (A, SL and SEA). As Williams argues, ‘too often lecturers and students are presented as being on opposing sides with mutually exclusive interests’ (2013, p.149). Naidoo and Williams suggest that student charters exacerbate the opposing interests of undergraduates and academics: ‘use of charters creates a pervasive sense that lecturers and students have opposing interests which require external regulation [...] the charter becomes symptomatic of a low-trust/high-risk culture’ (2015, p.217). The necessity of adhering to the promises set out in the contract with undergraduates and ‘the endless, relentless drive to make sure students are happy’ (B, P) was perceived to exacerbate the separation between undergraduates and

academics because it permits academics to ‘martyr themselves in the cause’ (B, P). Some academics felt that they were the ‘donkeys that make the wheel of the mill go round’ (B, PL) in order to ‘meet the needs of [...] students’ (University A, 2018e).

As a result of this opposition, ‘previously integrated relationships between academics and students are likely to become disaggregated with each party invested with distinct, if not opposing, interests’ (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, p.271). This distinction, based on opposing interests of the consumer and provider social roles, prohibits collaboration. Decisions made to increase undergraduate satisfaction were perceived by some academics to be ‘malarkey’ (A, SL2) and nothing more than ‘increased workloads for staff’ (A, SL2). The concept of partnership is directly opposed to this dynamic; it is one based on scholarly collaboration and reciprocity where undergraduates and academics ‘co-operate with each other’ (A, 2, M, E). The findings of this study suggest, though, that the implementation of a collaborative dynamic is inhibited by both undergraduates’ and academics’ recognition of the pervasiveness of the consumer-provider relationship within universities.

The findings from this study corroborate much of what has been discovered by other critics in the field: the consumer-provider relationship creates a powerful barrier to the establishment of reciprocal relationships. This study, though, illuminates the ways in which these barriers are perpetuated through the adherence to specific behavioural expectations associated with the subjectivity of the consumer, a discovery touched upon by Tomlinson in his study: ‘if students internalise dominant messages of their consumer prowess, this will inform their behaviours when studying’ (2016, p.3). As McCulloch notes, ‘the “consumer” metaphor implies a degree of passivity on the part of the student

in their role as the “receiver” of the service and thereby the education that is being provided’ (2009, p.178); this passivity, where undergraduates are ‘empty vessel[s]’ (B, R), is directly opposed to the concept of partnership where undergraduates are positioned as ‘co-producers’ (University B, 2018a). Moreover, the behavioural expectations of the consumer subjectivity emphasise the importance of performativity, whereby undergraduates choose not to take risks because they are concerned with the final grade and receiving a tangible output in exchange for the money they have paid. This conflicts with the partnership model because in order for partnership to be effective, there needs to be an emphasis on risk-taking and making mistakes (Peters, 2018). Sotiriou argues that if partnership is to be successfully implemented, ‘the fact that students’ success is defined as “the correct answer” is an issue that needs to be addressed’ (2018, p.61). The findings of this study suggest that both undergraduates and academics find it difficult to consolidate the behavioural expectations required for a consumer-provider relationship with those needed for the implementation of partnership models. Added to this are the problems arising from navigating the humanities and the entrenched characteristics that constitute them as established academic disciplines.

7.4.2.3 *Navigating the Humanities*

The partnership model is clearly difficult to negotiate in practice because of the barriers that exist through pre-existing and competing power relationships and subjectivities. However, the findings of this study suggest that it is particularly difficult to implement a partnership model within the discipline of English. Pilsworth argues that establishing a reciprocal dialogue should be easier within the humanities disciplines because they can be ‘defined as *dialogues* in both a literal sense (they are built on discussion) as well

as a metaphorical sense (they are about thought processes, an exchange of ideas and an encounter with the unknown)’ (2018, p.129). However, this was not shared by the participants in this study; there was concern about the possibility of sharing responsibility for knowledge production in a field that is characterised by autonomy and individuality.

7.4.2.3.1 *Autonomy and Individuality*

As Pauli *et al.*, note, ‘disposition towards certain learning and motivational styles can thus be expected to influence how students-as-partners pedagogies are experienced and the degree to which an individual student benefits from the experience’ (2016, pp.12–3). Undergraduates in the humanities, particularly, are familiar with a learning style that is characterised by individual interpretation whereby knowledge is produced based on subjective response. Levy *et al.*, note that ‘research collaboration tends to be the norm in science and engineering but is less frequent in the humanities’ (2010, p.4). Implementing partnership models within the humanities can be particularly difficult because of this disposition towards a specific learning style. As Levy *et al.*, note

Partnership models envisage educators bringing their discipline-based knowledge and educational expertise, and students their prior learning experiences, their existing academic or professional knowledge, and their status as legitimate participants in their disciplinary communities, to share authority in the process of jointly constructing meaning (2010, p.4).

The findings of this study suggest, though, that this ideal is not always met within the humanities disciplines. The notion of sharing authority in the construction of meaning was considered problematic by participants in this study. Academics reflected on the emphasis in the humanities being focused ‘*much more* on the individual doing *their own work*’ (A, SL and ProgL) and undergraduates corroborated that they are often told “‘off you go, do your own thing’” (A, 2, F, E and H).

