

Respect & Recognition: What's the Story?

Suzanne Nolan

Education Doctorate

**NUI Maynooth
Faculty of Social Sciences**

**Education Department
Head of Department: Dr Aidan Mulkeen
Department of Adult and Community Education
Head of Department: Josephine Finn**

Supervisor: Dr Ted Fleming

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*No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less,
as well as if a promontory were,
as well as if a manor of thy friend's
or of thine own were.
Any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind;
and therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee.*

by John Donne

Abstract

How do adults experience disrespect and respect in education? How do these experiences affect their identities, relationships and life choices? Has this return to learning had an impact on confidence, self-esteem or personal worth? What does education mean to the learner? In an attempt to answer these questions this research study explores the experience of respect in the lives of 8 students on a pre-access course in inner-city Dublin. My intention is to understand how the experience of respect or indeed the lack of respect affected their learning journeys and their life choices. The work of the American sociologist, Richard Sennett, informed my reading of respect and its impact on the individual in the new capitalism. This thesis introduces Sennett's work as offering a wealth of observations and concepts important to adult educators struggling to navigate the fragmented and shifting waterways of neo liberal, instrumental education.

This study is embedded in the recognition theory of Axel Honneth and Sennett's research concerning respect over the past four decades. The methodology is grounded in social constructionism and the theory contributing is from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. The experiences of the research participants were accessed using narrative enquiry in one to one interviews. The research produced is qualitative and gleaned from the stories these individuals shared concerning their learning journeys, both in childhood and as adults. The primary sensitizing concept used in this research is respect. As such, learners' life histories will be interpreted as containing moments of respect and disrespect and the consequences investigated.

The research participants were positive in their views and experiences of returning to education. Each participant affirmed that education had increased her self-esteem and instilled in her the confidence to continue to engage and pursue further study at third level. The research clearly shows how little monetary reward is considered in the return to education. The primary aim of the participants is a general one of self improvement and development. As early school leavers the individuals in this research considered the path to third level a magical one that only the learned few could attain. The re engagement with education demystified this outlook and demonstrated how much could be achieved with the crucial ingredient of support.

The findings of this research attest to the central role of respect both in the learning process and in the development of the individual. Relationships are at the centre of these learners' stories; relationships that are interpreted as either respectful or disrespectful. These relationships are filled with incidents that are intensely personal and impact on how the individual perceives herself, forms relationships and makes life choices. The increase in confidence and self-esteem of the participants in this research has two aspects that inter relate; this is the connection between relationships and successful learning. The experience of respect is telling someone that they can achieve, that they are intelligent, they have value. In these interviews this happens in the classroom and replicates moments these research participants did not experience as children or young adults.

Recommendations include raising awareness of the dynamics of intersubjective recognition for positive learning and self-esteem and the central role of respect for an adult education that seeks to promote citizenship and democratic participation. As such, the interpersonal space must now replace student centred learning as education is recognised as a mutual act that takes place together; it is not an individual process. And

finally, educational relationships that are grounded in respect increase the self esteem of the learner and allow for the growth of confidence and personal worth so essential for the well-being of the individual and of society. This thesis is part of a re-defining of the concept of curriculum; lifelong learning is not a servant to the economy but is an essential element of being well and well being.

Acknowledgements

I began this thesis with the words of John Donne's well-known poem, *No Man is an Island*. These words are central to the fundamental need for respect in daily life and remind us that we are connected to each other through relationship. It is in relationship that we learn about ourselves; it is in relationship that we find our worth. The presence of supportive and caring relationships is an essential ingredient of our achievements and successes in life. It is with these thoughts in mind that I would like to thank the staff in the Department of Adult & Community Education and Department of Education of NUI Maynooth. Their support, guidance and inspiration throughout these years have played a central role in both the completion of this project and the wonderful learning experience within the classroom.

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Suzanne

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Introduction

0.1 Background to the Study

This research study developed from the stories of adult learners and their reflections on significant moments in their lives that were told and retold in my classroom. I began to realise that although each autumn brought new students and new stories they each had a common theme; whether positive or negative each memory was framed around a relationship. As such, memories of school were not so much memories of hating maths or struggling with literacy but were filled with stories of teachers, friends and family members. The stories adult learners tell are embedded in the treatment they received at the hands of those in authority. Although adults share many childhood stories of good and bad, I have found the stories adults share in the inner city classroom to be primarily tales of suffering and neglect. These stories are usually of simple incidents that are remembered as personal indignities and traumas, incidents that are interpreted through young eyes as reflecting on the individual and how she or he was treated by others; as such, they are intensely personal and filled with meaning.

0.2 Rationale

As an adult educator I listen keenly to these stories and interpret them in the context of my epistemological and ontological values, perceiving them as issues of social justice and equality. My interpretation revolves around the humiliation and hurt that each memory produces and the subsequent consequences, such as confrontations in class, loss of confidence, early school leaving and feelings of inferiority. This research developed as I began to categorise these memories as incidents of dehumanisation with long term consequences. Adult learners often went to great lengths to assure me that their present

experience of education was far removed from the painful memories. When I asked them to put this difference in words I was often told that it is a matter of respect.

This thesis is centred on the exploration of respect and education and the implications for the learner when respect is absent and present. This research is motivated by the following questions:

1. How do adults experience disrespect and respect in education?
2. How do these experiences affect their identity, their relationships and their life choices?
3. Has this return to learning had an impact on confidence, self-esteem or personal worth?
4. What does education mean to them?

I believe the transformative potential of adult education may provide the opportunity to experience respect and develop personal worth. As such, I will explore the context of education as a space where respect has been undermined and in adult education redeemed. Stories have been fundamental to the motivation and rationale of this study as they provided both the impetus and context of this research. This research study will develop understanding of the challenges inherent to the functioning of respect within the classroom. The understanding of respect as an intersubjective and mutual act of recognition will challenge educational policy that reduces education to human resource management for the employment needs of the economy (OECD, 1966; ESF, 2012). To place respect as essential to learning is to promote the type of learning and collaboration that promotes community and democratic practice

This need to understand the role of respect in the process of development is increasingly important. In my experience respect is generally conceived as intensely personal and involves the issues of personal worth and dignity. I began this thesis with the words of John Donne, *No Man is an Island*. In order to develop and realise ourselves as beings of

worth and value we require a witness. In the classroom I may be that witness. I support; I challenge; I validate. Similarly, classmates are also witnesses to each others achievements who also support, challenge and validate. In this study I want to explore these thoughts. I want to find out what it is I am seeing as students engage in education.

0.3 Methodology

In this study I explore the life histories of a group of students on a pre access course in inner city Dublin using the sensitising concept of respect. The primary method of research is narrative inquiry. As discussed in Chapter III, I believe this is the most appropriate research method to access the lived experiences of the research participants. The narratives were recorded over two time periods; the first upon finishing pre access and the second two years later. The period in between these interviews allowed for the initial findings to be held up to the test of time and for the overall results to be clarified. This focus group included all 8 of the research participants and provided them with an opportunity to share their experiences and further explore the meaning of education in their lives.

0.4 Originality of Research Study

In my work as an adult educator in inner city Dublin I have experienced a bifurcation between the intentions of policy makers and the needs and motivations of adult learners. However, although issues of policy can be addressed through numerous reports and documents the experiences, needs and aims of adult learners are far more difficult to either access or express. As such, it can be a challenge for educators such as my self, to influence policy without a body of research or theory with which to ally ourselves. In this study the adult learner gives voice to her experiences as a pre access student beginning

the journey to HE. It is my intention for this research to reframe the neoliberal reasoning for adults returning to education in favour of a more humanistic discourse. As such, this research is located in the real experiences of adult learners returning to education. I have grounded this research primarily in the theory of Richard Sennett in order to demonstrate its connection with an educational and social agenda of equality and to relocate the personal as political. And finally, the originality of this research lies in its investigation of a particular group of students at a particular time in inner city Dublin.

0.5 Thesis Outline

In Chapter I, I attempt to locate the development of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and Access Programmes within a policy context. I introduce the policy documents which are important for understanding the present interpretation of BTEI and the expectations according to policy. The European influence on Irish education and its increasingly instrumental approach is located in the context of a globalised, neoliberal, international market. And finally, I critique the present interpretation of lifelong learning and explore the potential for a different interpretation as present in the theory of Sennett and Honneth.

In Chapter II I outline the theoretical underpinnings of this study. This chapter introduces the work of Sennett and provides an in depth exploration of his theory and concepts. This section is divided into four parts which reflect the central themes of his research and I explore each using the sensitising concept of respect. Following this I present a brief introduction to Honneth's theory of recognition and its importance to this study. Finally, I introduce my other theoretical allies who have supported the development of my argument. Some, such as Erich Fromm and Paulo Freire, are central to my conceptual

framework whereas others merely make a brief entrance in order to clarify a point or integrate a concept.

Chapter III describes this study's methodology and introduces narrative inquiry as my primary research tool. The challenges and benefits of being both teacher and researcher with a group of student participants is addressed. I discuss the gathering of the data through one to one interviews, a focus group and the use of art to access the participants' stories. I also give a step by step account of how I analysed and interpreted the data produced. I shall also consider ethical issues in this chapter.

Chapters IV, V, VI and VII present my findings. The experiences of adult learners are explored through the sensitizing concept of respect and common themes identified. Memories and experiences of misrecognition and disrespect are examined for their meanings to the individual and for their consequences. The research produces a number of key findings which indicate how the identity of the adult learner and the experience of education are closely connected to her experience of respect and recognition within the classroom. The findings clearly demonstrate that once experienced respect has long lasting effects which limit the need for approval and validation from others. This study uses the sensitizing concept of respect as understood in Richard Sennett, the American sociologist, to explore the situations that encourage learning and the situations that sabotage it. The concept of recognition in Honneth provides a theoretical background to interpret the research data in an educational context and along with Sennett connects neoliberalism to Higher Education. The increase of personal worth, confidence and self-esteem that these research participants experience within education is identified as a result of increased self-recognition. These participants hold education and their teachers

in high esteem and so when they succeed they achieve this recognition and esteem. The way these participants have achieved self-respect is through achievement in education and the subsequent recognition is a validation of their ability and worth. This takes place in community with others and so is an intersubjective process. One of the key findings in this research is the transformation of the adult learner's sense of identity. The learning journey for these participants is a process of identity development. The experiences of these adult learners locate adult education as a central path towards the achievement of the self respect and human dignity that a neoliberal society previously denied.

In Chapter VIII the conclusion and recommendations from this research are discussed and presented. The implications for recognition and respect in the adult education classroom are summarised and the importance of adult education as a site where the struggle for respect and recognition is contested is emphasised. As the numbers of non-traditional students continue to grow at third level it is important that these institutions increase their understanding of their learning journeys and attitudes. These adult learners provide important information concerning the central role of relationship in the education process and as such the importance of interpersonal relationships with tutors, mentors and support officers for a successful learning experience. Considerations for further study and implications for policy are suggested.

0.6 In the Shadows

The following chapters explore the lived experiences of the adult learner framed within a variety of theoretical perspectives, primarily those of Richard Sennett and Axel Honneth. I hope this study will contribute to a greater understanding of the intersubjective mutuality inherent to the learning process and essential to the development of the

autonomous and confident individual. I would like to end this introductory chapter with a poem contributed by one of the research participants.

In the Shadows

*Days go by
Sometimes we cry
And yet we must go on.
We are here to bring them cheer,
You don't exist my dear!
And during the day
We walk among you
Shadows in the mist
You don't know, see or hear,
We no longer exist.
We learn to float and rock your boat,
And softly fade away,
You don't see us!
You don't care!*

By Angie

Chapter I

Policy: Review & Context

'Education is the best economic policy we have'
Tony Blair (DfEE, 1998, p.9)

The participants in this research project are students on a pre-access course in Dublin's city centre. This course is provided by the City of Dublin VEC and is part of the BTEI, the Back to Education Initiative, co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union under the European Social Fund. The increasing numbers of adults returning to higher education in recent years, 1,717 (CDVEC, 2012) of whom took the BTEI route at the time of these interviews, is evident in the growing volume of research concerning non-traditional students at third level (Fleming & Murphy, 1997; Lynch, 1999). The majority of non-traditional students returning to education are from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds, and are generally the first of their family to consider third level education. The eight individuals in this research study are of this category of learner and as such, it is precisely the experiences of these learners which are central to inform policy at all levels, both further education and third level. The experiences, fears and concerns of the individuals explored in this thesis provide important information for policy concerning the access and retention of non-traditional students beginning their learning journeys.

In this chapter I will explore the policy informing the role BTEI's and Access Programmes play in assisting individuals with little academic or formal schooling access third level and further education. As stated above, there have been a number of studies in recent years concerning this issue. I also intend to explore the often dichotomous discourses of policy makers and practitioners of adult education, particularly concerning

the understanding of lifelong learning. This difference has enormous implications for both educator and learner and for the type of knowledge society we are creating. I believe a close reading of the policy affecting non traditional learners is essential if adult education is to continue to engage in the struggle for equality and social inclusion. As such, I will attempt to critique these separate educational agendas, described as humanist and instrumental.

1.1 Lifelong Learning & Adult Education

There have been many changes over the recent years in the field of adult education, not least its recognition as a valid and essential service for the promotion of social inclusion, equality and citizenship. And yet as the field continues to grow, so too does the intention and vision for its purpose. Before continuing I would like to explore this issue, one which can produce a conflict of interest as lifelong learning as a concept fails to have one definitive meaning. However, even though the concept may struggle for clarification, since the publication of the European Commission White Paper (1995) *Towards a Learning Society*, it has remained central to EU and national education and training policies and programmes. On page one of this White Paper (EC, 1995) the central premise of its argument is clearly stated;

The basis of this White Paper is the concerns of every European citizen, young or adult, who faces the problem of adjusting to new conditions of finding a job and changes in the nature of work. No social category, no profession, no trade is spared this problem.

The aim of the paper can therefore be considered as primarily concerned with a lifelong learning focused on education and training for work purposes. Education as such is considered the cure to the ills of ‘adjusting’ to neoliberal working conditions. In Fleming (2010b, p.1) lifelong learning is described as ‘the link between the economy and adult education’. The Irish Government White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000, p.27),

Learning for Life, further defines adult education as ‘systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training’. The central premise of the White Paper (DES, 2000, p.28) is ‘the adult learner's re-engagement having exited from the system at an earlier stage in life’. The framework of lifelong learning recommended is inclusive of six priority areas. These are consciousness raising, citizenship, cohesion, competitiveness, cultural development and community building. This is clearly an improvement on earlier definitions and is one which educators can recognise as representative of their work within the classroom and community. However, Grummel (2007, p.4) challenges the White Paper’s understanding of community development as one limited to ‘marginalised people who share common problems and who aim to become actively involved in solving these problems’ (DES, 2000, p.28). According to Grummell (2007, p.4): ‘Collective action is limited to the efforts of marginalised groups themselves, negating any sense of state or societal responsibility for social exclusion and disadvantage’. In essence this is not so far removed from the ‘adjustment’ of the individual to society recommended in the European Commission White Paper (EC, 1995) *Towards a Learning Society*.

Similarly, Coffield (2000, p.3) describe this view of lifelong learning as one belonging to the middle class;

It is the safe, Panglossian, middle-class view of learning which is removed from the clash of conflicting views and interests, and which is promulgated by those who appear never to have studied, never have experienced poverty, exclusion or unemployment. It is enough to turn even well motivated learners off learning for life.

What Coffield (2000) suggests is that the above view of lifelong learning is narrow and demonstrates a lack of research of learners authentic needs to enhance informed policy making. It elevates a particular interpretation of lifelong learning, one which is in market

interests and neglects the ‘clash of conflicting views and interests’ inherent to such a definition. Similarly, the above emphasis on the ‘adjustment’ of the individual to society thus denies and exonerates the culpability of society and its institutions for the individual’s situation. According to Griffin (2011), the conflict in the interpretation and therefore the implementation of lifelong learning policy is one which resides in the close affiliation of the political system with market interests;

Conflicts of meaning attributed to “lifelong learning” may also be addressed in terms of their origins in the function of policy discourse itself, rather than in terms of philosophical abstraction.

(2011, p.121)

Unfortunately, the consequence of policy making sympathetic to major economic groups is that lifelong learning becomes something other than that advocated by educationalists. The radical approach to education of critical theorists involves the active participation of people in questioning and transforming the self and society, learner and world. However, a market system promoting individual responsibility and instrumental education is not conducive to the creation of a critical space. The OECD (2005) *Policy Promoting Adult Learning* clearly states the issue at hand;

Adult learning systems are complex, not least because the players involved – federal and state ministries, the private sector, NGOs and the educational providers – may have many different objectives.

(2005, p.110)

In essence there is a disparity between student and teacher interpretation of “lifelong learning” and that of the institutions and policy makers. The former are engaged in a process of lifelong learning and development focused on the needs of the individual and the latter are providing a service which is congruent with upskilling and increased employment. The context in which adult education occurs is therefore critical to understanding the challenges it faces. Each classroom is located in a community centre, school or college of further education which is located in a particular district, or in the

case of the VEC, within an area. As such, the adult education classroom is a permeable part of a greater whole which is connected to and influenced by national policy. Decisions at different levels affect what happens within the classroom, from the type of courses offered to the learning considered as valid.

The instrumental focus on measurement, accreditation and standardisation is a result of the global trend towards the marketisation of education. Aronowitz and Giroux (1993, p.1) highlighted this growing discourse in the early 1990s when they warned that the educational agenda was being 'refashioned around the principles of the marketplace and the logic of rampant individualism'. In Richard Sennett (2012) we are introduced to the architecture of community as an important tool for democratic participation and active citizenship. The architecture of instrumental education however is focused on the economic imperative for lifelong learning and has quantifiable methods to ensure its achievement. In Ireland these include awarding bodies such as Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). In November, 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as a new integrated agency replacing all of the aforementioned awarding bodies, including the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). This educational architecture reflects the policy agenda of the Bologna Process and aims to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications.

As an educator I am greatly concerned that my agenda within the classroom is growing further and further apart from that of the DES at the level of policy creation. Adult

education policy must therefore be considered as a key contributor to the process of lifelong learning. According to Griffin;

Adult educators have not been successful in defending liberal and humanistic adult education, and lifelong educators have witnessed the frequent assimilation of a holistic concept of lifelong learning into human resource development for employment in a competitive global economy.

(2011, p.120)

1.2 Education Policy: At Home and Abroad

As discussed above, the adult education classroom is not an impermeable entity but one which is impacted by forces which are often not identified or recognised. BTEI is funded through Europe and as such is reflective of policy at that level and of the agenda of European interests. The European Commission's report *National Actions to Implement Lifelong Learning in Europe* (2001) recommends lifelong learning to be implemented in terms of basic education, human resource development and qualifications frameworks, all targeted towards the creation of a competitive European workforce engaged in the global economy. Similarly, the EU Education Council Report 2001 aimed to 'make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. The agenda of the National Development Plan does not digress far from this outline.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 will be the primary vehicle by which these challenges will be addressed. Over the period of this Plan, Ireland will continue to implement policies, which will support higher levels of employment, improve the quality and productivity of work and enhance social cohesion. Delivering on these challenges will require focused and flexible policies and measures that are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis, to ensure their continued relevance and impact.

(ESF, 2012, p.6)

There is the by now expected implication that social cohesion is an objective achieved through employment and better working conditions. As discussed above, the focus has shifted from the development of the individual through education to the adjustment of the

individual to meet society's needs, the economic ones. This discourse is one which 'markets' education as both a commodity and access route for economic gain as opposed to a process of inherent value. The priority of ESF funding is up-skilling 'the workforce and increasing the participation and activation of groups outside the workforce' (ESF, 2012, p.55). This is achieved through investment in education, training and upskilling, broadly referred to as 'investment in human capital' (ESF, 2012, p.51). The provision of ESF funding for BTEI's is consistent with this target: '*ESF investment under BTEI will support individuals to obtain employment through improving their skills*' (ESF, 2012, p.67). As stated previously, the objective of the BTEI is to 'increase the base of adults with upper second level education and/or qualifications at FETAC Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 and relevant or updated skills to meet the needs of the economy' (ESF, 2012, p.66).

I have attempted to show how recent policy developments in Ireland are reflective of the increasing influence of market forces in education. This commodification of education has roots stretching back to the first OECD report, the *Investment in Education* (DES, 1966). This report, commissioned by the then Minister for Education, Patrick Hillary, addressed the fact that over half of all Irish children emerged from primary school with little record of educational attainment and stressed the important role of education in wealth creation and in the subsequent absence of skilled labour as a result of early school leaving. The *Investment in Education* report (DES, 1996) cites one of the functions of the education system is to satisfy 'the manpower needs of the future' (DES, 1996, p.350). As such, this report (DES, 1966) served to connect school and economy and redefined the role of education in society. Several years later Ireland became a member of the European Community and since then the role of education, as with all state bodies, has been increasingly influenced and informed by European interests. The Treaty of Rome of

1957 made little reference to education or vocational training however, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) eventually interpreted the law under Article 128 of the treaty to include vocational training (Field, 1998, p.35). In Rosenthal (1991, p.278) 'educational policy, long viewed as an exclusive national prerogative, is now regarded as a vital instrument for creating a united Europe'. Teague ((2000, p.10) underlines the role of the European Commission as a 'supranational policy entrepreneur with the ability to persuade, mobilize and even manipulate opinion and interest in support of its preferred position'. According to Murphy (2003, p.554) both the European Commission and the ECJ are the two primary institutions responsible for the transformation of educational policy.

The 1990s were a decade characterised by educational policy reform and witnessed a number of important publications propelled by socio economic change, technological advances and high unemployment. Two important documents in this decade that framed much of the subsequent debate in education is the oft named Delors White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century* (EC, 1993) and the *Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society* White Paper of 1996 (EC, 1996). The former paper (EC, 1993) represents the first response of the European Commission to the issue of high unemployment. It served to not only revive the debate around unemployment but also to connect employment policy with other policy issues such as social protection, family patterns and equality of opportunities for men and women. The latter paper (EC, 1996) has attempted to combine the practice of education with training and has resulted in financial investment in educational initiatives guided by economic imperatives. Although it is clear that the central aim of this paper is economic development it does name social inclusion as a

priority. However, the following statement implies that social inclusion is also a necessary part of the economic imperative as opposed to one of emancipation and freedom;

The level of skill achieved by each and everyone will have to be converted into an instrument for measuring individual performance in a way which will guarantee equal rights for workers as far as possible.

(EC, 1996, p.17)

This White Paper (EC, 1996) launched the European Year of Lifelong Learning and marked its importance as central to European objectives. In 2000 the European Commission published a *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000) which emphasised the role of lifelong learning for employment and economic development. In Murphy (2003, p.557) this memorandum served to highlight ‘the role education plays in fostering a European citizenship and shared identity, a knowledge and information society and the increase in economic competitiveness’.

It is quite clear that the EU has enormous influence and power in the shaping of its member states educational policies. In Aronowitz and Giroux (1993, p.96) the ECJ’s education plan is one conducive with a European learning society centred around market needs and European citizenship. As such, education is developed with the primary intention of ensuring and safe-guarding the success of the single-market. Hantrais (2000, p.118) challenges this approach as one assuming that the needs of the individual will be fulfilled through employment. The social needs of the individual are thus subsumed within the rhetoric of economic justification and market prioritisation. Similarly, although lip service may be paid to an educational policy to meet social needs and it is as such in the rhetoric, social needs in a neoliberal state are increasingly solved through the market. Fleming (2010b, p.2) writes that the economy is not driven by a commitment to democracy but by a commitment to the free market and increased profit. Furthermore,

this belief is held by the neoliberal economic class as one that is beyond doubt and natural and proposes that ‘the market and not politics will solve all problems’ (Fleming, 2010b, p.2). Ball (1990, p.22) describes policies as ‘statements about practice – the way things could or should be – which are derived from statements about the world’. In this way, policy functions to legitimise and privilege particular interests over others. This serves to propagate a particular issue and its solution and silences other options and views. Present policy focuses upon issues of employment and therefore the solutions are found in the creation of programmes to up-skill and train a flexible workforce.

A central point in educational policy is that the skills required for economic success are the same as those required for active citizenship. One of the central objectives of the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000) was the development of active citizenship. However, it is clear from subsequent policy that economic productivity is an integral part of citizenship. Williamson (1998, p.91) argues that this vision of education promotes a ‘systems view of the world’ and lacks a ‘humane centre’. He writes that this view is ‘corroding the whole social fabric of modern society’. Educational policy has attempted to maintain a façade of humanistic intention while promoting a neoliberal inspired system. However, no hegemonic distortion can destroy all spaces of hope and there are opportunities within which to challenge this system and reassert a humanistic value system of educative practice. The emancipatory and justice oriented aims of adult education continue to function on the ground in the spaces where educators and students meet. The intentions and experiences of the research participants in this study give evidence that supports and encourages the humanistic project in education. It is within this context that the Back to Education Initiatives and Access courses has developed. I

shall now trace the genesis and development of access policy as it is central to the learning journey of the research participants.