Murphy *et al.*, discovered in their study that staff considered ‘students’ subject and pedagogic knowledge and professional body awareness as issues to partnership activities’ (2017, p.7). A number of participants in this study perceived undergraduates’ lack of expertise as a significant barrier to the implementation of partnership activities; some participants returned to the subjectivity of the traditional learner, which perpetuated the conception that academics ‘know a lot more about the subject and about the teaching and learning of it than they do’ (B, SL). A handful of academic participants questioned the possibility of undergraduates contributing on any given research project because of the autonomous nature of research within the humanities, which echoed the findings of the study by Murphy *et al.*, in which they noted that ‘some staff considered partnership to be something that challenged their professional legitimacy since it handed power to the students’ (2017, pp.9–10). Some academics felt that partnership ‘probably doesn’t fit with English as well as it does with other subjects’ (A, SL) because ‘research is individual’ (A, SL). In a study by Robertson and Blackler (2006), English students perceived themselves more as collaborators compared to their peers in Physics and Geography, however, this study found that undergraduates generally perceive themselves as learners under supervision as opposed to partners or co-creators: ‘I would see myself as a student, I wouldn’t see myself as a researcher’ (A, 2, M, E).

Evans considers the autonomy of teaching and learning within the English discipline and argues: ‘at the heart of English there seems to be a doubt about the subject itself. Reading is possible. Writing is possible. But in isolation, not in communication’ (1993, p.75). The conventional assumptions surrounding English as an ‘*academic discipline*’ (A, SL and SEA) where academic members are ‘very reluctant to change’ (A, SL and

SEA) are based on learning as an isolated and individual endeavour, in which subjective response leads the way. As Bovill and Felten argue, ‘partnership does not always fit easily within existing cultures in higher education’ (2016, p.1) and this echoes the findings of this study where the majority of undergraduates felt it was impractical and the majority of academics perceived it as an ‘*ethos*’ (A, SL and ProgL) or ‘concept’ (A, SL) rather than a practical learning process. Within the humanities, knowledge is ‘rarely co-authored’ (Evron, 2018), it is constituted through autonomy and individuality, which directly opposes the necessary characteristics of reciprocity and shared contribution that constitute partnership.

7.4.3 *Conclusions*

This study has illuminated certain issues that are significant for the concept of partnership. Firstly, the learner subjectivity, and the traditional learner-teacher relationship it invokes, are incompatible with the characteristics needed for a partnership model. The former is characterised by the unilateral authority of the teacher and the deference and dependence of the learner, whereas the latter is constituted through ‘collegial working relationships based on reciprocity, mutual respect, shared responsibility, and complementary contributions’ (Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017, p.720). Secondly, the consumer subjectivity, and the consumer-provider relationship it encourages, are equally as incompatible with the dynamic required for a successful partnership model. The former is characterised by the unilateral power of the consumer and the singular responsibility on the provider, whereas the latter is characterised by reciprocity and shared responsibility. Finally, attempts to implement partnership models not only require acknowledgement and understanding of the impact of competing subjectivities and relationships, but consideration must also be given to the impact of

disciplines. This study suggests that disciplines are important in the construction of partnerships; conventional learning styles associated with particular disciplines can aid or prevent the successful implementation of partnership activities. For English, and perhaps the humanities more broadly, the conventional learning style, which emphasises learning in isolation, as well as autonomy and individuality in the creation of knowledge, acts as a deterrent for undergraduates and academics in establishing a partnership dynamic. These disciplinary conventions need to be acknowledged and overcome if successful partnerships are to occur.

8 CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is twofold. First, is to discuss the findings in relation to the existing literature. Second, is to discuss the overarching purpose of this study, which is to provide a more integrated understanding of transforming power relationships within the current university climate, in relation to the positioning of undergraduates within conflicting subjectivities. This chapter also serves to discuss the study as a whole and the potential direction of future research.

8.2 Discussion of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide an integrated understanding of the ways in which power relationships between undergraduates and academics are being transformed in HE contexts, through the adherence to conflicting subjectivities. The existing literature generally posits a singular definition of power, namely because it is focused within political science as opposed to HE. By contrast, I have proposed a dialectical theorisation of structural and agential power – systemic and constitutive – which is more appropriate for understanding relationships in HEIs. In so doing, I intend to contribute to the field by introducing a theorisation of power that specifies the ways in which power relationships are both formed systemically and perpetuated or challenged constitutively within an educational context. The existing literature on undergraduate subjectivities generally considers one, or sometimes two, subjectivities in isolation without much reference to the behavioural norms that govern such socially structured roles. In contrast, I have proposed a dialectical consideration of three cogent and

conflicting subjectivities for undergraduates in the current university climate with significant reference to their behavioural expectations. This study contributes to the field by presenting the importance of behavioural expectations associated with established subjectivities and the ways in which these expectations prevent or encourage undergraduates to act in specific ways within interpersonal relationships with academics. I have drawn from numerous theoretical sources and from a range of authors from multiple disciplines to illuminate the powerful constraints presented by the conflicting subjectivities and power relationships that exist within universities. Most authors acknowledge the structural constraints for successfully implementing partnership within universities, but fail to present an understanding of how these constraints are formed and perpetuated and thus, how they can be deconstructed. This research contributes to that field by detailing these constraints at both systemic and constitutive levels so that greater clarity can aid in reconstituting the undergraduate student experience in appropriate and successful ways for the modern climate.

My empirical analysis studied two case study universities. I reflected on their engagement and positioning of undergraduates at both the systemic and constitutive levels, as well as the perception of undergraduates and academics in relation to issues concerning power relationships, market orientations and partnership. I surmised that undergraduates are engaged in relation to, and positioned within, three diametrically opposed subjectivities, each of which have conflicting behavioural expectations constituted through their establishment as structured social roles. Within this context, interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics, and the subsequent power dynamic, are in flux; the dispositional power granted to each subjectivity is conflicting with each having greater or less power than the other. I concluded that what

was, and still is, considered to be the traditional power relationship, constituted through adherence to the traditional roles of learner and teacher, is being transformed through the introduction of market models and partnership models. All of this creates a higher education context fraught with ambiguity and confusion in relation to the expected and adopted behaviours of undergraduates within the learning process.

The first contribution of this research is the conceptualisation of undergraduate subjectivity in relation to both the systemic construction of social roles and the constitutive perpetuation or rejection of these social roles. The literature typically considers isolated subject positions for undergraduates, such as the consumer, and details the benefits and problems that exist for the positioning of undergraduates within such a role. Some literature references singular positionings in relation to another, for instance, the negotiation between the consumer subjectivity and the partner subjectivity or the clash between the partner subjectivity and the learner subjectivity. This thesis, though, outlines the formation of all three of these subject positions and how their formation has created specific and accepted behavioural norms. Moreover, it delivers an understanding of these subject positions in relation to one another, presenting a dialectical illumination of how they interact and clash within HE contexts.

This study has clarified the need to better understand the negotiation of these subjectivities in relation to their conflicting behavioural expectations and norms. What came to light from the analysis of the empirical data was the cogency of the traditional learner subjectivity and undergraduates' natural adherence to its behavioural characteristics within an educational context. Moreover, this naturalised adherence to the traditional learner subjectivity interferes with the engagement of undergraduates as

both consumers and partners. The analysis of the institutional discourses in both instantiations illuminates how the undergraduate is being engaged as both a consumer and a partner at the systemic level and as such, positioned within these subjectivities at the constitutive level. The analysis of the interview discourses, though, illuminates the discord that exists between the systemic positioning of undergraduates and their acceptance of these subjectivities at the constitutive level. Whilst there are some behaviours that undergraduates are willing to adhere to, they, on the whole, are rejecting the 'set of expectations about what behaviour is appropriate' (Hargreaves, 1972, p.71) for both the consumer subjectivity and the partner subjectivity; they do so in favour of adhering to the more naturalised subjectivity of the traditional learner.

The second contribution of this study is the contribution to the literature on social power. The field is typically dominated by theories from political science, which means a large proportion of conceptualisations focus on the process of *power over*. Whilst there is considerable emphasis on the structural configuration of power, or the agential configuration of power, they are often examined in isolation with an emphasis on either *power over* or *power to*. This thesis has demonstrated the need to conceptualise a theory of power in terms of the dialectical relationship between structure and agency for HE contexts; emphasising the strength of the structural configuration of dispositional power through social roles, alongside the enactment of that dispositional power within interpersonal relationships at the constitutive level.

For HE, particularly, little attention has been paid to the configuration of power relationships, either through an emphasis on structural or agential power. I have argued that it is necessary to consider this dialectical construction of power through an

understanding of both systemic and constitutive conceptualisations. When authors examine power relationships as self-evident, they perpetuate the naturalisation and internalisation of particular dynamics, without scrutinising how and why they are formed, maintained or even appropriate in particular contexts. I have suggested an alternative approach to understanding power relationships within HEIs, using an analytical and methodological framework that illuminates a different vantage point. This is not a claim to a superior approach, but rather a demonstration of considering new questions from different perspectives to provide original and significant insights in relation to the transformation of power relationships in the current university climate.

What the empirical analysis of this study has highlighted, then, is a significant conflict for undergraduates within the current university climate. Undergraduates are positioned within irreconcilable subjectivities, which leads to ‘difficulty in deciding which behaviour is appropriate’ (Kitchener, 1988, p.218) and this has a significant impact on the transformation of the traditional power relationship, which is the definitive focus of this study.

8.3 Understanding the Transforming Power Relationship

8.3.1 How do we Position the Undergraduate?

Understanding how undergraduates are positioned within universities is a significant consideration for this research. It entails understanding how undergraduates are engaged and subsequently, which behavioural characteristics they are encouraged to adhere to. As I have said, the literature often deals with isolated positions for undergraduates in the current climate. Many authors focus on the consumer subject

position and the potentially damaging behaviours that are encouraged through adherence to this subjectivity (McMillan and Cheney, 1996; Hughes, 1999; Brown, 2013; Bunce, Baird and Jones, 2017). Equally, authors are concerned with the positioning of undergraduates as partners and the potential positive behaviours that are encouraged from adherence to this subjectivity (Little, 2010; Nygaard et al., 2014; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). This study, however, has developed the above considerations by focusing on the conflicting nature of the two in relation to one another and in relation to the traditional learner subjectivity which is often overlooked or underappreciated.