1.3 Back to Education Initiatives

The BTEI was originally launched in 2002 as an active response to the high number of adults who either left school early or wished to further their education. It is considered one of the more innovative programmes of support for adult learners wishing to attend either FE or HE and works actively alongside access programmes to support and foster academic growth and confidence. The inherent value of the BTEI initiative is twofold. It allows adults in receipt of social welfare to return to part-time education without either financial cost or a reduction in welfare benefits. The programme is also sympathetic to those adults not in receipt of social welfare and charges a minimal fee. The Adult Guidance Service plays an important role in this programme and assists the learner to both develop and implement an achievable learning plan. Tutor and guidance counsellor work together and attempt to create a solid foundation of support and knowledge which can assist the learner develop her confidence and abilities. However, this humanistic rhetoric is framed by a neoliberal policy discourse recommending human capital investment. The overall aim of BTEI is;

To increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second level education in a range of part-time accredited learning opportunities leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to facilitate their access, transfer and progression to other education or employment pathways.

(DES, 2012, p.3)

Success for the adult learner will therefore be measurable by external monitors who have never met the learner and are unaware of her individual learning goals, and whether or not they have been achieved. As with other educational programmes, BTEI is weighed down with reports, forms and funding application, which are all closely monitored. While

transparency is valuable the level of bureaucracy is time consuming and is far removed from the goals and needs of the adult learner. Below is a table of the category and numbers of learners who took part in BTEI programmes between 2010 and 2011 (CDVEC, 2012).

Target Group	Male	Female	Total
Disability	114	122	236
Substance Misuser	89	23	112
Ex-Offender	16	2	18
Early School Leaver	327	326	653
One Parent Family	8	277	285
Traveller	3	41	44
Homeless	60	19	79
ESOL Student	85	61	146
Refugee	9	10	19
Migrant Worker	7	12	19
Asylum Seeker	37	28	65
Other	218	265	483

The strongest presence on the BTEI scheme is the early school leaver. The lowest numbers are ex-offenders, travellers, the homeless, and non nationals. As funding for these courses is limited applications are competitive and reflect the market norm of winners and losers. An essential criterion for funding is accreditation by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) which necessarily requires the course provider be registered with FETAC prior to application. In the year 2010-2011 (CDVEC, 2012) 1,675 adult learners completed the course and 1,693 FETAC awards were

rewarded to learners. These ranged from Level 3 to Level 5. The achievement of a qualification is in line with European Social Fund guidelines (ESF, 2012, p.47). This ever increasing emphasis on achievement which is measurable and standardised is symptomatic of the marketisation of education evident throughout contemporary theoretical discourses (Lynch, 2006). Unfortunately the progression routes of learners who have completed BTEI as recorded are not an accurate reflection, as this report states 2011 saw 362 students progress to further education. However, 1, 717 students registered at the beginning of these courses and so over a thousand are unaccounted. This represents a wide gap in our understanding of the impact of BTEI as a progression route to further education and is a lack of important knowledge for evaluating both the positive impact and the limitations of these courses.

1.4 Access Programmes

The BTEI initiative as described above provides an opportunity for non traditional students to access education on a part-time basis. In recent decades policy makers have prioritised access for those who have traditionally been excluded from third level. The aim is to solve a variety of social issues of non-traditional students through access to education (DES, 2000). In the *Strategic Innovation Fund* (2007, p.205) a central objective is ‘to support access, retention and progression both at individual institutional level and through interinstitutional, sectoral and inter-sectoral collaboration’. The students consistently identified as being under-represented are those from disadvantaged and lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Irish Government White Paper on Adult Education (DES, 2000, p.139-147), *Learning for Life*, identifies the ‘low levels of educational attainment of Irish adults when compared to other industrialised countries’

and notes that HE continues to be dominated by a 'narrow sequential pathway following school'.

In the past decade considerable effort has been made to address the barriers non traditional students experience as preventing access to education and a range of programmes have been developed to address them (HEA, 2008). A National Office of Equity of Access was established in 2003 to oversee access policies and a recent report (HEA, 2008) suggests that the majority of HEA targets have been met. This confirms an increase in mature students, learners with disabilities and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, while the number of students in full-time Higher Education has increased they are still representative of the traditional student and are primarily accessed through traditional means. The large numbers of potential students who are specifically targeted in BTEI and Access Programmes are therefore not engaging with the service. *The Synthesis Report on Tertiary Education* (OECD, 2008, p.35) highlights Ireland as continuing to have one of the lowest median ages for entry to Higher Education. These findings inevitably place question marks over current access policy and its ability to attract mature students to Higher Education.

The present *National Access Plan 2008-2013* (HEA, 2008) aims to build on previous achievements to increase equality and participation in HE. This is combined with the National Development Plan's objectives (2007, p.250) which asserts that::

...by 2013, students with a disability, mature students and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including members of the Travelling Community and refugees, should have adequate opportunities to progress to higher education. Higher education institutions will pro-actively welcome and cater for a fully diverse student population.

The development of Access Programmes within universities and other HEA funded institutions aims at developing supports which will facilitate entry to HE by non-traditional students. The Strategic Innovation Funds play a central role in government policy in support of the Higher Education Programme within the *National Development Plan 2007-2013*. The focus of Access Programmes is to support adult learners in their first year and subsequently throughout their course. According to the HEA report *Towards the Best Education for All: An Evaluation of Access Programmes in Higher Education in Ireland* (2006, p.23), these supports include learning supports, such as the provision of supplementary or complementary tuition, funding assistance and personal contact with the access officer, tutor or mentor. However, mentoring of students has proved most effective as a method of support. The HEA (2006) report cites one third level institution which found that ‘providing student-centred, structured support on an individual basis helps access students to make the transition to higher education and to succeed in their studies’ (HEA, 2006, p.23). These ‘positive relationships’ between tutors, access officers and mentors are considered vital to the success of the adult learners’ engagement with education. This is also informative for an understanding in policy of the importance of relationship and intersubjectivity in the learning process.

However, although these support systems within access routes to HE are a positive and provide the conditions required for recognition and respect they do not challenge the instrumental agenda of these programmes. In the recent HEA (2010) report reviewing the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education: 2008-2013* the role of education is emphasised as crucial to solving the present economic crisis and to return us as a country to ‘a position of growth and prosperity’ (HEA, 2012, p.5). The growth and prosperity however must be considered within the economic agenda of the neoliberal

state as opposed to that particular to the adult learner. Recent publications, such as *Building Ireland's Smart Economy* (2008) and *Innovation Ireland: Report of the Innovation Taskforce* (2010) emphasise the economic imperative for investing in education. The conclusions of the review of the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education: 2008-2013* (HEA, 2010, p.24) aim to build on previous work and ensure that all HEIs 'are contributing to labour market activation'. The focus will remain on those who are traditionally under represented at third level while 'contributing to economic recovery' (HEA, 2010, p.24).

BTEIs and Access Programmes provide an important service to non traditional students returning to education. I have however attempted to demonstrate the economic agenda underpinning these policies whilst also exploring their positive contributions to adult learning. As demonstrated it is clear that non-traditional students are often poorly prepared for Higher Education and lack the support systems of the traditional learner. BTEIs and Access Programmes are vital providers of these support systems. I shall now explore a recent research report concerning both of these issues.

1.5 Retention and Access of Non- Traditional Learners in Higher Education (RANLHE)

This report (2010c) presents the research findings of the experiences and perspectives of non-traditional students in Higher Education. It addresses the issues which contribute and support the non traditional student's successful completion of college and is therefore an important step in the understanding of both access and retention at third level. The project included eight contributors from seven countries: Germany, Ireland, England, Poland, Scotland, Spain and Sweden. Fleming and Finnegan (2010c, pp.106-125), used three sensitizing concepts to access the interviewees' experiences – habitus, transitional space

and recognition. Although all three are of interest to adult educators the concept of recognition, as introduced in the previous chapter, is of relevance to this thesis. Fleming & Finnegan (2010c, p.108) particularly focus on recognition as interpreted by Axel Honneth and his theory of recognition underpins the research findings. The consequences of a lack of recognition and disrespect are present throughout the research findings and interviews clearly demonstrate the importance of intersubjective recognition for a successful college experience.

Both the sensitizing concept of recognition and the use of biographical narrative research to access student experiences are of importance for this research study. The use of this method of research is proposed as the most useful for accessing learner's perspectives and experiences and as such is of interest to my research as the interviewees are representative of the participants in this research in a few years time. Similarly, there is a recurrent theme of self-esteem in the interviews which supports my research findings in this study. According to Fleming & Finnegan;

This initial lack of confidence was often the legacy of negative experiences in compulsory education which led students at the very least to think of themselves as not the "type" of person who should be in Higher Education or even in some cases to consider themselves "stupid". Often this is where the social class dimensions of the participants' learner identity was most clearly evident.
(2010c, p.117)

As discussed previously an understanding of HE as an interpersonal space is central to this research study. The above findings in Fleming and Finnegan (2010c) stress the importance of relationship in the formation of identity and for the learning journey. This is evident in the previous discussion of the positive results learners' experienced through the support of tutors or mentors on Access Programmes. Similarly, the BTEI initiative is

one which prepares the adult student for the challenges ahead. According to Fleming and Finnegan;

Some students had very limited information before embarking upon their studies. This manifested itself in four ways. Firstly, unrealistic expectations about the workload and/or benefits of a course. Secondly, struggling with academic demands for which they were not prepared and thirdly, though this was not common, finding themselves on a course that was not sufficiently challenging academically. Fourthly, a small number of non-traditional students were unaware of institutional and state supports.

(2010c, p.115)

I believe these findings will be informative for my research as these are the issues which also present themselves at the pre access level of BTEI and continue during Access. It often takes the academic year for a student to come to terms with the fact that she is considering a third level education. Throughout this time she will question her right to go to college and repeatedly state that she lacks the ability to succeed. However, with support and encouragement and with the experience of success, confidence and ability grow. These research findings confirm the important role courses such as BTEI can play when they assist the learner to prepare for third level.

1.5 Where are we now? The Political is Personal

It is clearly shown in the literature that government policy on lifelong learning is generally critiqued for imposing instrumentalist values on a humanistic project. The political is clearly personal as the consequences of the subsequent education policy demonstrate and education becomes the process of human resource management for the labour market. A particular tension inherent to such policies is the danger of social marginalisation being increasingly recognised as an individual problem rather than one resulting from the unequal distribution of societal resources. Policy is generated from the top down in order to solve current problems and this requires a reversal if learner needs are to be recognised and returned to the agenda. Individuals are not the same and as such

have a wide variety of needs and goals. As such, because an individual is marginalised, unemployed, dyslexic or an early school leaver does not automatically mean that they also identify themselves with this group. The assumption that people from the same community or group are the same and have the same needs, and problems, is one which neglects the fact of human difference and that a single set of solutions will not address all problems. An education system which only focuses on social inclusion attempts only to bring these individuals back to society without interrogating or exploring the issues which caused their initial marginalisation. In this way society remains unchanged and unchallenged, and education loses the value of being an end in itself.

The commodification of education presents key questions for the type of learning carried out within the classroom, as adult educators must increasingly achieve specified learning outcomes. Who creates the curriculum? Who is it serving? What does this imply for the type of learning experienced? In this chapter I have attempted to address these questions and draw attention to the identification of learner issues as a long term dialogical process engaged in with the learner as opposed to imposed from beyond the classroom. I wonder at the differences in an education which seeks to empower the individual so that she can carve a secure place for herself within democratic society and the Freirean education which challenged and transformed society to meet collective needs. In a letter in *The Irish Left Review* (Loxley et al, 2011) Loxley, Seery and Walsh send a scathing reply to an earlier article by Dublin City University. DCU's letter outlined the university's intention to base its courses on the values of neoliberalism and as such focus its educational development on the entrepreneurial value of courses offered. The response to this letter by Loxley et al is representative of the challenge facing adult education today.

A one-dimensional theory of education has gained ground over the past decade – asserting that the needs of the economy should be the main (and preferably the

sole) priority of higher education. The wider concerns and demands of civil society (not to mention the mission of universities as liberal educational institutions) are automatically subordinated to the short-term economic imperative.

(Loxley et al, 2011)

These words echo the concepts in Sennett (1999, 2006, 2012) concerning the subordination of culture and community to the new capitalism and its market oriented social policy. In Sennett the arrangement of time that allows the coherent life narrative of the individual to become meaningful has been sabotaged through the neoliberal discourse of short term economic gain and the subsequent fragmentation of institutions and state bodies. The consequence for the individual is that the increasing illegibility and insecurity of modern living reduces the ability to interpret life experiences and the individual's personal worth is damaged. The increasing emphasis upon economic productivity as a symbol of worth means that those who cannot earn their dignity in this way fail to achieve respect. Similarly, an instrumental policy of education subordinating civil society to the economy is not conducive to the formation of relationships essential for the intersubjective experience of recognition. In Honneth (1997, p.20) the individual is 'recognised as a person whose capabilities are of constitutive value to a concrete community'. In this way society allows the individual to earn self-esteem through work and contribution to the community. A neoliberal policy of education which promotes the individual as worker serves to emphasise that this is the accepted way to achieve social recognition and so excudes those who fail to achieve in this area.

The instrumental and market oriented focus of policy discussed in this chapter has enormous implications for how the learner is perceived and engaged with, and therefore has serious consequences for how the adult learner experiences respect and recognition within such an economically based system. According to Fleming;

Lifelong learning needs to be reclaimed from the functional, the instrumental, the economic and the one dimensional to mean a right to learn all that it is possible to learn.

(2004, p.13)

The experiences of adult learners, such as those explored in this thesis, provide essential knowledge for policy makers. The lived experience of these second chance learners offer a wealth of information for policy makers to explore possibilities and question existing policy to find out what is missing. Each of the individuals in this research have emphasised the importance of respect and dignity for a successful learning experience. As such, neoliberal focused policy creation, with its bureaucratic, quantitative, market oriented education programmes runs the risk of alienating those adults it wishes to engage. The findings of this research concerning the experiences and aims of the adult learner will be explored against this educational policy.

Chapter II

Conceptual Framework

In the following pages I will explore the theory that informs my research. I will introduce Richard Sennett and present respect and its central role in the formation of personal worth. Sennett's writing will also inform my analysis of the research findings. For Sennett the struggle for respect is the struggle for personal worth and equality; a personal struggle that occurs through relationship. Axel Honneth's recognition theory asserts that respect, autonomy, freedom and self-realisation can only be achieved intersubjectively, through the process of being recognised by others as individuals of worth and value. Both Sennett and Honneth emphasise the corrosive effects of capitalism on the individual's need for self esteem and personal worth. In Sennett (2006) respect is the casualty as neoliberal discourses and values further obfuscate the world we live in and isolate individuals from the world around them, thereby limiting the formation of the relationships essential for personal worth and the experience of respect.

The adult learners I meet are more than familiar with the language of respect and self esteem and it is my expectation that the research findings in this study will demonstrate their perception of the lack of formal education as a key factor in their struggles. It interests me that in student discussions of the access route to college academic concerns take a back seat to personal well-being and development. The most frequent discussions amongst adult learners focus upon making sense of their lives. Education is considered by many to be a first step towards gaining control of a life that previously both overwhelmed and confused. Learners have often remarked to me that returning to education is their method of fighting the fear in life. It offers both a sense of self and the status of a professional career. Without formal education they feel less than, a loss of self. A return

to learning is often an attempt to recreate a sense of self along new paradigms of respect and to author a life beyond the domination of fear. I want to investigate my perceived link between respect and education. In the eyes of adult learners marginalisation is not only a reflection of social class but of character (Sennett, 2004, p.182). In the following pages I will attempt to position these ideas within a conceptual framework that will inform my understanding of respect and my interpretation of the research data.

2.1 Richard Sennett & Respect

The American sociologist Richard Sennett has enjoyed a career spanning the decades since the late 1960s. Since that time Sennett has written and published numerous literary works in fiction and sociology and his work has had a consistent thread that is relevant to my argument. In each decade Sennett has explored a set of related contexts in which respect is either achieved or not in society. In this introduction I will attempt to give a brief outline of Sennett's work and his recurrent theme of inequality and respect that is most relevant to my argument and I will position Sennett's research as relevant to Honneth's struggle for recognition.

What I want to show is how society goes about searching for this ideal man or woman. And I'll step beyond the scholar's remit in judging that search. A self oriented to the short term, focused on potential ability, willing to abandon past experience is – to put a kindly face on the matter – an unusual sort of human being. Most people are not like this; they take pride in being good at something specific, and they value the experiences they've lived through. The cultural ideal required in new institutions thus damages many of the people who inhabit them.

(Sennett, 2006, p.5)

This quote from *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (2006) captures the reasons for my interest in Sennett's research. Contemporary society places expectations upon the individual which the majority is incapable of achieving. The search for the 'ideal man or woman' and the ensuing damage when an individual internalises an unachievable or unhealthy image of how she should be, is an oft occurring conversation within my classroom. The image of a successful individual has become difficult to attain. Sennett's

research is an echo of the themes and stories with which I am repeatedly confronted with inner city Dublin. The research method of Sennett's inquiry is the life narrative. He positions the individual within a social and cultural context which encompasses the problematisation of daily life that, in my view, is so central to critical pedagogy.

Sennett's thesis is a valuable reading of how respect is experienced in society over the previous five decades. Sennett's in depth investigation of both the forms and interpretations of respect in contemporary society and its effect upon the subjective experiences and identity formation of the individual are of enormous value, particularly at this time of recession and high unemployment. Sennett's work will be the sensitising framework for my exploration of a contemporary understanding of respect within the key areas of personal worth, the new capitalism, work in the new capitalism, and community as the site of adult education. I shall now explore the connections between respect and personal worth in Sennett.

Respect & Personal Worth

I argue here that the human being develops in relation to others and that this has implications for teaching and learning. Sennett's (2004) exploration of the subjective reality of those he interviews highlights the importance of relationship for recognition and respect; the two being mutual and interdependent. Sennett (2004, p.59) describes respect as being 'both socially and psychologically complex'; it is upon the foundation of respect that recognition rests and equally respect requires recognition. As the identity of the individual is formed through the process of socialisation, the individual thus both reflects and internalises the beliefs and values they experience. The majority of adult learners I meet in my work have had negative and often abusive relationships with

teachers, and others, in the past. If the behaviour of others towards the self gives the individual the sense of her value, her 'personal worth' (Sennett, 1972, p.183) then mistreatment will also have implications for the learner's return to education and how she perceives her ability to learn. The individual's sense of value is therefore of primary importance to an authentic exploration of respect in the adult classroom. Furthermore, how the individual experiences this value is embedded within her life experience.

Respect & Equality

In sum, if behaviour which expresses respect is often scant and unequally distributed in society, what respect itself means is both socially and psychologically complex. As a result, the acts which convey respect – the acts of acknowledging others – are demanding and obscure.

(Sennett, 2004, p. 59)

Sennett considers an in depth inquiry into respect (1972; 2004) to be a fundamental social value implicit to the process of developing self worth and of development itself. Respect, respect of oneself and of others, is a key element of Sennett's research. It is through respect given and respect received that we enter the relationship of recognition of both self and others. This is a universal human value that reaches far beyond the particular. However, respect cannot grow in an environment where only few are applauded and only this few have the means to gain and give respect.

In *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1972) Sennett explores the effects of class on the lives of the working class people he interviews. He uncovers a repetitive feeling of inadequacy and vulnerability that is interpreted as a personal failing as opposed to the consequence of living in a class society (1972, p.25). The working class individuals Sennett interviews take their class positions personally (p.29) and in so doing perceive their social position as not only their own 'burden' (p.149) but a matter of 'character' (p.149). As the society in which they struggle is one of "equal opportunity" the reflection is solely upon them for

occupying the low position. According to Sennett's research, 'the "lower" a man defines himself in society in relation to other people, the more it seems his fault' (1972, p.96). Class is the personal responsibility of the individual and causes an enormous amount of shame. Personal worth is thus interpreted from social position. I believe this concept to be central to this study. The participants in this research each come from a working class background and are the first of their families to attend third level education. This achievement presents opportunities for social mobility that a lack of education denied. Furthermore, the respect gained from this achievement has implications for self worth. I am curious to find out if this is a motivation for education that will surface during interview, as until now it has only been framed by learners as a journey of self development.

Sennett equates the expression of equality in capitalist society as 'a dilemma of personal worth' (1972, p.183). He writes: 'Modern society lacks positive expressions of respect and recognition for others' (2004, p.xv). In Sennett's research the so-called 'dilemma' of personal worth is coupled with the way in which society interprets and accords respect to its individuals;

Equality of opportunity is not, therefore, an ideal framed to encourage men who are frustrated, defeated or unsure of themselves. It is at best a message that, were society fair, they would have a chance to escape being nobodies.

(Sennett, 1972, p.183)

The 'nobody' is the antithesis of the 'somebody'. To be considered 'somebody' in modern society is to wear the badge of success that financial achievement or unique ability allows. In order to gain the respect and recognition of those around us the individual must first be somebody. The tension between respect and equality requires a balance that will not be found in equality of opportunity but in equality of persons. To respect others as persons, as individuals deserving of respect, is to accord respect

regardless of ones situation in life. Sennett explores this ‘difficulty of showing respect across the boundaries of inequality’ (2004, p.23) and of how to ‘cross the boundaries of inequality with mutual respect’ (2004, p.21). He concludes that in both cases ‘true mutuality is lacking’ (2004, p.21), as to attempt respect in an unequal setting silences the voices present and gives precedence to the ‘fear of offending’ (2004, p.21).

Frank Risarro & Respect

The individuals Sennett (1972, p.73) interviews bear witness to a social hierarchy that allows fewer people to develop the personal resources that society values. Fear, powerlessness and vulnerability are the overriding emotions as individuals attempt to find some personal control over lives within which they feel passive (Sennett, 1972, p.35). However, although those at the bottom of the social hierarchy are more powerless and vulnerable than those higher up, it is the nature of a class society for these feelings to pervade each of its members. It is my “suspicion” that this concept in Sennett has definite implications for the adult learners in this research who, as socially and economically marginalised early school leavers, may have been more vulnerable to these feelings of powerlessness in their lives. Sennett writes that;

...everyone in this society, rich and poor, plumber and professor, is subject to a scheme of values that tells him he must validate the self in order to win other’s respect and his own.

(1972, p.75)

Sennett acknowledges that plumber and professor will have different experiences of both social values and the process of gaining respect due to their social positions. No individual is immune to the corrosive elements of a neoliberal capitalist society; successful entrepreneur or working class individual, the search for self validation and the encompassing fears this search produces are incompatible with a healthy sense of self and personal worth.

Sennett's (1972) interview with Frank Risarro reveals the haunting sense of illegitimacy the individual can feel as a result of background that even a successful career and family life cannot erase. Risarro's entrance into middle class suburbia is a fact he pronounces as good luck. He considers himself a passive agent in the story of his personal success due to his feeling of inadequacy. When attempting to improve his situation in life Frank's model was one which allowed him little internal respect and culturally increased his sense of inadequacy as he continued to feel an outsider in his own life. In order to escape the life of a 'nobody' and become 'somebody' Frank worked his way from working class poverty to middleclass suburbia.

Freire (2006, p.27) writes that the contradictions inherent in choosing to follow a model of being that holds no respect is an indicator of the conditioning of thought; 'Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity'. Importantly, he continues to say that despite the above contradiction the oppressed are aware that they are oppressed although 'their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression' (2006, p.27). This dichotomy that Frank experiences is the legacy of a social system intertwined and dominated by capitalistic doctrine. The identity of the individual is thus subsumed in an image of success that for many is an unachievable fantasy. Society thereby limits the freedom of its members to develop (Sennett, 1972, p.78) thus leaving them victim of circumstance whilst promulgating a freedom based on equal opportunity.

An Accursed Freedom

This freedom we so cherish in a capitalist system is one that Sennett describes as ‘an accursed freedom’ (1972, p.74). This is not the freedom of authentic human emancipation but represents the freedom of the market, the freedom to buy and sell, to work and shop. Freedom not only involves choices but also ‘the development of human resources of men and women’ (Sennett, 1972, p.74). It is a freedom that equips both to move in the world and contribute to the world as an agentic sovereign human being. However, according to Sennett, ‘class distinctions in both productive and emotional terms’ (1972, p.74) limit the individual when her work or social position fails to express the uniqueness required to win the respect of others. Encompassing these distinctions is ‘a morality of shaming and self-doubt’ (1972, p.74) that causes the individual’s life situation to be perceived as a reflection of her own worth and abilities. ‘These feelings amount to a sense that the ‘lower’ a man defines himself in society in relation to other people, the more it seems his fault’ (Sennett, 1972, p.96). The individual stands accused of all limitations and social inequality continues unchallenged.

In the face of the social message of freedom and equal opportunity for all, responsibility for experience and development is the domain of the individual. This is evident in Friedman’s flat world (2007) where neoliberal policies and practices are praised for breaking down barriers and creating opportunity. However, neither the world nor people are flat. We live in a multi dimensional world of multiple realities where opportunity is not equal as individual lives are so varied and few have the middle class foundations that support success in a neoliberal world. Left with so few options, those who have not or can not, perceive freedom as something which can be increased by moving to a higher class (1972, p.49). This sentiment is expressed repeatedly in Sennett’s interviews (1972) when a generation of parents consider their children as not only a hope for the future but

also a path to respect. While interviewing Enrico Sennett (1972, p.49) senses that he has given up on himself and believes that if his children can move up the social ladder he can still acquire dignity in the eyes of others. This form of pseudo respect, respect or status gained through the actions of another, is all that is left when the individual believes the position they occupy is static and without option for fulfilment.

Social Character

The aims of the individuals Sennett interviews are those of respect and human dignity and are not far removed from the conversations of adult learners returning to education. In order to be validated the individual must adapt to the values of the social system within which she lives. The authentic expression of the individual is then buried behind the social construction of a social self whose primary aim is survival in an ever changing system of insecurity and competition. In *The Sane Society* (2002) Erich Fromm describes the development of what he terms the 'social character'. The social character reflects the characteristics and personality traits valued by a culture. This concept forms;

...the nucleus of the character structure which is shared by most members of the same culture in contradistinction to the individual character in which people belonging to the same culture differ from each other.

(Fromm, 2002, p.76)

Fromm bases his analysis of the social character upon the concept of the individual's alienated state of existence within society. This imbalance results in a disengagement of the individual's humanity as a form of self protection. The combined results of an increasingly difficult search for validation and the withdrawal of 'the real self' (Sennett, 1972, p.204) can result in emotional detachment. Achievement therefore opens the way to emotional authenticity which prior to this may leave the individual vulnerable. Sennett writes: 'If this is true of social equals, how much more is it true of those who are of unequal class, of a high school principal or teacher dealing with his students, a labourer

with his foreman' (1972, p.233). I anticipate this research may yield interesting results regarding being true to oneself and authenticity. Adult learners consistently express an increased sense of self and less concern with how others view them as they progress on their learning journey. Patrick Flanagan (Sennett, 1972, p.232) expresses this dilemma when he describes a successful professional career as giving him the freedom to 'really be me'. Patrick attributes a successful career as essential to being fully him self. This is similar to the comments adult learners make in the context of education and I hope the interviews will generate feedback for the increased sense of self experienced through engagement with education.

Conclusion:

The American philosopher, William James, writes;

Properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any one of these his images is to wound him.

(1968, p.294)

The rejection implicit in a failure in any aspect of life coupled with the feeling of personal responsibility mystifies the power that judges. Social responsibility is negated and reality is affirmed as a constant that supersedes the needs of its individuals. In order to understand more fully the struggle for respect the adult learner engages in it is necessary to interrogate and attempt to unveil this system within which she is judged. In the following section I will explore the new capitalism and its consequences for the experience of respect for these adult learners.

Respect & The New Capitalism

In the following pages I will present Richard Sennett's research on the affects of the new capitalism, more often referred to now as neoliberal capitalism, for an understanding of

how the interpretation of respect in this new capitalism affects the individual and therefore the adult learner. It is Sennett's (1972, 2004, 2006) contention that respect is a casualty of capitalism – whether early, late or neoliberal. I am curious to find out if Sennett's exploration of the new capitalism has implications for the research participants and if their experiences are similar to the individuals Sennett interviews. Although I continue to refer to Sennett's work that is pre-neoliberal, such as *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1972) and *The Uses of Disorder* (1970), it is my argument that these works were produced at a time of change, a moment in history where one form of capitalism was being slowly replaced by another. David Harvey (2007, p.1) describes the end of this decade as 'a revolutionary turning-point in the world's social and economic history'. This period of Sennett's work shares exciting time and social context with other important theorists such as Paulo Freire and Erich Fromm and as such these early works are important for understanding how we came to be where we are now.

Neoliberalism

Sennett's work is in essence a critique of the effects of an unaccountable capitalist system on the condition of the individual (2006, p.12). His thesis questions the existing economic model and the value system upon which it is based and addresses the complexities and authentic needs of the individual that cannot be fulfilled through market growth, arguments that echo Erich Fromm's writing in the *Sane Society* (2002). Issues of character, respect, usefulness, community and identity are threads that weave a pattern through Sennett's writing. This pattern is one of the oppression of the individual in favour of the economy and it draws the eye to the centre of the weave wherein lies the market, alongside progress and growth, while faceless individuals flounder on the edges. Neoliberal ideology has here become the guiding force, both economically and socially.

In Sennett neoliberalism has an enormous impact on how individual's experience respect and recognition in society, as transactions replace relationships in people's dealing with one another (2006, p.25). This is hugely important for the issue of respect which is achieved through human relationship and carries echoes of the educational turn towards increased technological reliance. As opposed to the state setting limits on market power in favour of the social good it is now the economy to which we turn to solve social problems. In effect it is market needs first and citizen second, or dare I say consumer? Sennett (2006, p.13) writes of neoliberalism that the 'apostles of the new capitalism argue that their version of these three subjects – work, talent, consumption – adds up to more freedom in modern society..'. Sennett's challenge to neoliberalism however, is that 'these changes have not set people free' (2006, p.13). This is the freedom of the market – the freedom to buy and to consume. Furthermore; 'In this talent cull those judged without inner resources are left in limbo. They can be judged no longer useful or valuable, despite what they have accomplished' (Sennett, 2006, p.130).

Alienation & the Citizen Consumer

The consequences of a neoliberal agenda are therefore all encompassing and affect the individual in a number of ways. In Sennett human beings are naturally goal orientated; we are creators, and yet when we believe our lives are beyond our control we live in a reality that is increasingly insecure and overwhelmed by anxiety (1999). Personal goals are the product of a value system situated within a cultural context. The value system within our present social neoliberal context is one which revolves around money and all that it can buy. The new capitalism and globalisation offer the illusion that happiness can be found within the market and a particular lifestyle that can be bought.

In my experience the adult learners who return to education have been excluded from the promised financial rewards that are mostly the result of professional careers but this does not mean that they have escaped its repercussions. The majority of adult learners I meet rarely have bank accounts and usually rely on local credit unions and loan companies to maintain their lifestyles. I have found that the more marginalised the individual the deeper is the effect of consumerism. I have often had conversations with students who could not pay bills or rent because the small amount of money received was prioritised for branded luxury items. These items I believe serve to act as armour to protect the individual and restore respect and personal worth.

The demands of the new capitalism thus tie each individual to a way of being that both limits and distorts authentic human relations. Human life does not score very high on the global market as its value can be increasingly equated, and reduced, to its economic potential. As opposed to previous generations who lived in a world where life allowed a 'linear narrative' (Sennett, 1998, p.16), survival in the age of neoliberalism is predominated by an 'emotional, inner life adrift' (Sennett, 1998, p.20). 'Conspicuous consumption,' declares Sennett (1972, p.161), 'on the part of the rich sets the standard for all the people in a society'. Furthermore, the need to consistently improve and replace the item consumed, the idea of 'destructive replacement' (1972, p.162), propagates the circle of consumption. Inherent to the success of consumption in all of its forms is the sense of personal worth and respect derived from a high level of comfort.

Disrespect as Indifference

In his lecture in the New York Salon, *Reflections on the Future* (Richard Sennett, 2008a) Sennett elaborates on the consequences of the new capitalism for both the democratic state and its citizenry; 'Modern institutions appear omnipotent in their power and are increasingly indifferent to ordinary people and whom they deal with'. The new capitalism is an 'illegible regime of power' (Sennett, 1998, p.10) and this is nowhere more true than in the functioning of its institutions. These are hierarchical structures that mirror and promote the values of the new capitalism as they 'focus only on the top; only on the elite' (Sennett, 2008a). The result of this for those not in the elite minority according to Sennett, is that people are treated 'not with disrespect in the sense of being insulting, although of course that can happen, but with indifference' (2008a). However, I would argue that indifference founded upon a perception of equality that is manifested in social status is fundamentally disrespectful. The assertion (Friedmann, 2007, p.7) that we now take part on a level playing field assumes more than equal opportunity for all. This ideological assumption is founded upon the blindness of those who have and ignores those who have not.

Multinational corporations and institutions are increasingly more powerful and present in the daily life of the individual. In order to make this change appear more personal and therefore more acceptable, positive demonstrations of concern and support for employees is the new public face of large corporations. In *The Irish Times* article dated 13th September, 2011, the journalist, Finton O'Toole, draws attention to the British broadband company TalkTalk's 'Brighter Basics' values and their contrast to the treatment of employees. The 'Brighter Basics' are the five core values that defined the kind of team TalkTalk aspired to be and involved a constant rhetoric of employee value and inclusivity. Unfortunately, regardless of the weekly blog with the CEO, Dido Harding,

and despite being a valued member of the FTSE4Good index, the British company very suddenly announced a redundancy notice for 575 employees. This announcement came without any involvement with government bodies or state agencies which could have attempted to create alternatives and involved no discussion with employees. Despite the 'Brighter Basics' values TalkTalk merely announced it was closing its doors within 4 weeks. O'Toole quotes Barry O'Leary of the IDA when he writes: it was 'as bad as it gets in terms of company behaviour'. This complete reversal of company policy should come as no surprise when we remember that this is a demonstration of the new capitalism's value system. This subversion of authentic human values by the new capitalism's need to extend market dominance has resulted in a watering down of values essential to human well being. TalkTalk never 'talked' with its employees and used the 'Brighter Basics' values as a show to create a positive image and acquire points on the stock market. Democratic participation and the rights of citizens are now widely interpreted as consumer rights and freedom has become equated with economic activity.

Conclusion:

In this section I have explored a reading of Sennett which demonstrates how neoliberal policies have allowed for the dominance of capital in social relations and reduced the human agency that is essential for equality and respect. I anticipate that these concepts will have implications for the identity formation and development of the individual before, during and after her engagement with adult education. Neoliberalism undermines the democratic and participative ideology underpinning adult education in favour of education as a space for human resource development. In the following section, *Respect and Work in the New Capitalism*, I shall further explore Richard Sennett's study on the effects of modern work practices on the personal worth of the individual.

Respect and Work in the New Capitalism

As opposed to being an end in itself, work has altered in its function over the years to become the avenue through which the individual seeks validation. It is with this in mind that I want to explore how Sennett locates respect and disrespect in the workplace and the subsequent consequences for the individual, both personally and socially. I believe this will be essential for both interpreting and accessing the experience of respect of the adult learner who has often endured work that she believed to be undignified or alternatively long term unemployment.

No Long Term

The obvious impact of the slogan ‘no long term’ is its effect on the working life of the individual. The example of Rico in Sennett’s writing echoes the reality of a turbulent and insecure majority struggling to survive in the short-term. According to Sennett;

Today, a young American with at least two years of college can expect to change jobs at least eleven times in the course of working, and change his or her skill base at least three times during those forty years of labour.

(1999, p.22)

It is the requirement of the modern economy, to be all to all, the veritable chameleon, that proves so detrimental to ethical human life. ‘No long term’ has indeed far wider implications than a career characterised by multiple jobs or increased insecurity. Market demands, fear of job loss, technological developments, flexibility and fast changing networks have far reaching effects as the values they incorporate are continuously shifting and adapting to market needs. The requirement to adapt to the market in the work environment requires and values a flexibility which in other areas of life is undesirable. I anticipate that this dilemma will be present in the research findings, particularly amongst the interviewees who have recently left the workforce. It is also precisely this dilemma which causes Rico so much concern as the disparity between his work life and the ethical

values he wishes to impart to his children leave him without example as a father (1999, p.21).

The contrast between the values of previous generations and that of the new capitalism are as black and white. Sennett describes the type of individual who can cope with the far reaching impact of these changes as 'an ideal self' (2006, p.41). This ideal self however, would not only be unrecognisable to Enrico, the janitor in 1970s Boston, but could perhaps equally mystify the more contemporary Rico, Enrico's son. The ideal human being required by the values of the new capitalism mirrors these same values as it is 'a self oriented to the short term, focused on potential ability, willing to abandon past experience' (Sennett, 2006, p.5), in short 'an unusual sort of human being' (Sennett, 2006, p.50). However, the majority of human beings are neither ideal nor of superhero status. I anticipate that this 'dignity of work' and its 'unequal consequences' as expressed above in Sennett will have relevance for the stories the adult learners share during the interview process. They have lived lives that are far from ideal and no doubt will have many experiences in their working lives that demonstrate the unequal consequences of both a lack of work and work that they feel is undignified or not suited to their abilities. Sennett describes it as a 'principle which corrodes trust, loyalty and mutual commitment' (1999, p.24). Friendship, trust and loyalty take time to develop and so as time is unavailable within the new capitalism then so too are social bonds. However, for Sennett it is teamwork which embodies so much of what is questionable within the new capitalism's institutions and reduces human relations to a farce (1999, p.106).

Teamwork

It is teamwork for Sennett which represents the antithesis of the old work ethic and 'takes us into that domain of demeaning superficiality which besets the modern workplace' (1999, p.106). This superficiality is characterised by polite conversation, a lack of difference and an avoidance of all things personal. This is quite different to the dialogical focus of adult education where adults engage in discussion concerning personal issues and challenges in the addressing of the 'personal as political' and vice versa. Team work in adult education and team work in the workplace espouse differing values with different intentions. Sennett argues that these elements coupled with a focus on flexibility and change combine to increase levels of anxiety within work as even minor incidents are open to interpretation as the lines of colleague and competitor are regularly blurred. Valued character traits of flexibility, weak bonds and a willingness to abandon the past can only serve to increase levels of insecurity within the work environment as there remains no consistency in a system that supplies no foundation.

Authority

The old order had a recognisable system of authority that is absent within the modern team, as leader has become facilitator. This absence of an authority figure is all in the spirit of equality and yet has the greater benefit of allowing management to avoid accountability. In this way 'power is present in the superficial scenes of teamwork, but authority is absent' (1999, p.114). The absence of authority has cumulative implications for the employee and leaves her more vulnerable as it plays into the hands of corporate interests. Sennett describes this absence as allowing 'those in control to shift, adapt, reorganise without having to justify themselves or their acts. In other words, it permits freedom of the moment, a focus just on the present' (1999, p.115). However, authority in modern working life is made increasingly illegible by the abandonment of the old

communication system in favour of the inter office email service and computer surveillance systems.

Sennett uses the example of the Watson School to demonstrate how the issue of power and authority is transferred to the individual within the classroom. He writes that the 'superior "gets away with" restricting the freedom of someone in his charge by replacing the problem of limited freedom with the problem of the inferior person asserting his own dignity' (1972, p.89). This situation in the school demonstrates how power can be legitimised without the use of force 'but rather by a subtle and delicate balance' (Sennett, 1972, p.89). This behaviour, Sennett writes, is symptomatic of the failure to take action against a superior authority both in school and in work. The boys do not conflict with the school but merely accept their lot until they can leave and begin to live. This absence of presence at school is mirrored both in the stories of Sennett's interviewees and by adult learners discussing childhood memories of school.

User-friendly Work

When Sennett returned to the bakery he had visited in 1972 it was over twenty years later and much had changed. It had altered from a primarily Greek shop with inherited positions to a silent machine run place of part time flexible schedules. The bakery had discovered technology and baking had been simplified to the extent that few in the shop could bake. Sennett writes however that the workers felt a loss of dignity in the work; 'operationally everything is so clear; emotionally, so illegible' (2004, p.68). The bakers' tasks had become mindless and as a result the attachment of the workers to their work was minimal. Sennett describes the workers as having weak work identities (1999, p.70) due to this lack of attachment to their work. This assertion of Sennett leads me to wonder

at the identity of the research participants as students; is student identity experienced as something strong and deeply attached to the experience of learning? I believe the interviews will answer this question.

It is the inability to influence or contribute to solving a problem that highlights the lack of relevance the individual perceives in this situation and results in a superficial sense of the working self. Marx writes: 'The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things' (Marx, 1997, p.117). As demands for increased consumption increase technology has become all important in the act of creation while the individual has become superfluous. Yes, the machine requires an individual to work it but it does not require a specific individual; people are now easier to replace than machines. This easy replacement of the individual has consequences for her personal worth and sense of value as it is based upon a misrecognition of value in the eyes of another.

Lack of Work & Respect

In modern society respect is achieved through individual success and the area of paid work is the hallmark of achievement. And yet, if ability is how we demonstrate our personal worth, what becomes of the individual who is denied the opportunity to demonstrate her ability through her work? The majority of participants in this research are unemployed, some long-term, and as such I believe the concepts present in Sennett's investigation of unemployment in the new capitalism will be relevant to their experiences. However distasteful welfare may be Sennett reminds us that self-sufficient is not equal to self-respect. Respect cannot be earned in the same way that the individual

earns money. Instead, the path to self-respect in work is also subject to the nature of the position in work and how the role is fulfilled. It is here that the long term unemployed, the older person and the unprofessional have the most to lose from a return to work and this can often be the reason for remaining on welfare.

I believe this concept in Sennett will be present in the interviews with students as adult learners are consistent in asserting their preference for social welfare to that of work they believe to be unsuitable for them or demeaning. This is not usually related to position within work such as labourer or cleaner but to how the individual is treated and related to by those around her. The right not to work in this case has implications for respect and recognition of the individual. Sennett writes: 'Welfare reformers have imagined that in forcing people to work, a demeaning chapter would close in their lives' (2004, p.116). However, "the inferiority complex", as Sennett describes the individual's consciousness of others, is not cured by the entrance into unskilled labour or a position that leaves the individual vulnerable. He continues to stress that the fact that this individual is likely 'to be at the bottom of the occupation heap will breed a sense of inferiority'. Paid work is as such no guarantee for respect and the removal from welfare to work can often be equally as traumatic: 'Status in work comes from being more than just a "pair of hands"' (Sennett, 1999, p.120).

Craft

Craftwork certainly does not banish invidious comparison to the work of others; it does refocus a person's energies, however, to getting an act right in itself, for oneself. The craftsman can sustain his or her self-respect in an unequal world.
(Sennett, 2004, p.99)

Sennett's remedy for the previously discussed automated form of meaningless labour and the above feeling of being just a "pair of hands" is craft. Craft is often understood as the

sole dominion of artisans and we can easily imagine the independent craftsperson at her labour in her workshop. Sennett however, challenges this outdated view and ascribes to craftsmanship a more inclusive interpretation that 'names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake' (2009, p.9). In so doing Sennett extends our understanding of craft to a more contemporary use, one which 'serves the computer programmer, the doctor and the artist; parenting improves when it is practiced as a skilled craft, as does citizenship' (2009, p.9).

For Sennett craft evokes the values and engagement with work that are all too lacking in the new capitalism. It involves learned or taught practice, the thinking process and both problem solving and problem finding. It involves those elements of the individual that mind numbing work ignores. Through practice the individual craftsperson perfects her craft and achieves autonomy. The implications for Sennett are extended to parenthood and citizenship; success does not merely happen, it is acquired (I will explore this further in the following section). It is also a natural pursuit as it 'names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake' (2009, p.9). This human impulse further engages the entire human being and so the injuries sustained in mindless labour are removed. Pride in a job well done provides the emotional dimension that is lacking within many jobs in the new capitalism 'as people can feel fully and think deeply what they are doing once they do it well' (2009, p.20). In these ways craft acts as a remedy for the ills of work in the new capitalism. It not only increases social inclusion but also offers the moral dimension that is so lacking in the institutions of the new capitalism that are so focused on competition and individual achievement. As such, Sennett's discussion of craft and its emphasis on cooperation and democratic participation has implications for adult education and the type of learning that is considered a craft.

Conclusion:

Sennett describes what people need most as ‘a mental and emotional anchor; they need values which assess whether changes in work, privilege and power are worthwhile’ (2006, p.183). The individual needs something to protect from the fear that overwhelms in modern daily living; a way of coping that engages not absents. Day to day living is an increasingly difficult juggling act that demands so much of the person there is little left. In this next and final section on the work of Richard Sennett I will explore his writing on cooperation and community and their relevance for democratic participation and adult education.

Respect and Community

One of the unintended consequences of modern capitalism is that it has strengthened the value of place, aroused a longing for community. All the emotional conditions we have explored in the workplace animate that desire: the uncertainties of flexibility; the absence of deeply rooted trust and commitment; the superficiality of teamwork; most of all, the spectre of failing to make something of oneself in the world, to “get a life” through one’s work. All these conditions impel people to look for some other scene of attachment and depth.

(Sennett, 1999, p.138)

In this section I will explore Sennett’s treatment of community and its importance for the relationships within which respect and recognition are experienced. As an educator my reading of community in Sennett is reflective of what occurs in the adult education classroom. His thesis stresses the central importance of the engagement of the individual in community for the exercise of citizenship and the practice of participative democracy. It is my contention that adult education plays a vital role in creating the type of community Sennett describes as critical for citizenship and democracy.

Modern Community

Sennett critiques the modern sanitising experience of the communal space that acts as a homogeneous buffer against a fragmented and diverse world. He laments the loss of a diverse and complex urban space that both challenged and made the individual uncomfortable. Community has thus for Sennett become a space that offers to the individual a haven from a world where the short term reigns supreme. Involvement in homogenous community life functions to increase the individual's feeling of agency and counteracts the overwhelming feeling of loss of control that is so prevalent in today's society. This sanitised form of community provides an avenue for the individual to be recognised as a distinctive human being amongst similar beings whilst also gaining the long term witnesses to a life narrative that is absent in modern working life. Similarly, this form of community offers a rare consistency in relationships that is so often lacking in work and enhances the individual's sense of belonging, as similarity allows the term "we" to flourish. It is the microcosm that eschews all difference and coalesces around commonalities, functioning as a perfect example of teamwork, superficial and fearful of conflict.

It is Sennett's argument that in attempting to flee from a world of insecurity and vulnerability the individual unwittingly recreates that which she longs to escape in her attempts at community. Of modern community Sennett (1977, p.296) writes: 'Modern community seems to be about fraternity in a dead, hostile world; it is in fact all too often an experience of fratricide'. Fratricide is present in the community founded upon fear and distrust. The recognition of difference as a threat turns those who would differ into enemies and difference becomes synonymous with danger. Such a perspective demands that threats be removed in order to ensure security and survival. The creation of community on such foundations is to invert the values of equality and freedom as both

are denied in the effort to raise a particular way of being above all others. In Sennett (2012a) the values expressed in modern community are symptomatic of the wider values inherent in a neoliberal world.

In Sennett emotional injury results in withdrawal from those arenas that are considered dangerous or threatening. According to Sennett (1977, p.301) the effects of this withdrawal are to focus on community as a preventative force for the effects of the outside world and to subsequently remain safe behind the community walls, concerned primarily with all that is local. Sennett writes: 'Community has become both emotional withdrawal from society and a territorial barricade within the city' (1977, p.301). The individual who has experienced the above is therefore 'entitled to attempt to heal the wound by changing the social conditions which caused it' (Sennett, 1977, p.90); however, she must first recognise them. The individual has the right to act to change a situation in the world that causes her injury, and one might argue this is also the responsibility of the individual in a democratic society. It is Sennett's argument that this withdrawal is evident in the increased individualism that is central to capitalism. Sennett asks: 'What shared values then is community expressing but those of the dominant group?' (1970, p.11).

Diversity & Community

Sennett (2002, p.48) describes the city as 'a milieu in which strangers are likely to meet'. He (1970, p.73) presents the safety of the homogenous community as lacking the moral dimension present in diversity and thus inadvertently serving as an instrument of alienation of the other. Adult education is a space where 'strangers' come together to learn and to grow and it is also a space where the familiar is made 'strange' in order to

co-investigate reality. This is what Freire meant when he equated reading the word with reading the world and is the foundation of critical praxis (2001b). In Mezirow's Transformation Theory (1990) adults redefine and reframe their problems and life situations in order to come to new understandings and perspectives. The individual's retreat into the intimate and the familiar thus limits the opportunity present in the encounter with the other.

Homogenous living denies the individual interactions that are crucial for the development of the individual and society. It promotes a way of being in the world that is founded upon fear, fear of difference and fear of the other. It makes enemies of those we do not know and dehumanises those we will not recognise. Over protectionism thus further divides and encourages an 'us' against 'them' mentality, precisely the mentality that Sennett argues is so detrimental for the individual in the workplace. Sennett writes;

And this is why the emotional logic of community, beginning as a resistance to the evils of modern capitalism, winds up at a bizarre type of depoliticised withdrawal; the system remains intact, but maybe we can get it to leave our bit of turf untouched.

(1977, p.296)

According to Sennett democracy demands 'that citizens be willing to make some effort to find out how the world around them works' (2006, p. 171). This is the curiosity that encourages the individual to look beyond herself and reach out towards another person. However, Sennett's concern is that when citizens begin to behave like consumers they cease being craftsmen. By this Sennett means that unlike the good craftsman's urge towards understanding, the consumer requires a 'user-friendly' (2012, p.171) world. The result is that the citizen as consumer can 'disengage when political issues become difficult or resistant' (2012, p.170). It is the user friendly approach to democracy coupled with passivity that erodes the individual's interest in complexity. Of this Sennett writes that 'democracy becomes modelled on consumption' (2006, p.171) as the individual is

occupied with the trivial and mundane. The preoccupation with the trivial, the mundane and the personal sphere of the individual depoliticises this form of community and leaves the system unchallenged and free to continue in tact.