The traditional learner subjectivity is a cogent subject position for any individual entering an educational context in a learning capacity; it is part of a socially structured and historically enduring relation (Isaac, 1987). As such, its characteristics and behavioural expectations are not only well established and recognised, but also internalised as natural within educational contexts. Although institutional discourse does not explicitly position undergraduates as traditional learners, the internalisation of the appropriateness of the subjectivity creates a ‘powerful structural constraint’ (Haugaard, 2015, p.153) when attempts are made to adhere to a subject position which contradicts it. Using the Faircloughian three-dimensional model for the analysis of the data in this study highlighted the cogency of this naturalised subject position for undergraduates; social practices constitute systems of belief that social agents instinctively abide by when interacting in the social world. Behaving as a traditional learner within educational contexts constitutes a powerful and established social practice, which has been maintained over years of adherence during compulsory schooling. The cogency of the traditional learner subjectivity as a social practice creates

a stark challenge for institutions attempting to encourage alternative and contradicting subject positions.

Because discourse has a significant impact on shaping social relations and practices (Fairclough, 2015b), institutional discourse that emphasises the positioning of undergraduates as consumers is crucial for undergraduates' perceptions of their position within their respective institutions. The pervasiveness of consumer ideology within institutional discourse is emphasised by the necessity of adhering to national policy; government imperatives surrounding the positioning of undergraduates as consumers, in compliance with the Consumer Rights Act of 2015, has made it obligatory and pertinent for institutions to engage their undergraduates as consumers. This study has illuminated the ways in which this positioning is unavoidable to an extent, and the necessity of recognising its significance on undergraduates' behaviour within sites of learning and teaching. Because people so often become what we tell them they are (Solomon, 2016), undergraduates are beginning to internalise the expectation that they should behave as consumers at university. This creates a significant challenge for institutions because it presents a barrier that is both unavoidable and powerfully persuasive.

Equally, though, institutional discourse counters the obligatory consumer ideology with an emphasis on the positioning of undergraduates as partners within their universities. Although this form of engagement does not have the imperatives attached to it that the consumer position does, it has become stronger in the last few decades as a way of negating the transformation of HEIs under market models. This inevitably creates role conflict (Kitchener, 1988) for undergraduates because the behavioural characteristics

of the partner subject position are in opposition to that of the consumer subject position. If we understand the conflict presented to undergraduates through the encouragement of different subject positions, then we can also think about more effective ways to counter these conflicts. The literature typically treats the partner subjectivity as a given role; many authors conceptualise it as though its characteristics are established and known. This research, however, illuminates undergraduates' lack of understanding about how to behave as a partner, as well as academics' lack of understanding about how to engage undergraduates as partners. The partner subjectivity is not established in the same way that the consumer subjectivity is; it is fairly new and unique to HEIs, which means that undergraduates and academics do not instinctively know how to behave within a partnership model (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016). Being aware of the systemic and constitutive construction of social subjectivities allows us to acknowledge the lack of established associated behaviours and consider ways in which undergraduates can be trained to understand this role and how to act within it.

8.3.2 Power Relationships in HE: Negotiating the Traditional

Reflecting on the positioning of undergraduates in this research and the formation and perpetuation of those subjectivities at the systemic and constitutive levels within institutions allows us to better understand the transformation of the power relationship between undergraduates and academics. The literature seldom delves into the complexity of this power relationship; authors, if they do consider it, typically acknowledge it as a given and established dynamic which must be overcome in order for new learning relationships to form (Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017). This research provides a detailed understanding of the cogency of the traditional learner subjectivity and its perpetuation as an established social practice. In so doing, it provides a

foundation for understanding the traditional power relationship that is constituted through adherence to the traditional learner subjectivity. This traditional power relationship has been highlighted by this study as being inevitable within HE because of undergraduates' and academics' natural propensity to perpetuate the familiar dynamic. If we view interpersonal relationships in HE through the lens of systemic and constitutive conceptualisations of power, it allows us to understand how and why this traditional power relationship appears natural and inevitable. Moreover, it provides insights for understanding the conflicting power relationships that are being introduced into the current university climate. It also provides opportunities for dialoguing about ways to deconstruct the dynamic that, although socially constructed, appears natural (Shor, 1996), so that space may be opened up for new power relationships to exist.

If HEIs want the partnership power relationship to predominate, then an understanding of the formation and perpetuation of the traditional power relationship is necessary. Many authors acknowledge the barrier that the traditional relationship presents for the implementation of a power dynamic based on the partnership model (Shor, 1996; Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018). This study, though, has gone beyond recognition and instead applied an integrated approach to detailing how this barrier is formed and maintained, which allows insight into how it can be disbanded. A power relationship based on the characteristics of shared authority and thus, shared power, is impossible to effectively implement when the traditional power relationship still predominates. The capacity to exercise power granted to the social agents performing within each dynamic is divergent, with each constituting opposing dispositional powers.

Simply acknowledging the structural constraint of the traditional power relationship and strategizing isolated partnership projects at the constitutive level that attempt to overcome the behavioural barriers is not enough. To disband a socially constructed and internalised power dynamic, it is necessary to deconstruct it at the systemic level before it becomes perpetuated at the constitutive level and to do this, we must first understand its formation at the systemic level. Many authors and practitioners have focused on small-scale projects that aim to deconstruct the traditional power relationship at the constitutive level (Little, 2010; Nygaard et al., 2014; Tong, Standen and Sotiriou, 2018), and although they can be successful, they do not aid in denaturalising what undergraduates and academics perceive of as the unavoidable power dynamic. In other words, without an integrated understanding of how power relationships are formed at the systemic level and perpetuated at the constitutive level, institutions will find it challenging to successfully implement a new power relationship based on conflicting and unfamiliar behavioural expectations.