Cooperation in Sennett is a craft (2012a) and one which is essential to community. This cooperation takes place together; it is a process of co-working and co-developing that is also essential for the learning that takes place in the adult education classroom and is an essential element of the intersubjective process of recognition. In Sennett cooperation becomes craft and in the adult education classroom the craft is that of learning. Cooperation in Sennett (2012b) is a matter of working with others to do things that the individual cannot achieve alone and is the essence of democratic participation. This is something that is structured into us genetically and is a natural part of human survival. However, it is an error to consider cooperation as a 'natural endowment just waiting to be expressed' (Sennett, 2012b). Instead it is learned and developed and becomes a skill that may be mastered under a particular set of conditions. These conditions occur when the individual works with 'those who are different from themselves, whom they don't understand or don't like' (Sennett, 2012b). In this way the more cooperation becomes an engagement with the other, rather than with someone similar, the more skill is required in order to practice it.

An Architecture of Adult Education

Respect is not an abstract idea. In Sennett respect is explored through social class, work and the city. In this research study I am exploring respect in the context of education through this group of students. I am particularly interested in education as a space where respect has been undermined and in adult education redeemed. A consistent theme throughout Sennett's work has been the city and its potential for either enabling or

limiting democracy and community. As such, a city in its architecture either allows for or hinders respect. Architecture involves the use of space, it allows or denies light, its form can be welcoming or alienating, evoke warmth or cold, and either limit or allow variety in its use. How we create our spaces can determine how we use them and even if we use them. A recurring question in Sennett's work is how we can create spaces in cities which encourage strangers to meet? My argument is that this is the role of adult education within the community.

Place and architecture, these things allow or disallow space. Sennett writes: 'The space of liberty pacified the revolutionary body' (1996, p. 296). As such, the open spaces where citizens are expected to mingle and interact serve to pacify and reduce levels of interaction. In modern cities technological developments also hinder interaction through the speed and isolation in which people now move. Architecture involves the organisation and creation of space. In adult education the architecture of educational space has many aspects. These include tutors, colleagues, relationships, collaborative work, centres and support networks. In the city we organise space and in education we organise space e.g. relationship space, learning space. The spaces of education all have an architecture and this can either promote or limit respect. I believe these interviews will highlight the architecture of adult education as one which promotes and enhances respect and self esteem; the architecture of education which once undermined and disrespected has now become a safe space. However, safe in these terms does not imply uniformity or sameness. Instead, the research participants were challenged and stretched to meet difference and diversity and to collaborate in the craft of learning.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show in this section the important implication of Sennett's concept of community and cooperation for the adult education agenda of critical citizenship and democratic participation. Cooperation as craft in Sennett demands learning to listen well and to engage in discussion with others. The development of these capacities allow the individual to experience an ease of presence in the company of others and to improve the way individuals engage with each other in modern society. These abilities allow the individual to be recognised by others as a person of worth and develop self respect. The craft of cooperation in Sennett is present in Freirean dialogue and is essential to the adult education process. Community in Sennett has the potential to create active citizenship and challenge the regime of the new capitalism and can be assisted through an architecture of adult education which provides space and time for community to develop. As an educator Sennett's concepts echo those of my vision of adult education as a space in which individuals have the opportunity to interrogate their world and practice the tools of citizenship such as how to listen, communicate and cooperate with those who are different.

In Conclusion

Sennett describes character as 'the personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others' (1999, p.10). A great part of the personal damage perceived by adult learners in their life history is this lack of esteem in the eyes of others. According to Sennett 'strength of character' (1999, p.145) is essential to communities wishing to challenge the new capitalism and the question 'Who needs me?' is a question of character which suffers a radical challenge in modern capitalism' (Sennett, 1999, p.146). It is also one which Sennett answers in terms of community, cooperation and craft. It is within community and in relationship that the individual can demonstrate her

usefulness and receive the recognition essential to personal worth. It is the mutual and interdependent nature of personal worth in Sennett that echoes respect and recognition in Honneth. The image of a successful individual which relegates the majority of adult learners to the sidelines of neoliberal society is challenged and reimagined through community. The 'know-how' (Sennett, 2004, p.56) of doing something well that the individual gains through these processes is one which increases personal worth and achieves recognition.

Respect is not an abstract idea. In Sennett (2012, p.143) feelings of inferiority 'erode cooperation with others'. Status in Sennett equates with legitimacy (2006, p.190) and this is received when the individual is useful and achieves recognition for her role. As Sennett (2012a) argues for an architecture of cooperation and equality so too I believe can the architecture of adult education be a key provider in the tools for this craft and build on Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition and its intersubjective, mutual context.

2.2 Axel Honneth & Recognition

Axel Honneth is currently the Director of the Frankfurt School for Social Research. Honneth's theory emphasises the essential role of respect and recognition in the intersubjective process and its importance for human development and he considers the need for recognition to precede that of communication. Honneth's (2003, p.113) aim is a renewal of critical theory by establishing a connection between 'the social causes of widespread feelings of injustice and the normative objectives of emancipatory movements'. Honneth argues;

...the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee.

(1995, p. 92)

Honneth's theory proposes an intersubjectivist concept of the individual 'in which the possibility of an undistorted relation to oneself proves to be dependant on three forms of recognition: love, rights and esteem' (1995, p.1). A relation to oneself equates with the identity of the individual and as such the formation of identity is reliant on the presence of recognition.

The formation of identity is therefore a process which takes place intersubjectively in relationship with another. In this way individuals reciprocate confirmation of each other as autonomous individuals through their daily interactions. The three essential components of identity formation and respect in Honneth are self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. The first is developed through relationships of love and friendship and necessitates experiencing love in order to love self and others. The second, self-respect, is fostered when the individual is recognised as an autonomous person with moral and legal rights. Finally, the third is self-esteem and is achieved through acknowledgement of the individual's contribution to the community. Self-esteem is therefore earned through productive activities within society. This allows the individual to be 'recognised as a person whose capabilities are of constitutive value to a concrete community' (Honneth, 1997, p.20).

Honneth's recognition theory is the struggle for social development with implications for issues of equality and social justice. The denial of these rights is connected to three forms of misrecognition or disrespect. Self-confidence can be damaged through neglect or abuse; self-respect can be violated through the denial of human or legal rights and finally, self-esteem can be damaged through exclusion. According to Honneth, mistreatment of

an individual is not therefore only a matter of justice but a matter of identity, as it has direct implications for how the individual perceives herself. The three forms of respect and disrespect in Honneth embody three separate forms of moral claim which are raised when individuals or groups must struggle to oppose misrecognition in all of its forms. Honneth's theory of recognition contributes to the development of a political agenda for change and self-realisation as it challenges relationships of misrecognition on universal moral grounds.

My reading of both Sennett and Honneth gives me the theoretical language within which to locate the struggle of the individual to be 'somebody'. Honneth's theory of recognition and Sennett's exploration of how individuals interpret lived experience both demonstrate the human requirement for an intersubjective recognition of abilities and achievements for identity formation. However, as discussed in Chapter VIII, Sennett's theory is not always accessible and the pieces often need to be assembled by the reader. It is here that Honneth has been of great support. My reading of Honneth has allowed me to reframe Sennett's writing on respect as an issue of intersubjective recognition that emphasises the value of the social dimension for positive self esteem.

Disrespect in Sennett is the experience of not being seen by another and being rendered invisible for a variety of reasons such as education, background or profession; as such, it is tied to capitalism in all of its forms. Honneth equates misrecognition and disrespect as the source of social conflict as this struggle occurs intersubjectively and is based on the need for self esteem. The denial of recognition limits the potential of the individual to develop the self internally and externally in the social world. Recognition is therefore an individual and social need without which human beings are denied the opportunity to become fully human and to take their places in society. Both Sennett and Honneth argue

for a more just society and both emphasise the role of identity as central to the social struggle. However, it is Honneth who extends respect to include an intersubjective recognition of our abilities. While Sennett explores the consequences of respect and disrespect it is Honneth who frames this issue as one of recognition or misrecognition.

Honneth's theory of recognition provides an important model for understanding and interpreting the experiences of adult learners in education. In my experience as an educator students have consistently used Honneth's terms of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect to describe their learning journey. They interpret their experiences in these terms and as such learning becomes positive when it asserts confidence, esteem and respect in the learner. Similarly, adult learners are vocal in the ways in which respect is achieved and will relate it to belonging in a group of learners, being heard and acknowledged, achieving goals and contributing to a group project. These are but a few of the ways in which students believe education supports their development and growth and are similarly present throughout Sennett's interviewees' stories. Both Honneth and Sennett emphasise the importance of respect for human development and as such have important contributions to make to education and a deeper understanding of the learning experience.

2.3 Key Theoretical Allies

Although this research relies on both Sennett and Honneth, many theorists, educators and philosophers have contributed to this study. In this section I will attempt to briefly introduce these theorists and their importance to this research project.

Paulo Freire

The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, probably most memorable for his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006) has been of key importance in my educative practice. Freire's

emphasis on the mutuality of the learning process between educator and educated has influenced my approach to education and my behaviour within the classroom.

The dominant discourse traditionally found in education is that of the monologue. This is a form of communication which is closed and centres on the authority figure in the classroom, the teacher. However, dialogue demands more than a captive audience and involves the creation of open and trusting relationships. Freire describes dialogue as;

Founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence. It would be a contradiction in terms if dialogue – loving, humble and full of faith – did not produce this climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership in the naming of the world.

(2006, p.91)

A central aspect of dialogue is therefore its ability to build social and emotionally, caring relationships. The lack of dialogue in traditional education is present in its focus on what Freire describes as ‘narrative education’ (2006, p.52) and is inherent to the banking concept of education. In Freire the characteristic of narrative education is ‘the sonority of words, not their transforming power’ (2006, p.52). This is indicative of an education whereby the student memorises and repeats learned phrases and concepts without understanding their significance. Reality in this form of education is something static and lifeless that is never changing and predictable. However, the previous discussion of the consequences of respect in the new capitalism clearly demonstrates that reality is anything but static. In Freire education is ‘suffering from narration sickness’ (2006, p.52) that involves the teacher as narrator and subject and the students as listeners and objects, passively receiving knowledge. It is precisely this contradiction between teacher and student that Freire places as central to the creation of knowledge. This can be achieved ‘by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students’ (Freire, 2006, p.53).

It is this concept in Freirean education that is central to my argument in this thesis. Freire does not only emphasise the importance of dialogue in education but he also addresses the often false dichotomous perception of the teacher-student relationship. Freire reconstructs the relationship between the teacher and the student and transforms it into one of co-investigation. As such, knowledge is not transmitted as in the banking concept but is co-created through a co-investigation of reality. In this way the world is known by both teacher and student in dialogue together. It is this 'togetherness' that is central to this study as respect is also co-created through relationship. Freire attempts to overcome this dualistic focus of traditional western philosophic thought, dualisms such as subject/object, teacher/learner and thinking/doing. This is central to his concept of praxis which is a new relationship between thinking and doing and one which in Sennett can be found in his concept of craft.

All knowledge in Freire is therefore dialogical; 'Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has its individual dimension' (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.3). This also has implications for my decision to use narrative research in this study. We come to know together when we co-investigate the world around us. This is also the case in a narrative; it is never a speaker and a listener. The relationship between speaker and listener is reconstructed so that the narrative is constructed together and together through narrative we co-investigate reality and experience. In Freire (2006) the traditional method of teaching is criticised as the teacher takes the role of narrator and delivers knowledge through narrative. In this research however, I argue that this co-investigation is dialogic narrative that occurs collaboratively through a dialogical interaction that produces a co-narrative.

Erich Fromm

The German social psychologist, Erich Fromm, was a member of the Frankfurt School of Social Theory and was influenced by the work of Freud. Fromm's work involves a broad study of human character, its development and the interaction of psychological and sociological factors which impact the individual in society. In my MA thesis (Nolan, 2003) I explored Fromm's work in relation to the understanding and reality of freedom in Western society. Fromm attempted to show that life in modern Western democracy involves an escape from freedom as opposed to a celebration of it. Although much of Fromm's work was written between the 1940s and the 1970s his analysis of alienation and social character creation are relevant today as individuals continue to struggle with similar issues of identity and belonging. Fromm's analysis moves away from Marx's critique of ideology towards a psychological focus of how our consciousness is socially constructed and formed by a culture of commodification. Fromm (2001, p.ix) writes;

To understand the dynamics of the social process we must understand the dynamics of the psychological processes operating within the individual, just as to understand the individual we must see him in the context of the culture which moulds him.

In this research I have attempted to explore the subjective experiences of the individual and their social context. In Fromm (1994, p.288) 'individual psychology is fundamentally social psychology' and equates with the 'psychology of interpersonal relationships' (p.288). The fundamental approach to the human personality by Fromm is to understand the relationship of the individual to the world and to others (p.287). The importance of interpersonal relationships for individual well-being in Fromm is present in Honneth's theory of recognition, as both emphasise the role of the social dimension. Fromm (1976, p.83) observes it is through the process of 'indoctrination, rewards, punishments and fitting ideology' that the majority of people believe they are living according to their own will and are 'unaware that their will itself is conditioned and manipulated' (p.83). It is

through adult education that people can become aware of ideological manipulation and engage in an education for participatory democracy. This democracy would allow people to take control of the social and economic system and make 'optimal human development and not maximal production the criterion for all planning (1961, p.101).

Democracy in Fromm makes the workplace a site for human creativity and in this adult education plays an important part. Fromm's communitarian socialism is one which emphasises human creativity as opposed to economic imperatives. In Fromm the goal of socialism is the recognition of the individual's true needs 'which will be possible only when production serves man and capital ceases to create and exploit the false needs of man' (1961, p.59). Fromm's communitarian socialism is present in the adult education classroom that aims at principles of participatory democracy. In these classrooms adult education has the potential to explore the true needs of learners as opposed to 'the false needs of man' (p.59). False needs are those that are prescribed externally and aim at meeting the needs of the dominant culture as opposed to the needs of the individual learners. In Fromm's communitarian socialism we can imagine an adult education classroom as a space for the cooperation and dialogue as advocated by Freire.

According to Fromm (2001, p. ix) the individual is not free until she has achieved self-realisation and the fullest possible expression of her intellectual, mental and emotional possibilities. Freedom in the modern understanding of the term may have brought increased rationality and the potential for independence but as it has not led to self-realisation it is a negative form of freedom and has made the individual 'isolated and, thereby anxious and powerless' (2001, p.ix). Fromm's fear of freedom highlights society's focus on 'freedom from' as opposed to 'freedom to' (p.26) as a negative form of

freedom. Similarly, in Sennett people also have a fear of freedom and use a number of ways to counter authority but simultaneously depend upon the authority (Sennett, 1993). This dependence is interpreted as a struggle for recognition as the authority is in the position to enhance and validate the individual. In Sennett 'the self' divides in two to both obey and withdraw. Fromm's development of the social character structure serves a similar purpose and allows the individual the opportunity to gain acceptance. I have heard many stories from students regarding the lengths the individual can go to in order to gain approval from an abusive authority figure, whether that be a teacher, a lover or a care giver and I anticipate this may surface in the narratives concerning moments of disrespect.

Fromm's thesis stresses the impact of unconscious factors in the formation of character and their dependence on external factors. I used art as a medium to access the narratives of the students in this research. However, according to Fromm the id is 'the medium through which the economy exerts its influence on man's intellectual and mental manifestations' (Fromm, 1973, p.179). The social problems we face are therefore not the result of instinct or greed but are a consequence of the socialisation process of a society dominated by a market oriented economy (Fleming, 2012, p.126). In this way the influence of capitalism is not limited to politics or economics as the id itself is socially constructed by capitalist markets (Fleming, 2012, p.126). This has implications for research, particularly my decision to use art. As there is no part of the psyche that has not been influenced or touched by capitalism then the imagination (located in and connected to the id, the unconscious), has also not escaped its effects. Creativity which comes from the unconscious can therefore not be considered neutral or true. Even though I have decided to use art in the interview process I am aware that even art is not necessarily

representative of the truth and during analysis all notions of creative neutrality or truth will be treated as suspicious.

Jack Mezirow

Mezirow's concept of transformative learning involves affecting change in the frames of reference or the paradigmatic set of assumptions which we use to interpret our experiences. Frames of reference are 'the result of cultural assimilation and the idiosyncratic influences of primary caregivers' (1997, p.6). As such, our frames of reference are produced through interpersonal interactions with others and are intersubjectively created. The only way to transform these frames of references is through critical reflection on the assumptions which often function as accepted and unchallenged beliefs. Transformative learning takes place when our learning challenges our existing frames of reference.

According to Mezirow, transformative learning is one which differs from the merely technocratic practice of education as it fosters critically reflective thought and democratic, participatory discourse. Mezirow (2000, p.11) describes discourse as 'that specialised use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief'. Furthermore discourse is the forum where the individual not only finds her voice but achieves a sense of agency as 'agency is intimately dependent on others and on one's inclusion in discourse' (Mezirow, 2000, p.11). Mezirow's interpretation of discourse is present in Honneth's recognition theory where both emphasise the mutuality of understanding and interpreting experience.

According to Mezirow emancipation is freedom from 'libidinal, institutional or environmental forces which limit our options and rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted as beyond human control' (1981, p.5). However, in Fromm the id is socially constructed and is the medium through which the dominant culture exerts its influence. As such, the libidinal structure of the individual is a socialised one, albeit unconsciously, that the individual can not be emancipated from but through investigation can be aware of. Discourse in Mezirow (2000, p.14) is the 'process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience'. As such, the thinking that occurs is an interactive process and not a solo act. Through co-narration we engage in meaning-making together, as we interpret and reinterpret experience.

John Dewey:

Dewey advocates for education and civil society as two fundamental elements of democracy. He asserts that education and learning are a social and interactive process and are instrumental in effecting social change. In Dewey every experience is a 'moving force' (Dewey, 1998, p.31). He (1998, p.31) writes;

Experience does not go on simply inside a person. It does go on there, for it influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose. But this is not the whole of the story. Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had.

As such, experience involves the principle of continuity which functions differently according to the particular experience. The interviewees in this research had negative experiences of education which, according to the research findings, contributed to the development of low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. However, a positive experience which evokes curiosity and motivation, such as the experience of returning to education, can have the opposite affect. The responsibility of the educator is to deconstruct these

experiences with the student and help the learner to make meaning from them. In Dewey all human experience is social.

Experience for Dewey does not take place in a vacuum and ‘there are sources outside an individual which give rise to experience’ (1998, p.35). As such, Dewey assigns equal relevance to both internal and objective conditions. An experience in Dewey (1998, p.38) involves the interplay of these two conditions which through their interaction create a situation. To live in the world then is to live in a series of situations which in turn means that interaction is occurring between the individual and either objects or persons. The concept of situation and interaction are therefore inseparable in Dewey and of central importance to the educator are the ‘situations in which interaction takes place’ (1998, p.43). In this we find the core idea in Dewey (1998, p.47) that education is ‘the reconstruction of experience’.

In *Art as Experience* (2005, p.6) Dewey asserts that art is more than the mere copying of objects and reflects ‘the emotions and ideas that are associated with the chief institutions of social life’. As mentioned previously, I used art as a tool to access the stories of the research participants in this thesis. Dewey associates art with experience and writes that ‘every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality’ (1998, p.47). After all, this is ‘the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience’ (Dewey, 1998, p.47). Dewey stresses the principle that ‘education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience – which is always the actual life-experience of some individual’ (1998, p.113).

This thesis is an investigation of the life experiences of the interviewees and art is used to access these experiences as each work of art 'follows the plan of, and pattern of, a complete experience rendering it more intensely and concentratedly felt' (Dewey, 2005, p.54). Art is a way of expressing experiences and having a conversation about them that helps the individual to think. Dewey takes art and Sennett takes craft. Both emphasise the central role of community in the realisation of democracy.

Michel Foucault

Foucault's work places emphasis on contemporary freedom and its disciplinary nature. Transformation in Foucault builds upon experience to realise freedom as practice. In this the key to understanding freedom is the understanding of its conditions. Foucault's concern with freedom is one which focuses upon a way of being in the world that depends upon the individual's awareness of care for the world. Central to Foucault's research is the knowledge of the practices through which people practice freedom and understand what it is to be free.

In Foucault a world of static relationships is a world of powerlessness (1982, p.220). However, the operation of power ensures that it is contested and therefore something fluid, constantly in motion. Power in Foucault is not a renunciation of freedom and exists only when it is put into action. Power is 'always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action' (1982, p.220). Power is complex and can be unpredictable; those in seemingly subordinate positions, such as the students in this research, can access power in the interview process e.g. by non-compliance, not answering questions. My assumptions about the power dynamics within the classroom as primarily teacher power are challenged in a reading of Foucault who

emphasises the fluidity of power and the potentialities of student power in each engagement. Foucault is a cautioning voice for adult educators and researchers and highlights the risk of assuming that liberatory practices are free of subtle power relations. A Foucauldian reading of ‘disciplinary power’ with its emphasis on the impact and presence of power on the micro individual level has enriched my understanding of the power dynamic in the research and interview process;

Power is present both in the construction of knowledge and in the construction of relationships. Central to a Foucauldian understanding of power is discourse analysis. Power relationships in society are expressed through language and it is through discourse and the intersubjective knowing it produces that we are created. In Foucault meaning is created through discourse and therefore dominant ideology is transmitted through daily interactions, albeit unconsciously. This has implications for the interview process and the ‘purity’ of the data. Although as researcher and teacher I am the perceived holder of knowledge in a Foucauldian reading of power the power of the student must also be recognised. Discourse is not without resistance and the counter discursive elements can influence and produce change. Power in Foucault is considered a constant force, always present between people, shaping behaviour and producing reality. This dynamic signature of power in Foucault echoes a Freirean focus of education as a co-investigation involving student teacher and teacher student. The multi-faceted nature of power must therefore acknowledge the power of the student as central to the interview process.

2.4 Integrated Research Perspective

Although I am largely informed by my reading of Richard Sennett, each of the theorists informing my research provides a relevant piece of the puzzle that is respect. As discussed throughout this chapter, my reading of respect is one which centres on

relationship; the relationship with others and with self. Sennett interprets respect as personal worth and his research highlights the struggle the individual engages with in a neoliberal society in an effort to validate the self. His research provides the everyday examples of this struggle for respect that I witness in the adult education classroom. As such, Sennett's work is not incongruent with my pedagogical background in critical theory and I have attempted to highlight this in this chapter. Sennett's intersubjective interpretation of respect is present in a Freirean educative practice which emphasises the mutuality essential for authentic learning. In Sennett the values that are so corrupted in the neoliberal model can be regained through craft and community. These values are precisely those essential for Freirean dialogue which aims at building mutually supportive and caring relationships.

Fromm's study of character and the interaction of psychological and social factors upon the individual are echoed throughout Sennett's research. In Sennett it is the consequences of capitalism that corrode character and leave the individual bereft of an anchor, adrift in the world. Fromm's culture of commodification and Sennett's destructive replacement are attempts by the individual to ascribe meaning to her life and gain validation. These unconscious factors create a character which is dependent upon external factors, a character which requires Freirean praxis and Sennett's craft as a method of reclaiming the self. Similarly, the emancipation central to Mezirow's transformative learning revolves around the challenging of assumptions that accept external forces as beyond individual control. The agency that affects change in Mezirow is dependent upon dialogue with others and is founded upon relationship. It is relationships which are central to respect.

Dewey's pragmatism influenced Sennett and emphasises active involvement that incorporates the learner's world. For Dewey the learner's experiences are central to a problem-solving education that impacts on democratic practice. The pragmatic emphasis on the role of experience in education is tied to this understanding of democracy as collaborative effort and dialogic experience. In Dewey all human experience is social and education is an interactive process. In his theory of recognition Honneth focuses on the role that intersubjectivity plays in shaping a person's identity. Productive and healthy relationships require an intersubjective recognition of the individual's abilities and achievements. Underpinning the interactive process of relationship lies the issue of power. A Foucauldian understanding of power and its dynamic, fluid nature does not deny the presence of authority in the educator but asserts the ability of the student to also access power.

Although I have attempted to outline the key theories that inform this research on respect there are also some theorists who appear briefly in order to elucidate a point or to demonstrate an awareness of the context of the particular concept. Henry Giroux's (2005; 2009) critique of neoliberalism and his call for learning democracy through community engagement is at the heart of a critical pedagogical practice. In Giroux in order to teach well we must confront the system as it is today. Similarly, Chomsky advocates a critical investigation of the information generated in the media that many unconsciously accept as 'true'. Chomsky also echoes Sennett's concern for the integrity of the worker who must engage in 'wage slavery' and describes this common practice as indicative of a lack of freedom and therefore a lack of respect. This sentiment is often discussed in my classroom as students share experiences of paid work that lacked integrity and

undermined self- esteem. I anticipate these issues will be raised during the interview sessions as many of the research participants have removed themselves from paid work.

Stephen Brookfield's research on critical thinking and its role within the adult education classroom is of value both pedagogically and theoretically. He asserts that the 'ability to think critically about one's assumptions, beliefs and actions is a survival necessity' (2012, p.1). Similarly, Zygmunt Baumann (2000) interprets sociology as the practice of thinking about our world and ourselves. Baumann's (2000, p.12) 'liquid modernity' encompasses the shift from the solid, localised past to a world redefined by globalisation and the world wide web. His work on the citizen as consumer and the marketisation of all aspects of life and the enormous changes impacting on the individual echoes Sennett's critique of the new capitalism. I anticipate Baumann's 'liquid modernity' will enrich my understanding of the life narratives in this research and may be of benefit in their analysis.

Sennett (1970) relies on Erikson's theory of the psychosocial development of human beings to explore the identity crisis, or the failure to achieve ego identity in adolescence. The resolution of our basic ego identity is central to a healthy self-image and as such is foundational to the development of respect and personal worth. The transformation in self-image is tightly connected to the development of personal worth as the two occur simultaneously. In the adult education classroom students often refer to the self they remember upon their return to education as a stranger, a person they no longer recognise. I anticipate a similar response by students in this research and I am curious to find out if identity surfaces as something which is enhanced by respect and education.

In the work of Sennett alienation is a consequence of living in a neoliberal society that offers few avenues for the individual to gain validation and respect beyond financial gain. Karl Marx (1997) has laid the basis for our contemporary understanding of labour and its relation to capital. In Sennett (2009) and in this research alienation finds its resolution in craft, the craft of community and the craft of learning. A Marxian focus on consciousness and the distortions of ideology are central to critical theory and its programme of liberation. In both Mezirow and Freire education is a liberating force when it liberates the individual from the false consciousness in which she has been imprisoned. Marxian alienation focuses upon the social construction of reality which as a pragmatist Sennett echoes in his exploration of the indignities the individual suffers in capitalism, whatever its age. Erving Goffman's (1963) writings on stigma and shame are relevant to this study and to understanding how the adults in this research perceive themselves. A stigma in Goffman is something which reduces the individual 'from a whole and usual person to a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak' (1963, p.12). Adult learners commonly discuss feelings of shame and inferiority and as such, I anticipate these issues will be present in this research.

These words summarise the common thread connecting the theorists I have included in this research; they have each enriched my understanding of the central importance of the social dimension for well-being and being well.

2.5 Conclusion

My position concerning respect is informed by the theorists presented in these pages. Respect is either achieved or not achieved through the relationships we engage in throughout our lives. These relationships are a mirror to how the individual is and to how she should be treated. In essence, our relationships with our care givers, our teachers,

siblings, friends, lovers and colleagues provide the lens through which we perceive ourselves. Abusive relationships, relationships of disrespect or poor treatment reflect a self of little value to the individual. Caring relationship, relationships where love and consideration are predominant, reflect a self worthy of love and care. As such, the theoretical paradigms of this research assert respect as an intersubjective process which is either achieved or not achieved through relationship. It is relationship which motivated this research, the relationships I formed with students in my classroom and the stories of vulnerability, survival and respect that coloured them. The central premise in this research is that we associate respect with personal worth and respect is achieved as we find our worth in the eyes of the other.

Chapter III

Methodology

In this chapter I will outline the steps taken and the reasoning used to produce this body of research. I will begin this chapter with an introduction to the epistemological underpinnings of this research and my agenda as an educator to explore the presence or absence of respect within an educational setting. I use narrative enquiry to access the wealth of knowledge inherent to life experience. Merrill (2007, p.71) writes that 'biographies do not just help us to understand individual lives but are also an important tool for understanding shared experiences of the social world, such as class and learning as an adult'. These narratives will open a window into these issues and enable the connections between the individual stories of adult learners and collective experiences of respect to surface. This study is shaped and informed by my epistemological position as both teacher and researcher and as such I bring to this study my assumptions concerning the research question and its results. It is a critique of respect as identified and experienced by a group of students from inner city Dublin and I shall begin with a reflection on my position and the potential dilemma of the teacher as researcher. Ethical considerations will be addressed at the end of this chapter.

3.1 The Epistemology: Constructionism & Critical Inquiry

The way in which I approach this process of inquiry will emerge from my particular ontological and epistemological positioning. However, Fleming (2012) questions the often prevalent interpretation of epistemology in educational discourse as one reflecting beliefs as opposed to knowledge. He writes that 'the activity of epistemology is to take a more philosophical approach to what is known and how we can know' (2012). Any attempt therefore at an epistemological investigation must 'go beyond one's beliefs so

that these beliefs are well justified on the basis of sound and critical enquiry...’ (Fleming, 2012).

In the dominant educational paradigm of positivism knowledge has been treated as a static thing composed of facts and objective truths that exist beyond the realm of the personal. Contrary to this critical theory critiques this positivist approach to knowledge and questions its central assumption that knowledge itself is value free or neutral. Giroux (1981, p.43) writes;

...questions concerning the social construction of knowledge and the constitutive interests behind the selection, organization, and evaluation of “brute facts” are buried under the assumption that knowledge is objective and value free. Information or “data” taken from the subjective world of intuition, insight, philosophy and nonscientific theoretical frameworks is not acknowledged as being relevant. Values, then, appear as the nemeses of “facts,” and are viewed at best as interesting, and at worst, as irrational and subjective emotional responses.

Similarly, a Freirean view of knowledge recognises it as something constantly in motion; created and recreated as individuals engage and reflect on their actions and their world. Knowledge is therefore negotiated and emerges through the interaction of the individual and the world around her. How I make sense of the world must then be a subjective process that implies the absence of objectivity. However, in Freire (1996, p.32) subjective knowing does not deny objective knowing;

To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction.

This interconnectedness of subjectivity and objectivity connotes an infinite search for knowledge and meaning as the process is one which is constantly producing new ways of knowing. The production of knowledge and meaning making in Freire are essential to the process of humanisation. Dehumanisation in Freire is represented by the banking-model

of education which functions to fill the student with pre-existing knowledge. The problem-posing of critical education however attempts to engage the learner in the creation of knowledge reflective of her experiences and produced through dialogue with others. Freire describes this process as a 'constant unveiling of reality' (1996, p.81) and one which challenges the concept of knowledge as something pre-existing.

It is therefore essential that when attempting to engage with and clarify my epistemology I assert that it is not a static body of knowledge nor is it neutral. And so I return to the two questions with which I began this discussion; what do I know and how do I know what I know is true? My way of knowing will impact and inform my way of being. This is an important issue for this research and will make explicit the knowing and knowledge that has up until now remained implicit in my approach to this project. My epistemological positioning may also have implications for my chosen method of research and will certainly influence my decision.

The research methods I chose for this study are a result of my epistemological stance as an educator (Antonesa et al, 2006, p.74). According to Maynard (1994, p.10): 'Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate'. My position as social constructionist states that knowledge is constructed and inter-subjectivity is central to its production and to meaning-making. I take the epistemological stance that I construct my understanding of the world according to my experiences with others. As such, epistemology is something that develops with others not in isolation. In many ways the exploration of one's epistemology appears a complex process and yet epistemology is the study and justification of every day way of knowing what I know. As such, there is a difference between what I know and what I believe. I

believe in social justice, equality and democracy and as an adult educator I believe that education is of central importance for their achievement. Although I have made efforts to examine my beliefs I am aware that this is only one step on the way towards an epistemological stance. The issue is one of sustainability which overtime and through investigation transforms these beliefs into truths and epistemology.

Social Constructionism

Constructionism perceives meaning as constructed and truth is not an objective entity but 'comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world' (Crotty, 1998, p.5). Central to this is the understanding that individuals make meaning in different ways. According to Schwandt;

Human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct or make it. We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience, and further we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience.

(2000, p.197)

However, constructionism is not merely a process of curiosity with the world but also espouses the critical spirit as that which is constructed must also be questioned and challenged. Crotty writes that 'constructivism tends to resist the critical spirit, while constructionism tends to foster it' (1998, p.58).

Similarly, the social in social constructionism reinforces the social origin of meaning, Schwandt (2000, p.197) continues to write that we 'do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language and so forth'. In this vein meaning making must be considered neither objective nor subjective but an inter-subjective process. Crotty writes that constructionism is consistent with the

concept of intentionality which proposes an intimate and active relationship between subject and object;

To embrace the notion of intentionality is to reject objectivism. Equally it is to reject subjectivism. What intentionality brings to the fore is interaction between subject and object. The image evoked is that of humans engaging with their human world. It is in and out of this interplay that meaning is born.

(1998, p.45)

My theoretical perspective is informed by critical theory's problematisation of the "real" world and its goal for 'a fairer, less alienating, more democratic world' (Brookfield, 2001, p.12). Brookfield's words reflect my purpose in beginning this research and are central to my beliefs as an educator. Similarly, central to my understanding of the relationship between teacher and student is the process of critical inquiry as a mutual activity, one which acknowledges and invites intersubjectivity as valid life experience.

Brookfield describes the work of the critical theorist as 'the desire to extend democratic socialist values and processes, to create a world in which a commitment to the common good is the foundation of individual well-being and adult development' (2001, p.21). The central premise of this doctoral thesis is to explore the conditions and experience of respect in the lives of adult learners. A critical constructionist paradigm as discussed above positions the educator as a co-explorer who encourages students to challenge, question and interrogate in order to develop critical opinions, engage with the world and promote change. This paradigm promotes the qualitative approach to research for a number of reasons that are relevant to my research study. Although Sennett's work influenced my choice of research method, this was only possible after I had assured myself of its compatibility with the integrity of the research intention and its suitability for the participants. Denzin and Lincoln describe qualitative research as follows;

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible.

These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(2005, p.3)

Denzin and Lincoln refer to the qualitative researcher as a 'bricoleur' (2005, p.4) and 'the researcher as bricoleur-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms' (2005, p.6). As such, 'there is no value-free science' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.6); the social science researcher must instead act as interpreter, a bricoleur who produces a bricolage; 'that is, a pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.4). This fitting together is reflective of the story telling process and most suited to this research which involves speaker and listener, researcher and researched.

The decision to choose a qualitative approach to the research was one which reflects the research topic and acknowledges a critical constructionist paradigm. Although I am aware that a quantitative study is not incompatible with critical theory the sheer numbers required for a quantitative study are also problematic. In this particular year the pre access course I was sole tutor on had 8 students, with only one other such course in my area at that time. Although these courses are taking place on a national level and I therefore could have made contact with other groups I decided quite early in the research design to favour a small number of adult learners. My reasons were directly related to the research question as I believe a comprehensive study of how adults experience respect requires time spent with each participant individually. As such, I believe a questionnaire could not supply the information required and that the particular memories connected to both respect and disrespect might be more accessible through face-to-face contact.

Additionally, I hoped that the sharing of the participants' stories might allow the unexpected to surface, memories which a list of questions might not inspire. However, having decided to interview the participants individually I began to reflect on my position as both teacher and researcher and the potential tensions and benefits this might bring to the research. I shall explore these issues in the following section.

3.2 Teacher/Researcher, Researcher/Teacher

Craig (2009, p.61) describes teacher research as 'a form of inquiry approached from the teacher perspective'. As such the values, assumptions and opinions of the teacher will have implications for the research question, how the data is collected, its interpretation and the conclusions reached. At all times then the position of the teacher is inseparable from the research produced and the resulting 'knowledge' is the product of the social dance of inter-subjective knowing and creating. However, I am perturbed by the potential tensions inherent in the perception of the position of teacher researcher as one of duality. I am concerned that the relationship I have formed with the participants as sole tutor over this year will have an effect on the research material. As sole tutor I am aware that I am in a powerful position regarding these individuals and the human urge to please may influence the data. Similarly, I am a teacher who will now become researcher and inherent to these positions are different agendas and different issues of power. These are my concerns at this stage of this study and yet, I am positive that this inquiry will yield yet more concerns and issues that I will need to clarify. However, I shall start at the beginning and explore the issues I have identified.

According to Loxley and Seery 'research is a mode of cultural practice predicated on the adoption of certain roles and positions by the researcher vis-à-vis those people or

phenomena which ‘fall’ within the ambit of what is to be explored’ (2008, p.15). This has implications for ‘the production and organising of meaning’ and ‘the capacity to define what counts as legitimate and illegitimate forms of knowledge’ (Loxley & Seery, 2008, p.15). It is therefore of great importance for the integrity of the research produced to acknowledge the role of the researcher as privileged in meaning making, primarily through such issues as ‘power, epistemology, axiology and ontology’ (Loxley & Seery, 2008, p.15). The power of teacher and power of researcher therefore carry implications for my position in this study. As teacher I am the grade provider at the end of year and as researcher I am the privileged meaning maker of the experiences of the other. The power of teacher as researcher carries added implications for the participants. Loxley & Seery (2008, p.15) describe educational research as ‘an intervention into the lifeworlds of other people and their communities’. The term intervention is one which implies impact and therefore consequence. Before beginning my research and including students from a course I deliver I needed to resolve this issue.

The prime concern I had at this time was the issue of power between my self as teacher researcher and the students as participants. I interpret power as the potential to act and as such, power is present throughout all human existence and has implications in interpersonal relationships. In this research we are teacher student and researcher participant. As teacher I am in a powerful position and as such there is a power difference between researcher and researched. I might like to be egalitarian but it is not possible. It is not an equal relationship and therefore I cannot always access the thoughts of students nor will they always disclose their thoughts. Freire writes;

I have never said that the educator is the same as the pupil. Quite the contrary, I have always said that whoever says that they are equal is being demagogic and false. The educator is different from the pupil. But this difference...must not be antagonistic. The difference becomes antagonistic when the authority of the

educator, different from the freedom of the pupil, is transformed into authoritarianism.

(1985, p.76)

As discussed in Chapter II, a Freirean practice of dialogue involves the co-investigation of reality as we come to know things differently together. As such, the relationship between speaker and listener is reconstructed so that the narrative is constructed together. This is a different concept than that of one person researching another and has implications for this issue of teacher/researcher. I am not carrying out research on students but we are engaging in the co-creation of knowledge together. Similarly, Freire's opposition to dualisms purports the reconstruction of the relationship between teacher/researcher and student/participant. A Freirean reading of this situation negates the perception of a dilemma for the teacher/researcher and emphasises the mutuality of the meaning making which occurs in dialogue.

I am always aware of my position as tutor and the students will always see me in this position but Freirean dialogue stresses the value of trust and relationship that are essential to the horizontal nature of the dialogical process. However, I am the researcher and I not only have the tape recorder but I also have an agenda for the research which the participants may not be aware of. Furthermore, I chose the participants involved with the aim of obtaining information from them and the conversation topics will be guided by my study. This imbalance of power prevents any pretence of idealistic egalitarian research. The relationship of researcher and researched, teacher and student, is therefore inherently hierarchical and although reflexivity can make the researcher more aware of the underlying power dynamics present it cannot remove them.

I have found a Foucauldian reading of 'disciplinary power' with its emphasis on the impact and presence of power on the micro individual level as opposed to the structural macro level of benefit in my understanding of the power dynamic in the research and interview process. Power is present both in the construction of knowledge and in the construction of relationships. Foucault writes;

In thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.

(1980, p. 39)

At its most basic interpretation discourse means conversation and for Foucault it is through discourse and the intersubjective knowing it produces that we are created. In Foucault meaning is created through discourse and therefore dominant ideology is present and transmitted through daily interactions, albeit unconsciously. Foucault's term 'power/knowledge' stresses the presence of power through the acceptance of certain forms of knowledge, in this case the dominant knowledge of the teacher researcher. Foucault writes: 'Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart' (1998, p.100). In the research situation I as researcher and teacher am the perceived holder of knowledge and yet the power of the student must also be recognised in this process. My power as researcher is therefore not without challenge by the research participants. Change in Foucault is present through the counter discursive elements that can be present in communication as discourse can never be totally pure or without resistance. Power in Foucault is a constant force, always present between people, shaping behaviour and producing reality.

However, power is multi-dimensional and dynamic and as such is constantly on the move. The fact that I am teacher researcher does not restrict the multi-faceted nature of power nor does it ignore the power of the student participant. The concerns I had for this issue were challenged as the participants quickly asserted their position as story teller during the interview process. My research question revolves around the issue of respect and its role in the learning process and as such I filter the information and stories I hear according to their value and relevance for my subject. However, at times when I wanted to focus on a particular event or moment participants used a variety of ways to continue with their stories as they chose. Jimmy suggested he return to a previous event to clarify his feelings or actions if I '*skipped*' things in his story, Jim had definite opinions on what stories and experiences were of importance and Angie wanted to '*tell it all*' in order for a clear picture to be created. In this way the existing relationship was a positive aspect to this research as it allowed participants to relax and give voice to their concerns, and most importantly to remain true to their story. Although I was initially concerned that the positions of teacher and researcher would conflict I did not find this to be the case during the research process. I proceeded with the assumption that I am always the teacher in the eyes of the students.

As teacher I am present for my students and their needs and concerns are primary. As such, the boundary of teacher student relationship needed to survive that of the research participant. According to Duncombe & Jessop (2002, p.120) the use of empathy in the research process to encourage the participant to proceed with a story can be considered "faking friendship". Although I realise that both parties in this process can do this I remained aware of this during the process as I did not wish to damage the teacher student relationship and secondly, participants could 'explore and disclose experiences and

emotions which – on reflection – they may have preferred to keep to themselves’ (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002, p.120). In order to prevent this situation from arising and from losing sight of the participant as student and myself as teacher I needed to disregard any method of inquiry which objectified the participant and reduced the inquiry to a process of data collection. Brookfield writes;

We must not assume that adult education classrooms are safe havens or power free zones. Neither learners, nor teachers leave their racial, class or gender identities at the classroom door, nor do they forget their previous participation in discussions with all the humiliations and manipulations these often entailed.
(2005, p.358)

As such, it is not only the potential trauma of past experiences but also of creating potentially new memories of humiliation through the disclosure of personal experiences that I as teacher researcher needed to address. Oakley (2005, p.221) warns that what is considered ‘good for interviewers is not necessarily good for interviewees’. As a result I believed that while acknowledging the power of my position as researcher teacher I must also seek an understanding and intention of process that will allow the participant to feel that she is an important and valued part of the study. I felt strongly that the correct research method would remove the dichotomy of teacher researcher and believed that in order to investigate the experience of respect I must also create the conditions of respect during the research. I therefore wished to focus on the participant as subject and as such it was not a great leap to explore the possibility of the students as active participants in the research project. In Collins (1998, 1.1) research is ‘an interactional situation’ and the research is referred to as ‘data generation’ as opposed to ‘data collection’. This engagement of the participant in the research study is one which acknowledges the co-construction of knowledge and is reflective of a dialogic narrative discussed in Chapter II. In this way the issue of who controls the interview or who carries out the research is answered as both researcher and research participant engage in the process of co-

narration. Fleischer (1994, p.109) proposes dialogue as a preventative method of excluding the other from the production of knowledge;

An emphasis on dialogue, though, can help us consciously attempt to keep the roles of teacher and student from being polarities – as it helps us recognise the potential for meaning-making and theory-making, from the fused perspectives of teacher-students and student-teachers.

Similarly, Ray (1992) reminds the teacher researcher of the importance of the participants' insights in the creation of meaning and therefore preventing the teacher researcher of becoming sole meaning maker. I found his words reassuring and they reconfirmed to me the choice of a qualitative study as presenting the opportunity to collaborate with my students in the production of meaning. He writes: 'Students are not merely subjects who the teacher researcher instructs and assesses; they are co-researchers, sources of knowledge whose insights help focus and provide new directions for the study' (1992, p.175. These words rested well with me and eased some of the concerns I had regarding interrogating and making meaning from the participants experiences. Furthermore, as co-researchers and co-narrators I decided to offer the participants a copy of the material which involved them. I realised this would have a number of positive results for the research. It involved the participants to a larger extent in the research project, offered them the opportunity to clarify areas they believed needed more exploration while it also allowed me the possibility to return to an area that I thought might need further investigation. This potential increase in involvement of the participant, by choice, in the research eased the concerns I had as the sole creator of knowledge and meaning while acknowledging the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of my practice.

And finally, am I researcher teacher or teacher researcher? Am I either or, or am I both simultaneously? Wong (1992) highlights the tension between the position of teacher and

that of researcher, a tension that I mention above as one which concerns me. He reflects on an incident with a particular student who was struggling to interpret her experience. Wong (1992, p.25) felt 'a distinct tension between trying to be systematic and thorough and trying to be responsive and compassionate'; that is, he felt a contradistinction between his position as teacher on the one hand and researcher on the other. In Wong (1995, p.26) researchers ask the questions and teachers teach. I realised that this left little room for the critical teacher who is busy with the dialogic to and fro of the adult education classroom. As such, I found Wilson's (1995, p.20) response to Wong's article to be of much more relevance to my concerns and my practice. Wilson writes that teaching 'entails everything I must do to help my students learn, including asking questions' (1995, p.20).

Similarly, the reality of the bifurcation between the role of teacher and researcher is questioned by Wilson as her sole concern is with teaching and learning, not with, as suggested by Wong (1995, p.26), meandering between the two roles. Wilson writes: 'These are questions of interest to both researchers and teachers. They require neither a split in attention nor a conflict in intention' (1995, p.20). Noddings (1984 p.175) writes: 'Whatever I do in life, whomever I meet, I am first and always one-caring or one cared-for. I do not "assume roles" unless I become an actor. "Mother" is not a role; "teacher" is not a role'. I am therefore not restricted to the role of teacher researcher or researcher teacher but I am both and as such both positions are valuable knowledge creators.

In exploring the power issues inherent to my position as researcher teacher Foucault has been my chief informant. My reading of Foucault positions power within the shifting sands of the ever changing and growing dynamic that is relationship. Although the power

lies with me as teacher researcher it is not static but develops and moves through the dialogical process. As such the dynamic of power is not necessarily a negative and its nature is dependent on a multiplicity of factors such as intentions, context and the individuals present. This multifaceted interpretation of power demands that I as teacher researcher acknowledge both its invisibility and constancy as it is embedded in the very nature of the teacher student and researcher participant relationship. However, as discussed above, a Freirean interpretation of the dialogical process may allow for the co-creation of meaning and may increase the autonomy of the research participant in the process. And finally, as teacher I am engaged in the lifelong process of learning with my students. This research project offers students as participants both the opportunity to be involved in a study which they might one day undertake while also embodying the message of lifelong education. I therefore do not consider the positions of teacher and researcher as mutually exclusive. In Freire's words;

Once again, there is no such thing as teaching without research and research without teaching. One inhabits the body of the other. As I teach, I continue to search and re-search. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself. I do research so as to know what I do not yet know and to communicate and proclaim what I discover.

(2001, p.35)

3.3 The Reflexive Practitioner

Freire's emphasis on the central role of critical reflection for the pedagogical development of the adult educator has had a formative impact on my own pedagogical practice. According to Freire, 'human activity consists of action and reflection; it is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as practice it requires theory to illuminate it. Human activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action' (1997, p. 106). Freire (2006, p.51) further defines praxis as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to

transform it', a practice essential to transforming an oppressive reality. It is through consistent reflection that we can become more aware of the assumptions and bias that influence each step, each perception and interpretation. Etherington (2007, p.601) describes reflexivity as the ability to 'notice and respond to the world around us, to stories, and to other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform and direct our actions, communications and understandings'. Reflexivity is therefore of key importance in research, particularly in narrative research which relies on the co-creation of stories between the narrator and the listener.

In *How We Think* (1933, p.78) Dewey writes that 'education consists in the formation of wide-awake, careful, thorough habits of thinking'. As such, it is an activity which requires the individual to be fully engaged. Similarly, Clandinin and Connolly (2000) recommend the development of 'wakefulness' as a method of raising awareness throughout the research process. In order to enable this high level of awareness they recommend journaling and field notes. I found both insightful, although for different reasons. The journaling returned me to the classroom, both as student and teacher. In the stories of the students I found many positive affirmations of my work as an educator and the atmosphere I encouraged within the classroom. However, journaling also highlighted moments where I missed an important opportunity with a student or where I remembered success and the student remembered something else entirely. I have since continued to journal and have benefited from the numerous insights it has revealed into my pedagogical practice. The second recommendation by Clandinin and Connolly is the taking of field notes. After each interview I wrote my impressions and noted as much of the non verbal element of the conversation with the research participant as possible. I found this to be informative when it came to reading the data as the field notes alongside

the interview transcripts provided the added dimension which the transcripts alone lacked and allowed me to remain close to the data.