This thesis has highlighted the discord that exists between the perpetuation of the traditional power relationship and the implementation of the partnership power relationship, which has been touched on in the literature. However, this research provides a deeper understanding of the transforming power relationship through the illumination of the consumer-provider power relationship, which is becoming more pervasive at the constitutive level within HEIs. The positioning of undergraduates as consumers at the systemic level prescribes a specific power relationship between undergraduates as consumers and academics as providers, each of which has distinct and competing dispositional powers (Williams, 2013). Because the consumer subjectivity is familiar and because the positioning is encouraged so strongly at the

systemic level through institutional discourse, the power dynamic that follows is also cogent at the constitutive level.

If we consider the power relationship through the lens of the dialectical relation between systemic and constitutive power, we can acknowledge that undergraduates are having to negotiate three competing power dynamics, each of which awards them conflicting dispositional powers. The consumer is awarded increased power over the provider, perpetuated through the social practice of accepting that customers are always right. This is, of course, in conflict with the partnership power relationship in which undergraduates are encouraged to shared power equally, and it is also in conflict with the traditional power relationship that dictates unilateral power for the teacher. The consumer-provider power relationship is unavoidable, to an extent, because of the legal imperatives of undergraduates' financial contract with their institutions. However, if institutions want to encourage their undergraduates to adhere to a power dynamic based on partnership, then they must acknowledge not only the challenge of deconstructing the traditional power relationship, but also the barrier that is caused by the simultaneous encouragement of the consumer-provider power relationship. Without this recognition, institutions can hardly hope to create a power dynamic based on shared authority and reciprocity between undergraduates and academics. What is created instead, and this has been demonstrated by this thesis, is interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics based on discord, confusion and conflict in perceived and enacted behavioural expectations.

8.4 Reflections on the Study

This study, like all research, has its limitations. First, the methodological framework used in this study was incredibly complex, with a huge variation of components that required analysis. It was difficult to keep the study within parameters that would allow for effective contributions to be made. It may have been easier to consider isolated elements, such as the conflicting subjectivities of undergraduates and their behaviours, which would have still provided an interesting insight for HE research. However, it would not have enabled a wider conceptualisation of the complexity of subjectivities and how they manifest at both macro and micro levels. This was a pertinent argument within the thesis and so, I chose to balance the consideration between subjectivities and power relationships and the dialectical relationship between their formation and perpetuation.

Secondly, the purpose of this study was to understand a wider conceptualisation of subjectivities and power relationships within HEIs, therefore, the undergraduate sample reflected the characteristics that form the majority within universities. However, this narrowing did not allow me to detail the relations between my sample and undergraduates who constitute different groups within universities, such as mature, part-time, or international students. There was simply not enough time or resources to do justice to such a diverse sample.

Thirdly, the study did not allow for a more detailed understanding of conflicting subjectivities and transforming power relationships across disciplines. The individual tribes that constitute disciplines matter within HE contexts (Trowler, Saunders and Bamber, 2012) and each have their own practices, methods of engagement and

relationship dynamics. This will inevitably have an impact on the subject positioning of undergraduates and the encouragement of adherence to specific behaviours. My research is situated within the humanities, and specifically English-related degrees, which means it is not generalisable to other disciplines found in universities.

Finally, because my research was conducted within a specific group of HEI – post-1992 universities – it is impossible to generalise the findings for institutions which fall into different categories. Data taken from pre-1992 universities or Russell Group universities, for example, could potentially imply very different findings than those discovered by this study. To utilise this study’s analytical framework within different types of HEI would be an illuminating further research opportunity.

Recognition of a study’s limitations does not depreciate the contribution that this research makes. This study has provided insight into subjectivities and the conflicting nature of undergraduate positionings within the current university climate. It has illuminated the transformation of the traditional power relationship under the weight of these irreconcilable subjectivities, and their associated behaviours, and emphasises the necessity of acknowledging these challenges in order to successfully implement alternative learning processes through interpersonal relationships between undergraduates and academics.

8.5 Further Research

Knowledge is never infallible, nor is it ever complete. Future research undertaken by myself and others can develop what has been illuminated by this research project. The analytic framework of this study could be expanded with the introduction or negotiation

of new subject positionings for undergraduates as universities continue to develop. Understanding the formation, and adherence to subjectivities, and the impact of these subjectivities on subsequent power relationships is not only useful for HE research, but also for research within the compulsory education sector as well as the social sciences more generally.

I would be particularly interested in exploring the subject positioning of different types of students within HEIs; mature learners, distance learners, part-time students, international students and postgraduates would all offer new insights into the subject positioning of students within universities and the resulting power relationships between them and academics. It would be worth exploring the nuances that these different students bring to the understanding of conflicting subjectivities and power relationships in HEIs. It would also be highly relevant to the current university climate to further research the practicalities of negotiating conflicting subjectivities and power relationships, and how these can be countered successfully by the introduction of new dynamics and new learning processes.

Equally, the research would be beneficial if carried out in different types of HEI. It would be illuminating to relate these findings to data procured within institutions that perpetuate different cultures and values and thus, engage their undergraduates in different ways. For instance, are undergraduates positioned within the same conflicting subjectivities at Ancient universities or Russell Group universities? Is the traditional power relationship perceived in similar ways at the above types of institution and does this lead to similar transformations upon studying in the current university climate?

Moreover, there is scope to expand this research into the field of education more generally. What subjectivities are encouraged for students within different educational contexts? How are power relationships enacted in different educational contexts and is there a crossover between those enactments and the ones in HE? What can we learn from the positioning of students, and the relationships they have with teachers, throughout their educational careers, and can this inform decision-making processes within HEIs?

To reconstitute the undergraduate student and the relationships they negotiate with their academics requires that we dissect that which has become our normal. To transform the power dynamic within learning processes requires that we understand the one that is already in place. In order to create new subject positions that allow us to do this, we must first understand the existing ones that challenge us. The subjectivity of the undergraduate student is being negotiated; what it means to be an undergraduate is not fixed, nor has it truly ever been, but within the current climate, there is greater need than ever before to better understand how this negotiation is creating the modern undergraduate student. I end this study with a lasting thought:

Self-identity is inextricably bound up with the identity of the surroundings.

(Svendsen, 2005, p.143)

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10 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Invitation Email

Dear [Head of Department],

I am a PhD student at Lancaster University in the department of Educational Research.

I am conducting research into the interactions between students and university representatives to demonstrate the relationship these interactions have with student engagement, learning and satisfaction with the aim of improving the student experience. I have chosen [University] because of its dedication to incorporating students as participants in teaching and learning. Partnership with students is fundamental to the engagement and satisfaction of students in their learning careers and so, your university is crucial to my research. But more than this, my research will complement [University] dedication to student engagement and further explore ways to improve the student experience using student and staff perceptions. I'm approaching you directly because I'm situating my research within the study of English – I hold a BA and MA in English, but more specifically, I think it's paramount that educational research should be focused within the Humanities in times when research into STEM subjects seem to saturate the field. As Head of the School of English and Journalism, this research will benefit your own specialism and draw attention to the importance of the Humanities in today's world.

The research that I'm conducting will have a crucial impact on the understanding of student engagement, learning and satisfaction from an intimate perspective, drawing on individual perceptions of both students and university representatives to understand the student experience in its entirety.

I hope the [School] at [University] would like to be a part of this research.

My research hopes to examine the ways in which student engagement and student satisfaction can be improved within universities by being open to new considerations that draw on student and university representatives' perceptions. In order to gain insights into students' perceptions for this study, I will need to interview students in their undergraduate studies of English. I would like to recruit 6 undergraduate students to interview over the period of one academic year:

- 2 students in their first-year (1 male and 1 female if possible)
- 2 students in their second-year (same as above)
- 2 students in their third-year (same as above)

The students recruited will be asked to take part in 3 interviews throughout the year: 1 in the first term, 1 in the second term and 1 in the third term. They will be granted anonymity and will have the opportunity to withdraw at any time before, during or up to 2 weeks after the interview. I would also like to interview 6 university representatives – this would be 3 lecturers of English and 3 administrative staff within your department – and I would like to approach them directly via email, so that I can gain an insight into the ways in which individual members of the university attempt to engage their students; this will be invaluable to compare to the students' perceptions. I would like to observe 3 lectures and 3 seminars within English and will approach individual staff members to observe their classes and lectures.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Kind Regards,
Eloise

Appendix 2: Interview PIS and Consent Form: Undergraduates

CONSENT FORM



Project Title: The Power of Learning: Power Differentials, Marketisation and The Student Experience

Name of Researchers: Eloise Symonds

Email: e.symonds@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in the interview and within 2 weeks after I took part in the interview, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 2 weeks of taking part in the interview, my data will be removed. If I choose to withdraw at any point after the 2 weeks following the interview, I understand that any data collected up to the point of withdrawal will have been anonymised and cannot be destroyed.

3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.

4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.

5. I understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.

6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study where other researchers, upon request, can have access to this data.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____ Date
_____ Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Participant information sheet

I am a PhD student at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study concerning/ interactions between students and university representatives.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study aims to explore the ways in which university representatives engage their students and how these are perceived by the students. It hopes to explore the interactions that take place between students and university representatives and the impact these can have on student satisfaction, engagement and learning for undergraduate students in the Humanities. Overall it aims to improve the student experience in universities.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because I am interested in understanding about the ways in which undergraduate students perceive their interactions with the university representatives that they come into contact with during their undergraduate studies.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:

A single one-on-one interview with me. The interview will take place on campus and they will cover several aspects including your experience at this university, your learning approaches, your interactions with university representatives and your opinions on student engagement and satisfaction. The interviews will last anywhere between 30 and 60 minutes but refreshments will be provided.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

If you take part in this study, your insights will contribute to our understanding of student engagement and satisfaction with respect to

the interactions that take place between students and the representatives of their universities.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your studies and the way you are assessed on your course.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in the interviews. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any data you contributed to the study and destroy it. Data means the information, views, ideas, etc. that you and other participants will have shared with me. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 2 weeks after taking part in the interview; after 2 weeks, I will be unable to destroy any data collected up until that point as it will have already been anonymised and pooled with other people's data.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part in the individual interviews will require a commitment of your time, which will be 30-60 minutes.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview, only I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the data you share with me, except my PhD supervisors, Paul Trowler and Jan McArthur.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will anonymise any audio recordings and hard copies of any data. This means that I remove any personal information.