Both of these tools, the journaling and the field notes, highlighted areas where my own bias and perceptions impacted on the research; this was especially clear during the second stage of the interview process. At this time six out of the eight participants had remained in college and two had taken a break. I assumed that the initial findings, particularly the central importance of the teacher learner relationship, would remain consistent. However, my own bias was clearly demonstrated as each research participant focused on their own self development, learning journey, curiosity, thinking and achievements. The relationships which had been so vital at the pre access and access stage were no longer as necessary to the learner. Although each learner enjoyed positive relationships it was no longer an issue in their remaining in education. I had mistakenly assumed that what was important at the early stages of returning to education would remain consistent throughout the entire experience. My journal entries at this stage demonstrated my surprise and encouraged me to question the things I think I 'know' about the students I meet. I had assumed that the relationship they had formed with a tutor at the beginning of the learning journey would be replicated throughout the process; the opposite was true and tutors and lecturers featured far less in Interview 2 than in Interview 1. This is a questioning which has and will continue and one which will hopefully contribute to the 'wide-awake' thinking recommended by Dewey.

My reflections and journal entries have consistently raised the issue of what I could have done differently during this process. At the end of this journey I now know that my inexperience as an interviewer was a lack which impacted the interviews and the

narrations of the participants. Although I discuss this in the interview analysis, it was important that I identified it in the early stages of the process. My agenda as researcher caused me to control the first two interviews with Mary and Jimmy and to subsequently miss out on key moments in the conversation. Luckily, I could return to these moments with the participants very quickly and I could engage in a certain amount of damage control caused by inexperience. I have since learned the importance of trust and patience in the interview process and found the second stage of the interviews was more relaxed, on my part, as I allowed the story of the research participant to emerge in the telling. Had I this awareness in the beginning of this process I would not have needed to contact some participants for clarification of their thoughts or experiences. However, the students were very interested in the research and also appreciated that I was not an expert in the interview process. I find teaching is often a humbling experience but this process reminded me of how important it is for learners to see the humanity and the vulnerabilities of those who teach and to remind all involved that we are co creators on the learning journey; we are learning together.

3.4 Life Histories and Narrative Inquiry

From a Boston bakery in the 1970s to the offices of modern executives, Sennett's research and critique of modern contemporary life spans decades of human lived experience and social change in western society. And although the names, backgrounds and education of the individuals he interviews change, the deeper questions and struggles of human existence remain the same. As a researcher I am both interested in the method of Sennett's approach to his researched subjects and the theorising in which he engages. In the following section I will outline the concepts and interpretations that are central to the research of Richard Sennett and have implications for my choice of research methods.

Firstly, he has something important to say about respect that connects with other theorists and secondly when I reach the data stage I am going to rely on Sennett for interpreting the data. Although I have been guided by Sennett's use of narrative in his research there are elements of his approach that differ from the research in this study. Sennett interviews multiple individuals but often amalgamates their stories into 2 or 3 pseudo individuals in order to elucidate a point or issue. I decided not to do this because I wanted to stay close to the students' stories. However, I am aware that Sennett decided the opposite was also a demonstration of respect. My valorisation of these stories is connected to my understanding of an academic thesis and therefore impacted on my decision to use the research data in a different way to Sennett. He is writing a popular, sociological narrative whereas a thesis is technical in its attempt to be rigorous and produce findings dependent upon data.

Sennett also interviews his research participants both individually and in groups, such as the IBM computer programmers (1999). This allows for an in depth individual narrative to emerge and also facilitates the group to share experiences and perhaps come to new conclusions together. I considered this to be of potential benefit in this research and the focus group took place after the initial stage of interviews. However, Sennett's (1972, p.41) interviews were guided by a set of concerns as opposed to a preconceived set of rigid questions. The questions themselves were determined during the interview process. I have followed Sennett's example in this by using the sensitizing concept of respect to guide the interview. However, due to my lack of experience with the interview process I decided to outline a sample set of questions (see appendix A.2). Although I did not require these questions during the interviews they did help to guide my thoughts before

beginning each session. Sennett also returned to the same locations and the same individuals over a span of time in order to explore the impact of time and experience. When he returned to interview Enrico and the Boston bakers over twenty years had passed. This allowed Sennett to further explore the impact the changes in society had made on the lives of the individuals in his research. Although it is not practical to extend this research over a twenty year period I believe it may be interesting and informative to extend the data collection over two sessions. This will, as in Sennett, allow the experiences of the students to develop over time and both enhance and further inform the initial research data. This will also allow me to draw conclusions from the research that are not restricted to a certain moment in time but that have in fact stood the test of time. The time lapse in between both interview sessions is two years.

The central difference in my approach to this research to that of Richard Sennett's lies in the changes he made from what people told him to what appears on the page. In an attempt to protect the anonymity of the interviewees Sennett condensed remarks and portrayed them as coming from one person and on some occasions combined elements of various life histories into one. He did this for both clarity and privacy. However, I decided to remain true to the data as I wanted the voices of the learners in this research to be heard. I altered the names of the participants for privacy purposes and omitted certain details such as names and locations which would easily identify them. I believe remaining true to the data is of importance to the concept of respect that is central to this study. Sennett raises the question concerning how believable his research is due to his creative approach to the research and the data produced. This is precisely the situation which I wished to avoid by deciding not to adapt the data.

Sennett defends the artful freedom which he used in his research and writes that ‘art creates a different truth from the recitation and interpretation of facts’ (1972, p.43). It is Sennett’s defense of his creative method in the name of art that inspired my use of art to access the narratives of the research participants. Sennett also decided to approach his research using the qualitative method of narrative interviews as he believes talking to people about their personal experiences involves an element of trust that is not present in a phone call or questionnaire. In Freire (2006) trust is similarly central to the dialogical process. And finally, although Sennett interviews a larger number of individuals and this study involves 8 adult learners, he argues for the value of their stories not as representative of workers in general but as valuable human experiences containing social lessons. He writes;

It is not so much as a replication of other workers that their lives ought to bear a larger witness, but as focused points of human experience that can teach something about a more general problem of denial and frustration built into the social order.

(1972, p.45)

Similarly, Bell describes the story as ‘a window into people’s beliefs and experiences’ (2002, p.209), and yet the power within a life narrative is also a power that both connects and enlightens. Inherent to personal and social transformation lies the subjective. Merrill (2007, p.71) writes that ‘in constructing a biography a person relates to significant others and social contexts: a biography is, therefore, never fully individual’. The feminist mantra ‘the personal is political’ emphasises the fact that the experience of the individual is experienced within a social and political context. When we reverse this mantra we make the political and social personal, placing emphasis upon the fact that the social and political are experienced personally and the inherent power of narrative for their investigation. The individual does not merely act but interacts; subjectivity thus opens the door to intersubjectivity and empathy. We feel, hear and experience the other.

In my exploration of the importance of life narratives to adult learning I have found an ally in Richard Sennett (1972, 1996, 1999, 2004, 2006). His investigation of the social themes I consistently encounter in the classroom has mirrored my teaching experiences. I believe Sennett's use of the life narratives of the individuals he interviews has enormous implications for transformative adult education. The life narrative offers an insight into the learner's epistemological stance, not merely what they know but their 'way of knowing' (Kegan, 2009, p.44). Similarly, Sennett's use of life narratives allows him to explore how western society is experienced through the eyes of a diverse and wide ranging group of individuals. The variety of individuals Sennett interviews do not however manifest unrelated nor unique themes. Whether educated professionals or working class bakers each story speaks of the struggles of individuals to situate themselves within society. Although far removed from Irish inner city students on a college pre-access course, these narratives bear close resemblance to the stories I hear in my classroom.

In Merrill and West (2009, p.17) biographical research represents a 'reaction against forms of social inquiry that tended to deny subjectivity in research and to neglect the role of human agency in social life'. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) describe life experience as something which happens narratively. They write: 'Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experiences should be studied narratively' (2000, p.19). The sharing of a story in this context is much more than the passing on of information. Stories represent both an honour and an opportunity for the listener as the teller not only opens her life to the other but also allows it to be interpreted. In this research the stories of the participants provide an entry point

for exploring and examining respect, its impact and the consequences for how adults learn. Narratives are brimming with information about the individual, such as the experiences which inform her opinions and her outlook on life. According to Bruner (1990, p.115) individuals 'narrativize their experience of the world and of their own role in it'. Narrative can therefore illuminate the connections between experience and agency in the life of the individual. Similarly, I believe this to be of value to a study of respect as experienced in education. The life history allows the researcher a glimpse of how the participant experiences respect, deals with its absence, copes with its consequences and perhaps restructures her life.

Similarly, the participants in this research have begun their journey to third level education, and as such past experiences and their impact on the identity of the individual will have enormous relevance for the learning journey. Tedder (p.323) writes that biographical research 'offers empirical means for enquiry into such issues; it offers an approach to understanding how people come to terms with uncertainties about identity and change in contemporary society'. Educationally then narrative inquiry presents the individual in the context of her learning story. Chamberlayne et al (2000, p.1) describe how biographies are 'rooted in an analysis of both social history and the wellsprings of individual personality, reach forwards and backwards in time, documenting processes and experiences of social change'. The biographical method therefore focuses upon the interrelation of the personal and the social. This is important for this research on respect as it acknowledges that the attitudes adult learners bring with them to class are shaped and influenced by their life experiences as social beings. Merrill (2007, p.87) writes: 'Biographies are helpful for understanding the process of participation in learning as, importantly, they reveal the relationship between the individual/group and society by

highlighting the dialectics between social structures and agency'. In this way the biography of the individual is important for interpreting and identifying the practices which support and hinder adults on their learning journey thereby offering information vital for improving learning opportunities, particularly for non-traditional students.

According to Denzin (1989, p.69) biographical research facilitates the researcher in 'capturing, probing and rendering understandable problematic experience' and in order to do this 'it is necessary to get as close to actual experience as possible'. However, Denzin (1989, p.28) issues a reminder that this experience is not a search for the exact truth. He writes;

Interpretation, the act of interpreting and making sense out of something, creates the conditions for understanding, which involves being able to grasp the meanings of an interpreted experience for another individual. Understanding is an intersubjective, emotional process.

Similarly, Bruner (1984, p.7) distinguishes between the life as lived and the life as narrated;

A life lived is what actually happens. A life experienced consists of the Images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts, and meanings known to the person whose life it is....A life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context.

Both Bruner and Denzin capture the essence of the life history as one which necessarily contains gaps between reality and experience. The stories I will collect from the participants will therefore be representative of their perceptions of their life experiences coupled with the meanings co-created from these stories by researcher and participant. Although qualitative research is criticised for this interpretative element of its research, as discussed above its validity lies in the importance of the individual's interpretation of her experience.

Although the story told is based on the experiences and perceptions of the teller it is not a monologue that is set in stone and never changing. Narrative inquiry is not a process of one person telling a story and the other passively listening. The story emerges in the context of the relationship between the story teller and the listener and can also change with the telling. This reciprocal nature of the story is present in Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition and Freirean dialogue (2006). The issue of recognition in Honneth is predicated upon respect in interpersonal communication and is achieved intersubjectively. In Freire dialogue creates an open and trusting space between two or more people. In this study the process of sharing a life history is therefore dependent upon the relationship the participants have developed with me as their teacher. According to Freire trust is an essential ingredient in this process and therefore without it there will be no research. In Honneth (1995, p.133), lack of respect and recognition for the individual result in the absence of trust which is essential for all practical dealings with others.

The narrative is therefore dependent upon many factors besides merely the story and the teller and is an intersubjective process which requires the trust gained through relationship. As such the story emerges through the process of interpersonal recognition without which it would not be. Narrative inquiry is a human based method of research and therefore reflects the power of stories to demonstrate 'experience as a matter of growth, and that understandings are continually developed' (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.13). Truth-seeking must therefore be left for the scientific explorer whose search takes her beyond that of the social world. As opposed to truth, the social scientist is searching for 'verisimilitude – that the results have the appearance of truth or reality' (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.4).

It is for these reasons that I believe narrative inquiry and the life history is the most appropriate form of research method for this thesis and reflects the research topic most closely. The use of this method has eased the concerns I had about participant representation in this study and also any underlying concerns I had for my position as teacher researcher. Similarly, as an educator I work on the premise that human beings are a work in process and in progress. At each moment we, as human beings, are in the process of developing and writing our life histories. The potential of the narrative is therefore not only to demonstrate how social, historical and economic forces shape the individual but to ‘understand how people can find some means and strength to challenge these scripts, to take risks and become active agents in reconstituting lives and composing new stories in experientially more authentic ways’ (West, 1996 p.xi). As such, each story provides a privileged view into the window of another’s life at a particular time and in a particular place in her life trajectory. What is true today may be less true tomorrow, that is the experiences remain but our interpretation changes and grows with us. A life history is therefore continuously being rewritten, edited and developed.

Narrative inquiry offers the research participant and story teller the freedom and autonomy to write her story at the time of the research and choose the experiences she wishes to share. In Riesmann (1993) this autonomy is present in the flow of the narrative, as the story the individual wishes to share often takes a life of its own in the moment of the telling. He writes (1993, p.2) that in this situation the ‘purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives’. This interpretation of narrative as an inter-subjective process of co-constructing reality is one which reflects my position as an educator and recommends

narrative inquiry as a research method of educational value for both researcher and participant.

3.5 Interview Preparation

As stated previously, the data collection took place over two time periods separated by two years. This process included an initial interview, Interview 1, with each research participant followed by a Focus Group at the end of the week and a second interview, Interview 2, with each participant two years later. At each time however, my interview preparation remained the same and the interviews took place in the same location. Interview 1 and the Focus Group focused on three areas, those of school, work and adult education. In interview 2 the focus was on the courses the students were engaged in at the time and how they were experiencing education two years later. Although my research topic anticipated certain questions, such as, in Interview 1, “What do you remember most about school?” and “Are there any particular incidents which stand out?” an important part of this research was to allow the experiences of the participants to inform my research. For this reason Elliott (2005) recommends the use of open-ended questions in everyday language. As part of my interview preparation I created a page of sample questions to read before each interview in order to focus my thoughts on the research topic (see Appendix A.2/A.3). Similarly, my pre-planned questions were to be used primarily as prompts as Elliott (2005) also recommends for narrative researchers to limit interruptions so as not to disrupt the flow of the story and prevent themes from emerging naturally. I soon learned that as a researcher with no experience of empirical research this was a skill best learned quickly. However, I was fortunate that the participants were very interested in my research and so were more than willing to clarify moments where I felt I had interrupted or altered the story and so I could to a certain extent engage in damage

control. However, at the preparatory stage, when the interviews were a theoretical development all appeared quite clear.

In Interview 1 I designed the interview questions around three main categories. These were firstly experiences of respect in school, secondly experiences of respect in work as an early school leaver, and thirdly the experience of respect as an adult learner. In Interview 2 the focus was on the experiences of adult learners two years later and primarily focused on their present circumstances as students (Appendix A.3). Within these areas I attempted to access the experiences of respect and its consequences for the adult learner. Although I had these questions prepared I recognised that the research is co-constructed and so I must wait and see where the participant's story took us. In this I was guided by Riesmann's (1993) advice to the researcher, that the story telling reflects how the teller structures and makes sense of her life. However, these questions were a guideline or road map that did not discount arriving at my destination by the multiple side roads that present themselves in any situation involving human beings. As such, my intention was to allow the individual's story to unfold.

I believe I had an advantage as I already had formed relationships with the participants and knew them to be positive and enthusiastic about my study. In this way should I require further clarification of an incident or experience, as I mentioned above was necessary for the first set of interviews, there was the possibility to refer responses or incidents back to the participants for clarification or further exploration. However, while this was a positive I was aware that for the participants to share their stories and experiences with me required a level of trust that did not include my consistently returning the data to them for further study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In an attempt

to circumvent this situation I decided to explore other possibilities which would allow the participant to formulate her story and review her educational experiences. The avenue that both appealed to me and was consistent with the use of narrative inquiry as a research method was the use of art as a means to access narrative.

Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p.415) describe arts-based inquiry as intertextual and write that it 'crosses the border of art and research'. In Sullivan (2012, p.xii) 'research is first and foremost about communication' and as such 'a point to be made might best be conveyed in pictures, pigments, or pixels as much as prose'. He writes (2012, p.189): 'When considered as both a form of research and a form of cultural production, visual arts has the capacity to contribute in a significant way to our understanding of the uncertain times in which we live'. People are complex beings and so too are their stories. Human beings communicate in many ways and use their bodies as often as they use the spoken word. Art is a process which allows the individual to engage both physically and mentally and as such is one which engages the whole being (Greenwood, 2012). Greenwood (p.2) writes;

The use of arts based approaches to research, therefore, has grown from the desire of researchers to elicit, process and share understandings and experiences that are not readily or fully accessed through more traditional fieldwork approached.

The use of imagery allows the individual an alternative way to access her story, one which can often surprise. We can portray events and experiences through imagery in such a way that we bypass the rationalised meaning making systems we usually employ to create our story. Mason (2005, p.331) recommends the use of visual aids to 'excavate beneath practices', to identify the underlying values the individual uses to create meaning. He (2005, p.331) writes;

The images may be used to prompt research participants to talk about something that may be uncomfortable, something personal such as their family history, or

something such as their direct experience of a phenomenon illustrated by the image.

As stated above, I did not wish participants to divulge experiences that they would regret sharing and that could therefore result in embarrassment or humiliation. In this way I felt it inappropriate to produce images I had chosen to prompt the participant's story. I believed this would have implied the process of prescription which I wished to avoid. However, I believe the creation of the image by the participant, in full knowledge that she would then explain its meaning to me, allowed for the research interview to retain its integrity as a co-constructed process. In Interview 2 I did not use art to access the learners' experiences as the focus was primarily on their present experiences in education and did not require an excavation of the past.

Before beginning the recorded interview I introduced the consent form to the participant and discussed the importance of privacy and anonymity in the process and we briefly discussed the purpose of the research study. In Interview 1 I showed the participants the art material and asked them to draw their experiences within education. I did not elaborate at this stage as I did not wish to prescribe any thoughts which could alter the art produced by suggesting I wanted only negative or positive experiences. I asked each participant to take some time to draw their learning journey from school, to work and to the present in adult education. I did not remain with the participant at this time as I wanted her to relax and contemplate her experiences and not be overly concerned with my judgement or requirement. This process was quite short as each student completed the drawing within ten minutes. The subsequent discussion of the drawing and the images it contained proved very useful for starting the interview process. Although once begun the narrative gained a momentum of its own and the picture was then rarely referred to, I

found it a very useful method. The use of art allowed the participant time to contemplate the life experiences central to this study while also providing a springboard for researcher and participant to co-investigate and co-create a narrative together.

I was aware that my decision to introduce art could potentially result in the surfacing of an event or feeling that has been pushed aside due to past associations of humiliation or pain. However, as previously discussed, I was conscious of the relationship of trust between myself and the participants and had no wish to engage the individual in a conversation of a part of her life she would regret disclosing. In order to prevent this situation I reminded each participant that, as included in the interview consent form, we need only discuss those issues or experiences they were comfortable with disclosing and if at any time they wished to stop the interview or change the subject they must do so. I was aware that some had been homeless or had other issues that they might not wish to divulge and so I allowed these issues to be introduced by the participant. Barone and Eisner (2012, p.1) write;

The narrative, as rendered through words, makes possible stories and other forms of prose that are not renderable in music. Arts based research is an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable.

The use of art to access the life history of the individual therefore creates room for the unexpected, leaving the world of facts in favour of the ambiguous. In Sennett (2009) craft is something done with care and is meaningful to the individual. Dewey writes that art 'celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is' (2005, p.17). As such, the journey of the adult learner, past, present and future is depicted in a moment of art. Dewey writes;

In a work of art, different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear and lose their own character as they do so – just as in a genial conversation there is a continuous interchange and blending, and yet each speaker

not only retains his own character but manifests it more clearly than is his wont.
(2005, p.38)

I have provided copies of the 8 images produced by the participants in Appendix A.4.

3.6 The Data

Below is a chart with general information of the research participant's name, nationality, age at the time of initial interview and age of leaving formal education.

Name	Male/Female	Learning Supports	Accreditation	Left School
Mary	F	_____	Leaving Certificate	17
Jimmy	M	_____	_____	15
Patrick	M	Dyslexia	Group Certificate	16
Simon	M	_____	Leaving Certificate Applied	17
Stephen	M	_____	_____	12
Angie	F	Literacy	_____	13
Jim	M	_____	_____	15
Michelle	F	Second Language Speaker	Leaving Certificate Equivalent	17

At this stage of the process I required a structure and method for analysing the data that the interviews generated. I had the research questions that had motivated my study but they were primarily used for my guidance. These are:

1. How do adults experience disrespect and respect in education?
2. How do these experiences affect their identity, their relationships and their life choices?
3. Has this return to learning had an impact on confidence, self-esteem or personal worth?
4. What does education mean to them?

Throughout the process I decided to use grounded theory practice as it offers well signposted procedures for data analysis and it develops from the interaction of the researcher and the researched, thereby acknowledging the perspective of the researcher in the creation of meaning (Charmaz: 2000). Essential to this is the process of constant comparative (Glaser: 1978) and an inductive approach which stresses the importance of listening to the data. Unlike many qualitative methods grounded theory provided me with a three step framework with guidance on how to start the research, how to carry it out and how to stop (Dey: 1999). Within these three steps I found the structure that I required to approach the interviews and begin my analysis.

In Charmaz grounded theory involves ‘reclaiming tools from their positivist underpinnings to form a more open-ended practice of grounded theory that stresses its emergent, constructivist elements’ (2000, p.510). This involves the use of grounded theory methods as ‘flexible, heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures’ (2000, p.510). This description of grounded theory by Charmaz encouraged me to adapt it to suit this study and not to restrict my investigation to ‘formulaic procedures’. Furthermore, Charmaz stresses the advantage of qualitative research as allowing for the emergence of the underlying and possibly unexpected factors which are intrinsic to human experience: ‘We can add new pieces to the research puzzle or conjure entire new puzzles – while we gather data – and that can even occur late in the analysis’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.14). As such, the flexibility in Charmaz allowed me to apply grounded theory in a way that worked well with this study. Although Sennett does not discuss grounded theory as a research method he does stress the importance of qualitative research that allows for individual human experience to generate data (1972, p.45). As discussed previously,

Sennett is creative in his presentation and adaptation of the narratives in his research whereas I have decided to remain true to the individual narrative of each participant and as such grounded theory provides the structure I require which is absent in Sennett.

The Interviews

In Interview 1 I did one interview with each participant as due to the established relationship I did not feel the situation required an introductory session. However, I received permission from the participants to clarify or return to any points in the interview at a later date if necessary. This was not a problem as I had quite regular contact with the participants and I also offered each student a copy of the transcript in case they wished to clarify, correct or edit anything they said. Only three of the participants accepted a copy of the transcripts and none had an issue with the information they had shared. I contacted the first three interviewees, Mary, Jimmy and Patrick on one occasion after the initial interviews as I was unhappy with some of the conversation from my end. This was a reflection of my inexperience as an interviewer and one I attempted to improve during the following sessions. In Interview 2 the interviews were approximately 30 minutes in duration, due to the fact that we had already discussed experiences in school and work. As such, these interviews primarily focused on experiences at third level and the route through access. At this time I had benefited from my previous experience and did not need to contact the participants post interview.

I received permission from each participant at the beginning of the interviews to record the dialogue and all were comfortable with this process. I believe this was essential to the narrative process as it removed any distraction that taking notes might cause and also maintained the integrity of the dialogue, whereby my listening was an active part of the

process. However, guided again by Charmaz (2006) I used the time after the interview to make note of any insights or thoughts which the recorder could not catch. The following are two examples from my notes following the interview with Mary and Jimmy.

Mary used a wonderful expression during the session when speaking of her next project, “to satisfy the soul”. I commented on it and she became very emotional. My recognition of her phrase touched her. I can’t remember her words exactly but it was an interesting moment of respect during the interview process as I validated her use of the phrase and this had an immediate positive effect. She pressed both hands to her face and needed a tissue to wipe her eyes..... Moments later she described leaving work as a ‘positive out’ and again appreciated my appreciation and recognition of her phrase and attitude. It was a spontaneous validation of this research.

Throughout the interview Jimmy really took control of the conversation. His engagement in the process was complete and there was little need for me to worry that the student’s voice would not be heard. On numerous occasions he side tracked or drew my attention to a point I had missed or not acknowledged. He made sure to point out the experiences that he felt were important in his learning, influential in leaving school and contributed to his return to education. I found myself enthralled in the development of his story....It served as a reminder to me that the points or experiences that I consider important may not reflect the opinions of the participant. This is a good example of how I as researcher can put my bias into the story and contaminate the data with my assumptions.

These two samples from the notes I made demonstrate clearly the importance of these moments post interview. The above comments were of personal importance as my motivation for this research was validated so clearly in the first interview with Mary and in the second interview I experienced the danger of researcher bias that I had been so wary of introducing to the research. These moments were crucial as they allowed these incidents and insights to remain fresh in my mind while also helping me to improve my interaction in the process by allowing the story to develop with the participant as opposed to one dominated by my assumptions. These notes were also important when it came to analysing the data as I recalled body language and emotions that the transcripts could not convey.