How will my data be stored?

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. My supervisors, Paul Trowler and Jan McArthur, will also have access to the data when requested.

I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office.

I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic).

In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years in Lancaster's institutional data repository, where other researchers, upon request, can have access to the data.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data you have shared with me only in the following ways: I will use it for academic purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and other possible publications in academic journals. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. When doing so, I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from our interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself:

Eloise Symonds
e.symonds@lancaster.ac.uk
+44 (0)1524 592889
Department of Educational Research
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Or my supervisor:

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+44 (0)1524 592879
Department of Educational Research
County South
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YD
United Kingdom

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

Paul Ashwin
paul.ashwin@lancaster.ac.uk

**+44 (0)1524 594443
Department of Educational Research
County South
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YD
United Kingdom**

**Thank you for considering your participation in this
project.**

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____ **Date**
_____ Day/month/year

**One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at
Lancaster University**

Participant information sheet

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Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because I am interested in understanding about the ways in which undergraduate English students perceive their interactions with the university representatives that they come into contact with during their undergraduate studies.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:
A single one-on-one interview with me. The interview will take place on campus and will cover several aspects including your position within the university, your interactions with students, your opinions on student engagement and satisfaction and your personal responsibilities as a representative of the university. The interview will last anywhere between 30 and 60 minutes but refreshments will be provided.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

If you take part in this study, your insights will contribute to our understanding of student engagement and satisfaction with respect to the interactions that take place between students and the representatives of their universities.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

As a university employee, if you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your position of employment.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in the interviews. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any data you contributed to the study and destroy it. Data means the information, views, ideas, etc. that you and other participants will have shared with me. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 2 weeks after taking part in the interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part in the individual interviews will require a commitment of your time, which will be 30-60 minutes on one occasion during the academic year.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview, only I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the data you share with me, except my PhD supervisors, Paul Trowler and Jan McArthur.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will anonymise any audio recordings and hard copies of any data. This means that I remove any personal information.

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I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office.

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How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data you have shared with me only in the following ways: I will use it for academic purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and other possible publications in academic journals. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. When doing so, I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from our interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

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If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

**Paul Ashwin
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Department of Educational Research
County South
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YD
United Kingdom**

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Appendix 4: Observation PIS And Consent Form

CONSENT FORM



Project Title: The Power of Learning: Power Differentials, Marketisation and The Student Experience

Name of Researchers: Eloise Symonds

Email: e.symonds@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

8. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily

1. I understand that as part of an observation, the notes generated by the researcher will not include any identifying information about any of the participants, including both the students and the lecturer. I understand that I have the right to withdraw before, during and up to 2 weeks after the observation has taken place and if I do, the data generated will be destroyed.

2. If I am participating in the observations I understand that any information disclosed within the session remains unidentifiable.

3. I understand that any data generated by the observation may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.

4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.

5. I understand that any notes taken during observations will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.

6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study where other researchers, upon request, can have access to this data.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____ Date
_____ Day/month/year

**One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at
Lancaster University**

Participant information sheet

I am a PhD student at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study concerning/ interactions between students and university representatives.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study aims to explore the ways in which university representatives engage their students and how these are perceived by the students. It hopes to explore the interactions that take place between students and university representatives and the impact these can have on student satisfaction, engagement and learning for undergraduate students in the Humanities. Overall it aims to improve the student experience in universities.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because I am interested in understanding about the ways in which undergraduate English students perceive their interactions with the university representatives that they come into contact with during their undergraduate studies.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:

The observation of you and your students in your lecture/seminar during the academic year.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

If you take part in this study, your insights will contribute to our understanding of student engagement and satisfaction with respect to the relationships that students build with the representatives of their universities.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

As a university employee, if you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your position of employment.

What if I change my mind?

You can change your mind about participating in the observation up to 2 weeks after it has taken place, and if you do choose to withdraw, the data generated will be destroyed. After 2 weeks has passed, the data generated will be pooled with other data and therefore, it will be impossible to destroy. However, all notes generated during the observation will not contain identifiable information to either students or lecturer.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The observations will be naturalistic observation, therefore I will simply observe and make notes; I will not participate in any way. Taking part in the observation will not pose any disadvantages or risks.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the observation, only I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the data generated, except for my PhD supervisors, Paul Trowler and Jan McArthur.

No data generated during the observation will include identifiable information to either students or lecturer.

How will my data be stored?

The data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. My supervisors, Paul Trowler and Jan McArthur, will also have access to the data when requested.

I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. No identifiable data will be recorded.

In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years in Lancaster's institutional data repository, where other researchers, upon request, can have access to the data.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data you have shared with me only in the following ways: I will use it for academic purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and other possible publications in academic journals. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of what I observed. When doing so, I will only use generalised

references to the observation, so you cannot be identified in our publications.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself:

Eloise Symonds

e.symonds@lancaster.ac.uk

+44 (0)1524 592889

Department of Educational Research

County South

Lancaster University

Lancaster

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United Kingdom

Or my supervisor:

Paul Trowler,

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Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Appendix 5: Interviews and Observations Conducted

Code	Profile	Date
A, SL	(Dr) Senior Lecturer	21.06.17
A, P and former DTL	(Prof) Professor and Former Dean of Teaching and Learning	13.07.17
A, PL and ProgL	(Dr) Principal Lecturer and Programme Leader	13.07.17
A, SL and ProgL	(Dr) Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader	31.07.17
A, SL and SEA	(Ms) Senior Lecturer and Student Engagement Advocate [name changed]	31.07.17
A, SL2	(Dr) Senior Lecturer	25.01.18
A, 1, F, E and CW	First Year, Female, English and Creative Writing	25.01.18
A, 3, F, E	Third Year, Female, English	26.01.18
A, 1, F, E and J	First Year, Female, English and Journalism	26.01.18
A, 2, F, E	Second Year, Female, English	07.02.18
A, 3, M, E	Third Year, Male, English	07.02.18
A, 2, M, E	Second Year, Male, English	21.03.18
A, 2, F, E	Second Year, Female, English	18.04.18
A, 2, M, E	Second Year, Male, English	19.04.18
A, 2, F, E and H	Second Year, Female, English and History	18.10.18
A, 1, F, E and CW	First Year, Female, English and Creative Writing	18.01.19

Table 10.1 Interviews conducted at University A

Code	Profile	Date
B, FDLT	(Ms) Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching – Arts & Humanities	05.06.17
B, SL and ProgL	(Dr) Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader	05.06.17
B, SL	(Dr) Senior Lecturer	26.06.17
B, PL	(Dr) Principal Lecturer	12.10.17
B, R	(Dr) Reader in Modern and Contemporary Literature	15.11.17
B, P	(Prof) Professor of Victorian Literature	28.11.17
B, 3, F, EL and MC	Third Year, Female, English Literature and Media Communications	04.10.17
B, 3, F, EL and S	Third Year, Female, English Literature and Sociology	06.10.17
B, 2, F, EL	Second Year, Female, English Literature	17.10.17
B, 2, M, EL	Second Year, Male, English Literature	01.11.17
B, 2, F, EL and MC	Second Year, Female, English Literature and Media Communications	27.11.17
B, 1, F, EL and CW	First Year, Female, English Literature and Creative Writing	16.02.18
B, 2, F, EL	Second Year, Female, English Literature	16.03.18
B, 2, F, EL and AS	Second Year, Female, English Literature and American Studies	19.10.18
B, 3, M, CW	Third Year, Male, Creative Writing	26.02.19
B, 1, M, EL	First Year, Male, English Literature	04.06.19

Table 10.2 Interviews conducted at University B

Code	Session and Leader	Date
A, 2, Lec	Second Year Lecture (A, SL)	19.10.17
A, 2, Sem	Second Year Seminar (A, SL)	20.10.17
A, 1, Lec	First Year Lecture (A, PL and ProgL)	06.02.18
A, 1, Sem	First Year Seminar (A, PL and ProgL)	06.02.18
A, 2, Lec2	Second Year Lecture (A, SL2)	12.03.18
A, 2, Sem2	Second Year Seminar (A, SL2)	12.03.18

Table 10.3 Observations conducted at University A

Code	Session and Leader	Date
B, 3, Lec	Third Year Lecture (B, SL and ProgL)	31.10.17
B, 3, Sem	Third Year Seminar (B, SL and ProgL)	01.11.17
B, 2, Lec	Second Year Lecture (B, SL)	06.11.17
B, 2, Sem	Second Year Seminar (B, SL)	07.11.17
B, 2, Lec2	Second Year Lecture (B, PL)	13.11.17
B, 2, Sem2	Second Year Seminar (B, PL)	14.11.17

Table 10.4 Observations conducted at University B

Appendix 6: Ethical Approval

 Ethics approval (REC reference number FL16126 please quote this in all correspondence about this project)



FASS and LUMS Research Ethics

Symonds, Eloise; Trowler, Paul; McArthur, Jan

Friday, 3 March 2017 at 11:10

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[Show Forward](#)

Dear Eloise

Thank you for submitting your ethics application and additional information for *The Power in Learning: Power Differentials, Learning Approaches and Market Orientations in Higher Education*. The information you provided has been reviewed by member(s) of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School Research Ethics Committee and I can confirm that approval has been granted for this project.

As principal investigator your responsibilities include:

- ensuring that (where applicable) all the necessary legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and the necessary licenses and approvals have been obtained;
- reporting any ethics-related issues that occur during the course of the research or arising from the research (e.g. unforeseen ethical issues, complaints about the conduct of the research, adverse reactions such as extreme distress) to the Research Ethics Officer;
- submitting details of proposed substantive amendments to the protocol to the Research Ethics Officer for approval.

Please contact me if you have any queries or require further information.

Kind regards,

Debbie

Debbie Knight

Secretary, FASS-LUMS Research Ethics Committee fass.lumsethics@lancaster.ac.uk

Phone (01524) 592605 D22 FASS Building, Lancaster University, LA1 4YT | Web: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/arts-and-social-sciences/research/ethics-guidance-and-ethics-review-process/> & <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/lums/research/ethics/>



www.lancaster.ac.uk/50

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