I again referred to these notes during Interview 2 and found them of great benefit in making connections between the participants as they are now and were then. For example, Angie's confidence and easy way of interacting was a far cry from my initial notes of "poor eye contact, excessive smoking, laughing at most difficult moments...". These notes allowed me to draw comparisons in the participant's behaviour and emotional state and to highlight changes. Angie was particularly delighted when I noticed she did not smoke as she is '*cuttin' down*' and Mary was appreciative when I noticed her assertiveness during the interview. Previously I had noted she was "trying to please, afraid she was not helpful, very unsure". However, two years later and she regularly drew my attention to certain points and ensured I understood her year out was '*temporary due to family life*'.

Focus Group

As discussed previously this research has been influenced by the work of Richard Sennett, and as such the use of narrative also has its roots in Sennett's work. However, Sennett does not limit his narrative explorations to the individual interview and group discussions also feature throughout his research. Although there were aspects of Sennett's methods I decided not to adopt, such as fictionalised characters, I believed the opportunity a focus group provided would be of benefit to the research. There were a number of reasons for this decision.

Firstly, the focus of this study is respect as an intersubjective process that occurs, or does not occur, through relationship and the site of this study is education. As such, respect is a social process. In Freire trust is central to reflexivity and dialogue. Similarly, Sennett writes 'to restore trust in others is a reflexive act; it requires less fear of vulnerability in

oneself. But this reflexive act has a social context' (1999, p.142). The interviews had provided an opportunity for the research participants to reflect on their experiences of education in a private space with myself as tutor/researcher. However, I could not assume that a student would find it easier to share her story in a personal setting as opposed to a group. I was aware of the potential of the group dynamic to assist learners explore their experiences and develop their thoughts. Kitzinger (1995, p.299) writes that focus groups are 'particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way'. I was curious to know if group reflection in a focus group would yield fresh insights onto past experiences.

Secondly, I anticipated the interviews would raise memories of shame, failure and disrespect; similar to the stories which had motivated this research study. I had seen the benefit for learners when they realised others shared their experiences and the cathartic nature of knowing that you are not the only one. Sennett's (1999, p.131) groups confront 'the reality of failure and self limits' through 'interpretation'; they cease suffering passively and 'the action they take is talking to each other'. He continues to write that this is real action as they are 'bringing it out into the open'. Bringing stories of disrespect and respect into the open is to shine a light on them and hopefully reinterpret them in the presence of fresh insight. In Sennett 'the way people talk is important to understand'. He (1999, p.131) quotes the philosopher Rousseau; 'Who could have proposed that this childish punishment, received at the age of eight at the hands of a woman of thirty, would determine my tastes and desires, my passions, my very self for the rest of my life?' Our memories allow us to build a life history, a personal trajectory of the self from beginning to the present and projected on to an imagined future. The 'convention of the defining,

clarifying moment helps the programmers make sense of the shape of their careers' (Sennett, 1999, p.132). It was my intention that the focus group would offer a similar opportunity to the research participants.

Although my intention was to discuss education within the group I am very aware that a group of bakers or newly redundant computer programmers are not adult learners on a pre access course. I had initial concerns that the nature of the focus group might be a vulnerable site for the sensitive issues this research had yielded during the interviews. This concern was eased somewhat by Kitzinger (1995, p.300);

However, it should not be assumed that groups are, by definition, inhibiting relative to the supposed privacy of an interview situation or that focus groups are inappropriate when researching sensitive topics. Quite the opposite may be true. Group work can actively facilitate the discussion of taboo topics because the less inhibited members of the group break the ice for shyer participants.

To further ease these concerns I spoke individually with each student after the initial interview to confirm their willingness to attend and speak in the group. I also discussed the importance of only sharing information they were comfortable with and that, as with the one to one interviews, they were under no obligation to speak or share information and could leave at any time. I reiterated this at the beginning of the focus group and each participant assured me they were happy to continue. The focus group was based on guidelines provided by Kitzinger (1995, p.300) who cites three central advantages:

- They do not discriminate against people with low literacy skills
- Can encourage participation from those who are reluctant to be interviewed alone
- Can encourage contributions from people who fear they have nothing to say 'but engage in the discussion generated by other group members'

In order to allow the participants full control of their stories I again suggested we begin the discussion with the pieces of art drawn during interview. Each participant explained the picture she had drawn and the memories it had raised. When each student had

finished I opened the floor to any issues they found interesting or any insights they might have gained from listening to other students' stories. The use of art in this session helped the students to focus on each other and less on myself as facilitator. I was aware of the possibility at this stage that students might not want to comment on another's experiences or compare them to their own. However, my concerns were unfounded as the conversation flowed and all were involved.

Although I interjected if I felt a comment was interesting or if an issue had not been explored, the discussion continued smoothly. All were amazed at the similarities in their stories and experiences, particularly in how they each felt about themselves as compared to those they considered successful or educated. Learners did not share the more intimate details of their histories but they did find common ground in their experiences and how they impacted their sense of personal worth, their relationships and self-confidence. In Kezington (1995, p.299) 'focus groups reach the parts that other methods cannot reach, revealing dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by more conventional data collection techniques'. As such, my concerns were unfounded and as the group engaged in discussion I took advantage of my 'backseat' and took the field notes that would add texture to the transcript. At the data stage of analysis the focus group transcript was analysed in the same way as the interview transcripts.

Interpreting the Data

As the interviews in Interview 1 and the Focus Group were each of almost an hour in length I decided to have them transcribed by a typist. However, during this time I listened to each interview a number of times and added to the initial notes I had made after the interviews. I found this informative as the audio allowed me to note the tone and

inflections contained in the words that the transcripts could not highlight. For example, at numerous times in the interview process Jimmy appears to end his sentences quite suddenly, for example:

More or less ye but.... different influences if you know what I mean. Like as regards me Father was a bit of a.....and I just kinda lost interest at school. Losing interest due to the fact that I was not scorin' up high and down kinda low and it was almost like right... I'm just about passin' subjects here...

However, my familiarity with Jimmy coupled with the audio recreated the moment and I could reflect on his body language, tone of voice and the emphasis he placed on phrases such as '*different influences*' and '*just about*'. The drawings produced by the participants were extremely useful for accessing information and provided a starting point to the discussion, particularly for the participants who are less confident. For example, the picture allowed the participant time to reflect on her learning journey before the discussion whilst also providing an object to focus attention on besides the individual. Some participants such as Jimmy, Jim and Angie were extremely forthcoming and needed little encouragement to share their story. However, for others such as Michelle or Simon the pictures were a great asset. At these times I could enquire as to an image in the picture or the colours used to access the learning story. Michelle doubted she had anything to contribute to the research study that would be of interest and so the conversation took a while to reach a comfortable rhythm. An interview transcript misses the essential nuances of the conversation inherent in eye contact, tone of voice and body language and also moments of silence or thought. An exploration of Michelle's picture and its meanings offered a context within which to develop her narrative.

Suzanne: And you went to school in Brazil, all the way, primary school and secondary school?

Michelle: Ye.

Suzanne: Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences in primary school in Brazil?

Michelle: Oh it was ok.....nothing new....

Suzanne: What is your best memory of school?

- Michelle: When class finished and I could play and then eventually I got to leave....*
- Suzanne: This picture you have drawn about your learning journey, its very interesting, can you explain it to me?*
- Michelle: Ye. Well what I can remember about primary school I couldn't wait until it was time to go home cause it was a long day. I was always bored in school, and coz of certain issues with my family and the school I wasn't relaxed, ye know. I was always imagining I was somewhere else coz it just didn't interest me. When it was interesting I'd try but when I wasn't interested I just imagined things. I couldn't wait to get out. That's why I'm unhappy in the corner. Beside me I always putting my son because ye know I'm two now not one, so even in learning I'm doing it for us two. So I thought I should be normal ye know so got married had the home, rented ha....had a baby, no dog that's just to show kind of the idea I had of what I should do to be normal...the stairs is me always falling down and never getting back up coz I fell so far and not even knowing what I should be doing ye know. And then from there it's a gate coz I'm breaking away from all that and I really think my son is making a start through me too, So we are both graduating together and starting again.*
- Suzanne: There's a lot of interesting things happening In your picture.*
- Michelle: Am..Yeah it's weird I never knew I thought about me going to college so much to do with my kid, I mean I want to make a better life and be a role model for him but it was weird drawing us as two all of the time. I guess a picture does say what's the say again?*
- Suzanne: A picture speaks a thousand words I think you mean.*
- Michelle: That's it, we have something similar in Brazilia.*

The above extract from the beginning of the interview demonstrates the benefit of the use of art in this research. All of this information contributed to my reading of the transcripts and my codification of the data into relevant themes.

In Charmaz coding with gerunds, or action codes, is essential in the initial analysis of the data in order to generate theory. She (2006, p 49) writes;;

Coding with gerunds helps you detect processes and stick to the data. We gain a strong sense of action and sequence with gerunds. Staying close to the data and, when possible, starting from the words and actions of your respondents, preserves the fluidity of their experience and gives you new ways of looking at it.

These action codes lead to focused codes and categories that lead to theory as the analysis continues. Guided by Charmaz (2006) I quickly went through the transcripts identifying themes as I read. However, I realised that my analysis of the first interview with Mary

had skipped the above stages and progressed directly to imposing my theoretical assumptions of their experiences. My analysis of the following interview extract will demonstrate the issue;

Well in the latter part of the job that I was in I, em... there was a lot of changes, a lot of changes... and not just I was feeling it... but we amalgamated with a department and I had previous experiences; bullying experience in another office. Then amalgamated.... then this fear of new people... then change.

Mary

My initial coding of this extract from the interview was 'self-esteem and misrecognition' as these were some of the themes I had expected. However, upon returning to Charmaz I understood that I had skipped essential steps in the data analysis that imposed my assumptions on the participants' experiences. Additionally, the sensitizing concepts of recognition and respect that I required at the theoretical level of interpretation were at this early stage undermining the data. I realised that I needed to reconcile the use of grounded theory and sensitizing concepts.

Charmaz (2006, p.16) refers to Blumer's (1969) notion of sensitizing concepts as useful for sensitizing the researcher to ask particular questions. In Blumer (1969, p.147) the concepts of a particular discipline are sensitizing tools which he refers to as "sensitizing concepts". A sensitizing concept 'gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances' (Blumer, 1969, p.148) and 'sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look' (Blumer, 1969, p.148). Charmaz affirms that 'consistent with Blumer's (1969) depiction of sensitizing concepts, grounded theorists often begin their studies with certain research interests and a set of general concepts' (2006, p.16). Although Sennett does not discuss sensitizing concepts, in his research he explores the social order through 'people's feelings about class and human dignity' (1972, p.43). In this research I have used the sensitizing concepts of

respect and recognition 'as points of departure to form interview questions, to look at data, to listen to interviewees, and to think analytically about the data' (Charmaz, 2006, p.17).

Charmaz emphasised a 'language of action rather than topics' (2006, p.48) and so the code I eventually used was 'fear of people', 'bullying' and 'change'. When I came to the next stage of focused codes the combination of action codes lead to half a dozen focused codes from Mary's interview transcript. These were 'exclusion' and 'positive change' and resulted from the combination of action codes created from such comments as '*nothing would make you feel very adequate*', '*you just didn't feel that you mattered*' and '*retirement was a positive out for me*'.

This process of analysis both enabled me to remain true to the data and assisted the constant comparative process of cross examining the 8 transcripts during both interview sessions. As the analysis of the data continued I began to draw connections between the interviews. In Polkinghorne (1995, p.177) 'the goal of analysis is to uncover common themes or plots in the data. Analysis is carried out by hermeneutic techniques for noting underlying patterns across examples of stories'. For example, on completion of the second interview with Jimmy I immediately noted the obvious similarities with Mary's discussion of change and its negative and positive connotations. An initial code from Mary's data was '*a positive out*' and referred to her retirement, redundancy and reflection on working life. Similarly, an initial code that emerged from the data from Jimmy's interview is '*a savin' kinda grace*' which framed his attitude towards leaving both school and work. Both of these initial codes were later conceptualised as 'change' with all of its positive and negative connotations.

Similarly, during Interview 2 common themes once again appeared. The importance of *'understanding'* for Patrick had remained a motivating factor. Stephen referred to his motivation for continued study as *'a curiosity'* and Michelle wanted to *'know why things are the way they are'*. This need to find meaning in daily life and to understand the world around us is a common factor in the reasons why adults choose to return to education. These initial codes were conceptualised as *'meaning making'* in order to reflect the connection between both interview sessions. The sensitizing concept central to this study is respect and so the experiences of both Michelle, Patrick and Stephen were explored in the findings to inform my understanding of the student's need to make meaning of her world and the development of respect.

The Findings

The fifth and final stage of this process was the writing up and theoretical analysis. Tenni, Smyth and Boucher write: *'Data is never theory-free. What we choose to write and how we choose to write it is constructed based on the ways we understand the world, our practice and ourselves'* (2003, p.5). The data analysis had revolved around four main periods in the participants' lives and so I decided to present the findings in three chapters. These are: Memories of School, Nobodies and Somebodies, Second Chance and Two Years Later. The sensitising concepts in this study are from the work of Richard Sennett and Axel Honneth and were important as analytical tools for the research. The processes I found most helpful in the analysis were highlighting particular quotes, using the participants language to describe the experience and separating the data into themes and sub-themes, focus code and action code in Charmaz (2006), first by transcript and then as

a whole. The following description of narrative analysis in Kim (2006, p.5) was useful in my approach to presenting the data in the findings chapters;

The researcher extracts an emerging theme from the fullness of lived experiences presented in the data themselves and configures stories making a range of disconnected research elements coherent, so that the story can appeal to the reader's understanding and imagination.

As I slowly surfaced from the data I began to gain a broader perspective on the consequences for individuals, particularly those who are marginalised and live in poverty, when respect and all that comes with it is interpreted through neoliberal values of ability and achievement. The data from this study began to give weight to the concerns which had motivated me to begin this journey.

3.7 Accessing the Participants

Each individual interviewed for this research was a member of my pre-access college course in inner city Dublin. As such, I experienced no difficulties with accessing their stories in the initial interviews. Each of the participants was keen to be part of the research process and enthusiastic about sharing their stories. As discussed in Chapter I, this course is part of the Back to Education Initiative provided through EU funding and delivered through the CDVEC. All of the research participants were members of the same pre-access group. I limited the number of participants to this one cohort because it is the only course at this level with which I was involved at this time and this allowed me the time to interview participants who were comfortable with the process as I was their sole tutor.

The individual interviews took place over two time periods. The initial interviews took place the Christmas of the year they completed this course, 2011, when the majority had progressed to third level, and were concluded with a group discussion. The timing of the

interviews was planned to allow the research to reflect the learning journey from part time adult education to full time third level study. The second set of interviews took place two years after the initial research in the same location, in order to create a comfortable and familiar environment. This allowed a space in time for the research participants to further experience education and to perhaps develop their initial experiences. The narrative style of the writing throughout the findings is intended to give voice to the stories of the participants in their own words.

3.8 Ethical Concerns

As teacher researcher I was at all times cognizant of the possible tensions between my narrative history and that of the participants. I was present as teacher researcher but believe my primary responsibility at all times to be to the students. As such, the location of the interviews and the times of each were arranged to suit the needs of the participants. I initially thought that they would prefer a neutral space away from their usual environment but this was an assumption on my part. Each participant chose to meet in the centre where her class was usually held. Similarly, in order to ensure privacy all names were changed during the research and participants chose their aliases. In order to further protect the identity of the participants I removed their ages from this document. Also, I arranged times and days of interviews to ensure that participants would not meet each other and discuss the research before having engaged in it. For this reason the interviews were arranged for the week before Christmas in 2011, a time when I knew each individual would be too occupied with festive preparations to discuss the research. I realised in the New Year that my preparations had worked and the group had not been in contact during that week or indeed throughout the Christmas break. I felt this was essential for the interview process as it ensured authenticity and spontaneity on behalf of the participant.

The NUI Maynooth Research Ethics policy similarly acknowledges the primacy of care for the participants in research and states that researchers 'have a special responsibility for safeguarding the interests of vulnerable people' (2007, p.2). Accordingly, I was at all times aware of the situation of trust demonstrated by the participants' engagement with the research process. In an effort to ensure transparency I offered each participant a copy of her interview transcript and encouraged each individual to contact me if they had any concerns, questions or confusion regarding the process. NUI policy clearly states that this participants should be able to contact the 'researcher within a reasonable time period following participation should stress, potential harm or related questions or concern arise' (2007, p.3). In addition each participant signed a consent form which I read with them before the interviews began, a copy of this form is in Appendix A.

Similarly, I believe that the constructionist approach to this research allowed for an increased collaboration between participant and researcher. Traditional research methods consider the participant to be a passive component of the research and depersonalises both parties. However, as the central focus of this study is a reflection on respect I believe it is imperative that the participants believe they are respected and valued throughout the process and as such their voices are present. As stated above, each participant was offered a copy of the interview transcript and the opportunity to clarify any part of the story she believed was misrepresented. Only three of the participants accepted this offer and the remaining five declined. I initially wondered if perhaps they had less interest in the process than I had believed but it was more a reluctance to reread the story of their own lives that caused the refusal. Each participant however, has asked to read the finished thesis.

Conclusion

The research carried out for this study was done with an attitude of respect and humility. I am grateful to the students who showed such enthusiasm for this project and who volunteered their time and stories without hesitation. Their generosity was central to the ease with which the data was gathered and provided security for me as a researcher to know that I could return for clarity if necessary. It was in an attempt to honour their stories that I chose these research methods.

Chapter IV

The Findings: An Introduction

The findings in this research will be presented in the following three chapters. The nature of this topic is such that it could not be explored without presenting a coherent picture of the experiences of these individuals throughout their early schooling, the subsequent years of work and their return to adult education. As a result, the following three chapters are divided into the relevant stages of life for this research. In Chapter IV, *Memories of School*, the early experiences of the research participants are explored in order to compare and contrast with their experience of adult education, to demonstrate the reasons why adults often leave school at a young age and have such fears of returning. It is also important in this research as part of locating the experiences of disrespect in the childhood memories of school and connecting them to the work of Richard Sennett. This is not to describe all early experiences of education as negative but to acknowledge that for a variety of reasons it is often so for those returning to education as adults. Chapter V, *Nobodies and Somebodies*, explores the working years after school and the impact a lack of education has on both esteem and opportunity. It is an inquiry into the vulnerability of adults who work in an unprofessional capacity and experience the indignity of invisibility that a lack of craftsmanship in Sennett implies. In Chapter VI, *Second Chance*, I explore the initial process which returns the adult learner to adult education and the subsequent experiences. I attempt to locate adult education as the space where dignity, respect and personal worth are reclaimed through the craft of learning and the collaborative discipline of community education.

A Thematic Investigation

The primary themes of my research findings are a reflection of those prevalent in the research of Richard Sennett. As indicated in the conceptual framework chapter the sensitising concept for this research is respect in the work of Sennett. In Chapter II I have attempted to follow the work of Sennett through the previous four decades using this sensitising concept. I have framed the conceptual framework in what I consider to be the four primary areas of Sennett's writing: respect and personal worth, work and craft, the new capitalism and community. In this chapter I shall attempt to interpret the interview findings using this sensitizing concept as understood by Sennett. I have taken this concept from Sennett and attempted to locate it in my research. However, various other themes have also surfaced during this research. These are primarily change, failure, meaning and direction. A reading of Sennett can demonstrate that each of these sub themes are present in his work and are implicit in a life narrative discussing the earlier identified themes of work, capitalism, personal worth and community.

The following research findings clearly demonstrate two quite definite separations of student experience within education. The first involves the overwhelmingly negative experience of education as a child and its opposite in adulthood. In these findings education is the location of disrespect in childhood and reclaimed respect in adulthood. Dividing these two experiences are years of living, years that eventually returned each individual to the classroom. These in-between years have their own stories of success and failure, of a search for meaning and fulfilment that is continuously changing and adapting to the needs of the time. In the following chapters I shall attempt to explore this journey from school to work and to the adult education classroom using the sensitising concept of respect. The broad scope of Sennett's thesis over the past four decades is an informative

critique of modern society, its institutions and the often precarious position of the individual. Sennett's theoretical concepts will be a valuable framework within which to explore the interview data and the role of respect in the learning process. However, before I begin I feel it is important to briefly address the issue of dyslexia in education for reasons explained below.

4.1 I'm Dyslexic

As mentioned in Chapter III, two out of the eight research participants are dyslexic and as such, I would like to briefly address this issue before I continue. As an educator I believe this raises significant questions such as the symptoms of dyslexia and its classification as a learning disability. Similarly, the widespread diagnosis of dyslexia amongst adult learners raises a red flag that may be considered convenient, as it offers a respectable reason for low literacy levels. I am therefore curious to clarify what a diagnosis of dyslexia entails and if this diagnosis is as comprehensive as I have been led to believe.

The International Dyslexia Association (2009, p.2) describes dyslexia as;

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and / or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

In recent decades dyslexia has been repeatedly investigated as a neurological disability and was reported to have neurobiological origins by the British Dyslexia Association (2009). However, there is another school of thought that questions not only question the criteria for a diagnosis of dyslexia but the meaningfulness of dyslexia as a model of differentiation between those with literacy difficulties. A recent article in *The Journal of*

Philosophy of Education (2008, p.476) by Elliott and Gibbs asks the following vital questions in an effort to investigate the value we place on dyslexia assessments within an educational setting;

1. Is dyslexia a clinically or educationally meaningful term for differentiating between children with reading difficulties?
2. To what extent would the dyslexic diagnosis guide the educator in devising appropriate forms of intervention?
3. To what extent should the dyslexic diagnosis result in the differential allocation of resources or other forms of special arrangement?

The wide variety of difficulties recognised as dyslexic are considered problematic when placed alongside those experienced by individuals with literacy difficulties. The following is a comprehensive list of the characteristics of dyslexia described by Elliott and Gibbs (2008, p.477);

Thus, dyslexics are often considered to present with such (co-morbid) characteristics as: speech and language difficulties, poor short-term (or working) memory, difficulties in ordering and sequencing, clumsiness, a poor sense of rhythm, limited speed of information processing, poor concentration, inconsistent hand preference, poor verbal fluency, poor phonic skills, frequent use of letter reversals (d for b, for example), a difficulty in undertaking mental calculations, low self-image, and anxiety when being asked to read aloud.

My concern is that the above definition of dyslexia is not dissimilar to that of an adult with low literacy levels. According to Elliott and Gibbs (2008, p.477) the weakness of this lengthy list of characteristics is that they are often present on other lists as signs of developmental conditions not connected to dyslexia and more importantly that ‘such problems are more characteristic of a certain stage of reading development, than representing pathological features’. As such, it may be argued that a diagnosis with dyslexia offers a badge of legitimacy to an individual who does not achieve a socially expected standard of literacy.

The National Adult Literacy Association (2004) refers to Bertram C. Bruce for a definition of what literacy means. Bruce’s central premise is that literacy, as with all

things, is constantly changing and evolving and as such can mean ‘just what we choose it to mean – neither more nor less’ (1995, p.1). Bruce attempts to demonstrate the diversity of meaning and interpretations inherent in the concept of literacy, one which cannot be separated from its socio-historical context. According to Bruce (1995, p.1) literacy is;

First, literacy means control over discourses that use and communicate complex forms of knowledge. Since there are many such discourses, there can be multiple literacies. Second, literacy is so embedded in our daily practices that it can scarcely be conceived as an activity separate from any of them. Third, the changing technologies of literacy provide a window into literacy practices, both because they are the tools through which literacy is enacted and because their construction reveals our basic conceptions of our basic humanity.

Literacy as a practice and construct is therefore a socially constructed practice. Freire (2001, p.29) describes reading as an action which ‘does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world’. As such, both ability and difficulty in literacy must be investigated critically and all labels, such as that of dyslexia, must be explored. This is not to doubt the need for further study and investigation in the area of dyslexia but to raise a flag for educators that all labels, no matter how respectable, must be interrogated without the assumption of truth.

The prevalence of learners with dyslexia returning to education is something which educators have come to accept as a legitimate reason for early school leaving. According to Fleming and Finnegan 30% of a cohort of mature students in NUIM in 2010 were registered as dyslexic (2011c, p.11);

There were 700 mature students in (the university) that year – later to rise to 800 in 2010. It is worth noting that 44 percent of the disabled students have registered as having a learning disability most typically dyslexia. More surprisingly, 30 percent of mature students are registered as having a disability, most often dyslexia.

As compared to 30 per cent at third level in Maynooth, 25 per cent of the adults on this pre access have been diagnosed with dyslexia. When discussing their learning experiences dyslexia therefore forms a central part of their story. However, this diagnosis offers an explanation for low literacy levels that are similar to those of other adult learners. It serves to explain away potential issues in not only how learners learn but also how they are taught. The majority of learners diagnosed with dyslexia that I have met have been early school leavers, as this is the nature of the learner I meet in inner city Dublin. However, I am increasingly concerned that the socio-economic background of the individual is often overlooked when the badge of dyslexia is applied. Similarly, schools, teachers and parents are more inclined to seek help for children who are either disruptive or who are failing. A diagnosis of dyslexia removes responsibility from all involved and maintains the reputation of both school and teacher.

I am concerned that the often unquestioned acceptance of this diagnosis results in the collusion of educator, parent and learner in a stigma of limitation which has not been fully investigated or understood. This collusion has the implicit consequence of the acceptance of certain limitations that may, under other circumstances, be challenged. As an adult educator I must therefore treat as suspicious a diagnosis of dyslexia in the same way I would a report of a student diagnosed with behavioural problems or labelled as slow. Elliott and Gibbs (2008, p.485) consider a fundamental risk in the debate about dyslexia as residing in 'the failure to acknowledge socio-cultural dimensions'. They continue to write that 'it is possible that dyslexia may be considered as at least partially a social construction' (2008, p.485). The acceptance of dyslexia without further investigation is therefore a 'catch all term of convenience' (Elliott & Gibbs, 2008, p.484) which ignores the complexities of literacy and its social construction.

4.2 The Findings

In 1972 Richard Sennett interviewed Enrico Kartides, an American labourer. Enrico believed that, in contrast to Greece, American culture struggled to demonstrate reciprocal respect across class divisions. He ‘finds in America an absence of rituals by which people might transcend class lines’ (1972, p.47). Three decades later, in 2004, Richard Sennett returned to the study of respect and the ‘difficulty of showing respect across the boundaries of inequality’ (2004, p.23). This issue prompted Sennett to ask a question that is a challenge to the modern individual living in a neoliberal society and vital for those in education: ‘Can we only respect people who are equal in strength to ourselves?’ I hope this research will shed light on this question and furthermore, identify the work of Richard Sennett as a relevant contributor to critical theory’s exploration of recognition and respect.

Chapter V

Memories of School

5.1 Anxiety, fear and inferiority:

I hated it. I absolutely hated it. If somebody said to me....well, like even now, I do see the kids going down in their uniform. I was walking with a friend of mine and she was saying, 'Ah look at the little one in her uniform,' - and she saw a cute kid in a uniform - and I felt terror for that poor child. I thought, 'the poor little bastard'. When I see kids going to school I feel so sorry for them and somebody said to me.....and like ye know – some people say, “Wouldn't it be great to be a child again?” and I'd be like Jesus no way. Absolutely no way I would hate to be a child.

Angie

I didn't know what the word dyslexic was or meant but I do now. I probably went through a lot of stress as a kid. I would be worried about Monday mornings going to school about reading ye know. I spent the second half of the summer holidays going oh shit! It's going to come round again. Dreading it.

Patrick

‘In our ordinary experience,’ writes Sennett, ‘anxiety can lead to withdrawal’ (2011b, p.4). In a lecture in 2011 Sennett described the central theme of Alex de Tocqueville’s writings on America as one of fear. The fear of what others might think causes the individual to retire inside herself. Although fear and withdrawal are seldom states we associate with school they are predominant in the stories of adult learners returning to education. As with all emotions the potential causes of fear are far ranging. Memories of early school years often include the fear of standing out or of exclusion, the fear of appearing stupid, the fear of hurt, the fear of judgement, the fear of difference and the fear of failure. Sennett writes that fear comes in two forms: ‘One arises from a clear-cut enemy who can be fought in clear-cut ways. The other gathers around dread, a generalised sentiment of vulnerability that is hard to contain rationally’ (2011a). This second form of fear is the one most referred to in these interviews as adults recall the all

consuming fear of being noticed by the teacher or drawing too much attention to themselves, with often violent consequences.

As a kid you don't really...just whatever is happenin' is happenin'. This is what your life is. I didn't feel like ...all this different. I just had to employ mechanisms to not be in trouble ye know.

Patrick

When I was a kid..knowing I wasn't wanted or liked... did you ever see a little pup or a little terrier that's in the RSPCA and if you go to pick that pup up, or that pet it will cower away from you – that's the way I was as a child, school or home made no difference, I learned to be invisible and just get through it. I still don't know how I made it. I was terrified for my whole little life, sheer terror....

Angie

Well I was a talker as a child and I'm a talker again now as a man but there were many times when I had to just shut up and swallow my words. I learned the hard way..... to stand out too much wasn't a healthy thing, no good ever came of my talk in school, it got so's I'd look over my shoulder as a wee lad before I'd speak. Frightened me they did..... I sometimes think of going back to that school, now that I'm over 6ft ha..... see would they tell me to shut up now.

Jim

When writing of the development of the personality and the importance of social interaction for its fulfilment Sennett (1970, 2004, 2012) consistently refers to Erik Erikson. Sennett writes that Erikson may 'seem to declare the obvious: we could not develop as individuals in isolation' (2012, p.13). Fear keeps the individual stuck; it prevents growth and robs the individual of the dignity of self-respect. According to Erikson (1959) it is at this stage children are at the age where they are learning to write, to read and to claim ownership. Teacher's and peers play an important role in this stage of a child's development and as such become an important barometer for a child's self-esteem. The child begins to feel pride in accomplishment and enjoys the approval of those around her. With encouragement a child learns to feel confidence in her abilities and to strive for higher goals. However, if initiative is not encouraged at this vital stage by a parent or teacher, then the child's confidence may suffer and inferiority might be experienced. When a child fails to develop the particular ability that is expected, such as

reading or writing, or is singled out from her peers in a negative manner, she may begin to experience a sense of inferiority that can subsequently affect her behaviour and potential.

No, things like someone would be up reading from a book and I be listening to what they're saying and before the page was turned over I'd be on the third page because of reciting what I heard someone else sayin'.

Patrick

But reading. I never would have read anything. I couldn't comprehend how someone could possibly read a book or understand that like. They must have some kinda magic powers. There was all these superstitious kinda...

Jimmy

Erikson further explains this stage of development in the child as 'I am what I learn' (1959, p.87). Patrick learned not to draw attention to himself or to ask for help. Jim learned that he could not learn. Angie learned she was a mistake. For Erikson the danger at this stage of growth 'is the development of a sense of *inadequacy* and *inferiority*' (1959, p.91). Sennett describes the inferiority complex as one which 'implies a deep consciousness of other people' (2004, p.116). He continues to say that the 'inferiority complex, whether generated from without or within, objectively or subjectively, means making an invidious comparison in such a way that whoever one is and whatever one has seem not good enough' (2004, p.116). As Jimmy watched other children read and enjoy books he thought they had special gifts that he was lacking, magical abilities that excluded him. Jim also believed that school was not for him as he could not absorb the information.

Ye I just thought it was the way it was, like... 'your dumb, your stupid.'...

Simon

When I did eventually go to school you'd dress yourself, and you'd brush your own hair, and you'd do your own stuff and ye know – you'd look scraggy. I used to look scraggy and then this scraggy kid with mad curly hair and... Do you know what I mean? Not good at reading and not looking like the rest...the other perfect children with their hair done and uniforms ironed, the teachers just knew no one was bothering with me and they didn't either. I can't honestly remember a kind

word...hated the place. They thought I didn't learn but one thing I did learn is that I was a mistake, I shouldn't have been born so I couldn't expect to be like the others....

Angie

For both Angie and Simon school was a place of isolation and struggle. Similar to Sennett, Axel Honneth considers mutual recognition to be an essential moral resource that is central to human development. According to Honneth's theory of intersubjectivity;

...the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee.

(1995, p.92)

Honneth (2005, p.114) asserts the importance of relationship for the development of self confidence as:

...a child thus learns to relate to an objective world of stable and constant objects by taking up the perspective of a second person, and thereby gradually decentering its own primarily egocentric perspective.

Misrecognition in Honneth or disrespect in Sennett both imply the presence of neglect and humiliation that destroy confidence and self esteem. Sennett makes a similar argument when he writes of the 'peculiar lack of respect which consists of not being seen, not being accounted as full human beings' (2004, p.13). According to this argument the central element lacking in these stories is the key ingredient of respect. Sennett writes: 'Modern society lacks positive expressions of respect and recognition for others' (2004, p.xi). This relates to inequality as it becomes incumbent upon the individual to prove her self-worth and validate her importance. Of self-respect Sennett (2004, p.xvi) writes;

But in the larger society self-respect depends not only on economic standing, but on what one does, how one achieves it. Self-respect cannot be "earned" in quite the same way as people earn money. And again inequality intrudes; someone at the bottom of the social order can achieve self-respect but its possession is fragile.

5.2 Shame on Me

These working class students are the first in their families to consider a college education and as early school leavers the return to education is an enormous step. One of the central challenges to their return to education is the assurance that the memories of school will not be repeated. The incidents recalled in these interviews had long lasting repercussions far beyond the class room. Incidents of disrespect are internalised as a judgement of others upon the self and become a visceral part of being, colouring every experience with the shade of ‘not good enough’.

When you're told you're not as good as others often enough... well, eventually you start to believe it.... especially when you're a child, you believe everything ye know. I'd never go back to those days, not for anything.

Jim

So if I couldn't do something I would think it was because I had dyslexia and I just could never do as much as the others. A few times I asked in class, same as others, but I always felt the teachers made a big deal of it, like I was stupid. It took years for that fear of not knowing something and looking stupid to leave me. Even now I have nightmares that I can't finish school. And when my son started school my biggest fear was that he have the same problem, like it was contagious or something....

Michelle

The injuries sustained from a lack of respect leave invisible scars that an individual can spend a lifetime attempting to heal or of not knowing what is wrong. Sennett writes: ‘Lack of respect, though less aggressive than an outright insult, can take an equally wounding form’ (2004, p.3). The form is all too often an attack on the self-worth of the individual when she fails to reach some unquantifiable standard or is perceived as different. However, it is all too often that the lack of respect takes the form of an aggressive act. Incidents of slapping, beating and shaming are all too common when adult learners discuss their memories of school.

Sennett (2004, p.117) quotes Erikson's formula that 'shame occurs when someone is rendered visible and yet is not ready to be visible'. The example Sennett uses is 'when a child struggling to read is being singled out by a teacher for making a mistake' (2004, p.117).

I was a fast talker but a very slow reader and at that time my talking wasn't appreciated. I'd be on a different page to the others and dread if I was asked to read. I'd go so red that eventually they just stopped asking me altogether. I still hate to be asked to read in class, and me a grown man.

Jim

'What adults, like children, need,' writes Sennett, 'is to control the conditions under which they see and are seen' (2004, p.118). Jim was not alone in his fear of being nominated for a task in front of his peers, particularly a task that he knew was a difficult one for him to achieve. However, it was not only the assignment of a task that caused anxiety but the mere thought of such a thing which caused Michelle's older brother to soil himself numerous times. According to Erikson (1959, p.92) it is important at this stage of the development of the child's personality to place a strong emphasis on those things that they can do, particularly for those children with a sense of inferiority. To shine a light on an individual when she is unready or unable to participate is to seize control of the other, thereby causing anxiety and disrespect. In Sennett welfare recipients complain of the lack of respect when they feel they are being 'got at' (2004, p.173), even when they are sincerely in need of assistance. Similarly, Patrick recalls; '*they made us stand with a book in the air*', while Michelle dreaded when the teacher made her or her brother '*sit alone for the day at the bold desk*'. Sennett writes 'the fear of naked exposure falls within the orbit of shameful exposure....'(2004, p.173). The consequence however, of failing to achieve a set goal or of perceived disobedience is not only the possibility of embarrassment leading to feelings of shame but also of physical abuse.

I wasn't a family member that suffered from it, but my brothers did. So you were always on guard - always on guard for the embarrassment of - while your

brothers mightn't have their homework done and they were going to get a slap.

Mary

So the more the teachers would react like that towards me, I would sit at the back and I would keep myself to the back. Then, ye know - in those days teachers could slap you – and so if you didn't know an answer.... you might have been doing maths, or sums, it was called in those days. You'd come in, and you'd get all of them wrong, and you'd get a slap across the back of the head but you genuinely couldn't because you didn't know. And then the audacity of the Mother when you'd get a report. She'd give you a hiding of a lifetime. You couldn't say to her, 'Well you didn't send me to school.'

Angie

As I said I was a slow reader and the teacher of the times made an example of me in front of the rest of the class.....and...battered me and stuffI still can't understand it but I suppose those were the times. In anyway, it made me look as daft as I felt...It's not somethin' I'd tolerate now though, I couldn't take seen a child hit.

Jim

Lack of respect can take many forms, however the dehumanisation of another through violence, although illegal in modern times, is present throughout these interviews in the early years of school. Sennett writes of character that it 'focuses particularly upon the long-term aspect of our emotional experience' (1999, p.10). In an emotionally charged environment of fear and vulnerability the lessons of character are not merely negative but detrimental. Character is something that develops in tandem with our relationship to the world around us. Sennett writes: 'Character concerns the personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others' (1999, p.10). Sennett echoes the words of Hegel and later Honneth and reaffirms that character development is a process which takes place in an intersubjective world. Hegel writes that 'social character must be planted in the child as feeling' (2001, p.149). And yet the predominant emotions described throughout these interviews are a mixture of fear, terror, embarrassment and dread. The treatment of these students in school allowed them to believe that they were 'stupid', 'daft' and 'weird'. Fromm writes;

Respect is not fear and awe; it denotes in accordance with the root of the word (*respicere*-to look at), the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his individuality and uniqueness. To respect a person is not possible without knowing him; care and responsibility would be blind if they were not guided by the knowledge of the person's individuality.

(2002, p.101)

5.3 Authority and Trust

Individuality in these stories resulted in punishment and the lingering feeling that the individual '*just didn't measure up*'. Sennett further describes invidious comparison as 'the personalised experience of inequality' (2012, p.169) and one which can erode social bonds. Stephen describes a moment that resulted in his early departure from primary school when a teacher '*put his hands on my shoulders so I just felt uncomfortable*'. After this and other incidents he believes he lost trust in those adults around him.

I don't think I really had any trust. I just didn't trust the whole system then as such. It was just trying to get through it....get out of it and that was it.

Stephen

Sennett writes: 'the social bond arises most elementally from a sense of mutual dependence' (1999, p.139). He continues to say that 'bonds of trust are tested when things go wrong and the need for help becomes acute' (1999, p.141). It is an absence of this help and support that results in a withdrawal from others. Sennett (2012, p.212) describes withdrawal as 'anxiety-reduction' which aims at diminishing external stimulation.

One thing I learned though is to just rely on myself. All that hurt, It didn't make me strong it just broke me inside.... that's what happens when you don't look after someone they just shatter all over the place... I'm forty five and its taken me this long to start putting all those pieces back together and to even try life in the world again. But I still don't trust people, I lost that years ago. It doesn't take much to have me pull back when I'm getting to know ye.

Angie

Angie's isolation and poor treatment both in school and at home resulted in more than low self-esteem and withdrawal. She gradually began to believe that she was '*a mistake*'

and therefore there was no real life for her to live. Her self-belief and care of self was minimal as she had never experienced it. Patrick chose to accept his position of isolation in the classroom and often removed himself to study or read alone in the local park. His method of coping with feeling different to the other children was to *'be a loner'*. However, as Patrick grew he found he had different issues to cope with, *'issues with authority'*.

I was never disruptive. I just would never turn up for things I wasn't interested in. I wanted to do Art, English and History - which is what I was interested in. They took me and they didn't listen to me. They took me and put me in this other class, so I just stopped turning up for school.

Patrick

Sennett describes the problem of his childhood home in Cabrini as one which 'denied people control over their own lives. They were rendered spectators to their own needs, mere consumers of care provided to them' (2004, p13). The refusal of the school to acknowledge his wishes caused frustration for Patrick who believed *'at that stage of your life you know yourself a bit, You're starting to know yourself'*. The refusal of the school to hear Patrick's wishes and respect his choice of subjects caused him to withdraw from school life. Although he was eventually placed in the class of his choice he felt it was too late as the damage had been done and he was subsequently in a position of conflict with his teachers, who he rightly believed did not listen to him. If his voice would not be heard than he would not speak and so he gradually removed himself from school. Sennett emphasises the importance of listening for authentic communication: 'The desire to communicate withers if there is no real interest in listening' (2012, p.172). Patrick removed himself from school when his voice was no longer heard.

The lack of recognition in Honneth and respect in Sennett at the hands of educators is often the child's first experience of those outside the nuclear family. Sennett writes of the institutionalised lives of children in The Watson School where everything that occurs

within the class room is ‘directed by the teacher’ (1972, p.80). He describes the teachers as ‘conductors who must bring potentially unruly mobs of musicians under their direction’ (1972, p.80). Furthermore, the judgement of the teachers bestows badges of both ability and inability on the students. The children learn through this process who will succeed and who will not.

Authority for the teacher is a matter of personal assertion, assertion of his power to do good as opposed to his mere possession of power. Authority appears to the child, however, as *passive*, as an audience before which he must prove himself.
(Sennett, 1972, p.87)

In this way the judgement of the teacher upon the child lies with the child as her responsibility. It is a dance between approval and rejection where the judge plays the tune. The lesson the children receive is that ‘something is wrong with them in the eyes of this silent judge, who does not, who cannot, verbalise his distance’ (1972, p.88). The onus thus lies with the children to succeed by ‘asserting their individuality’ (1972, p.88). Sennett continues to write: ‘The child’s own experience in school, however, is most important’. It is here she learns that the burden of success and of approval is on her shoulders. Sennett (1972, p.89) describes this situation as;

...an instance of how a superior “gets away with” restricting the freedom of someone in his charge by replacing the problem of limited freedom with the problem of the inferior person asserting his own dignity – the superior will not control, he will impassively judge.

Sennett describes this as ‘a game of disguised power’ (1972, p.89). It functions due to the fact that all believe they are either causing the problem or attempting to solve it. Power is thus legitimised in the name of good. According to Foucault (1980, p.74), power is instrumental in shaping identity and subjectivity. He (p.74) writes of personal identity;

...the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is a product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces.

The power of the teacher to judge and to subsequently wound is an attack on the dignity of the child. The child's fear of being powerless surfaces in resentment that grows as the child grows and is aimed towards the figure of authority. The teacher, however, interprets the child's obedience as respect and is blind to the child's true cause of fear.

But anyway he was in the class and I was up the front of the class and I turned around talking to someone and I turned round like that and next thing.... He punched me in the throat.... I was shocked and I kinda ... you couldn't go hittin' him back even though you wanted to hit him back or something ye know. It's like they had the power over you, you know.

Jimmy

Jimmy's experience eventually led to further confrontations with teachers as he believed it became a question of his personal dignity to stand his ground and not accede to their demands. In an incident where he was accused of swearing and denied it he was required to offer an apology to the teacher involved if he wished to play the upcoming school soccer match. Jimmy's subsequent refusal to apologise lost him the match but he believes that *'at the same time there was a disrespect but I felt proud of myself for not breaking'*. His dignity was on the line and although he felt he was letting down his team by not apologising, Jimmy felt *'I was being respectful to myself'*. This incident represented for Jimmy his *'little bit of power'* and a time when *'you know that you're standing up for yourself'*. However, I label this as a process of ritual humiliation. Jimmy continues to describe this incident as;

....an almost point in life where there was something happening; that this is a big test at the moment for your whole character. I knew stickin' to my guns I was doing the right thing for me.

Sennett writes: 'The children have a great deal of resentment against the aspersions on their dignity the teacher's power ultimately causes' (1972, p.89). Jimmy's reaction and decision to defy his teachers was a natural reaction of self-defence, one which allowed him a small amount of control. Similarly, Stephen experienced conflict with his teachers due to an ear piercing. His mother was the person who defended him.

So I went home and told me Mother like. She went in. Now she doesn't like me havin' an earring in me ear but at the same time....somebody telling me to take it out. So she went in and screamed the class and said he's wearing a necklace, he's wearing a bracelet and he's wearing an earring. They are all wearing jewellery.

Stephen

Stephen's mother noted that the class were all wearing jewellery and yet Stephen had been singled out for punishment. He was the only student interviewed who mentioned the support of an adult in school. This is of vital importance for the development of the individual as in his mother Stephen found the advocate and protector that many of the participants in this research lacked. At a later date while discussing this subject Stephen commented on the endless support of his mother. The knowledge she was 'on his side' gave him the strength to defy the teachers when they belittled him. During the incident of the ear piercing he had been referred to as 'a homosexual' and 'a queer'. This incident caused Stephen to eventually withdraw from school and had repercussions in his later life when he engaged with authority: *'I think I have a problem with authority - I don't think I have it the other way around. I don't think I have a problem in accepting other people's views so I....* Sennett writes that 'an absence of trust can also be created by the flexible exercise of power' (1999, p.141). The incidents these students recall although minor have serious repercussion both within and outside of school, repercussions that could have been avoided with more tolerance on the part of the adults involved. Trust implies tolerance and the expectation of acceptance, each of which are eroded through these incidents. Similarly, Patrick also experienced conflict with teachers due to individualising his appearance.

I was getting into punk rock and things like that. They didn't like that in a non uniform school - telling you what way you're cutting your hair. I don't like your haircut, you don't like my haircut – lets get on with it ye know. But it wasn't seen like that.....authority....

Patrick

These incidents confirmed to the students involved that school had little to offer them but conflict and intolerance. It became a symbol of disrespect, one which caused fear, resentment and in Patrick's words, '*put the shits up me*'. Sennett sums up their decisions to withdraw from school: 'It is rather that they have lost any expectation that school will help them, that this experience will change them or help them grow as human beings' (1972, p.83). In a similar vein Erich Fromm writes in *The Art of Loving* (1989, p.14);

While we teach knowledge, we are losing that teaching which is the most important one for human development: the teaching which can only be given by the simple presence of a mature, loving person.

5.4 Drifting

Although the incidents described in these interviews eventually lead to the physical withdrawal of the students, there was also a common thread of emotional and mental withdrawal while maintaining physical presence. Angie called this urge to escape '*drifting*' while Michelle referred to it as '*imagining I was somewhere else*'.

Ye it didn't matter. It's the way it is. There's nothing I can do about it. When I get older I'm gonna run away. That's what I was always thinking...always thinking about the future - when I get older I'm going to run away. And here I am, full circle and not far from where I was dragged up, still feelin like a stray dog, but in heels.... And so when I was in those situations I'd drift. I still call it that but I don't do it as much.

Angie

Well what I can remember about primary school I couldn't wait until it was time to go home cause it was a long day. I was always bored in school, and coz of certain issues with my family and the school I wasn't relaxed, ye know. I was always imagining I was somewhere else coz it just didn't interest me. When it was interesting I'd try but when I wasn't interested I just imagined things. I couldn't wait to get out.

Michelle

Angie continues to say: '*No the driftin' is what kept me alive. Without that I would have killed myself*'. Drifting, or imagining she is elsewhere, allows Angie a time of escape to safety. In her safe places there were never any adults, only animals: '*They won't hurt you like people can and they don't judge you either*'. The beatings both at home and in

school, the isolation and the lack of acceptance Angie felt caused her to withdraw from those around her to the only place she could, her mind. Sennett writes that for those children who are not engaged in school it becomes ‘something to wait out, a blank space in their lives they hope to survive and then leave’ (1972, p.83). Sennett writes that the less academic students in The Watson School acted as though they were ‘serving time’ (1972, p.82). Stephen described it as ‘*an endurance test*’. It was merely something to survive. An aerospace worker interviewed by Sennett reflected on his day dreaming at work: ‘The more a person is on the receiving end of orders, he said, the more the person’s got to think he or she is really somewhere else in order to keep up self-respect’ (1972, p.94). Sennett writes that when ‘you are just taking orders, you are not really alive, you almost cease to exist in the present, you blot it out’ (1972, p.94). The drifting and day – dreaming of these students was an active attempt to retain dignity in the face of disrespect.

In *Pedagogy of Freedom* (2006) Freire writes of the project of constructing the self. His words on the struggle to become the subject of one’s life, the agent of the self, shed light on the assertion of individuality the decision to leave school for these young students involved. They each eventually removed themselves from a space where they experienced disrespect, a space where they were not recognised as beings of worth.

In other words, my presence in the world is not so much of someone who is merely adapting to something “external,” but of someone who is inserted as if belonging essentially to it. It’s the position of one who struggles to become the subject and maker of history and not simply a passive, disconnected object.

(Freire, 2006, p.54)

5.5 Injuries of Class

Sennett describes the position he takes in *The Hidden Injuries of Class* as one in which ‘everyone in this society, rich and poor, plumber and professor, is subject to a scheme of

values that tells him he must validate the self in order to win others respect and his own' (1972, p.75). It is a scheme of values that tells the individual her worth and school is the space where this is often experienced for the first time.

So there were things like, I went to school with wellingtons on. A lot of the rest of them had nice shoes and what we referred to as runners, ye know, trainers these days. They were a big thing – we never had that... and you were classified, ye know, as no good. I stood out and looked different.

Jim

My family, my brother is dyslexic and in the 70's and 80's in Brazil dyslexia was seen as... I dunno...are you stupid? My family were poor and my mother didn't understand so we had no support, and we were already noticed by the school. So I was kinda just grouped with him by the teachers, like they expected me to be the same so I was always worried and trying to just keep my head down. I didn't want to be treated different like him, I just wanted to be normal but sometimes my clothes were too big or too small. I was always so afraid coz I knew they were judging me, especially coz my writing was slow. Only for my mother I would have left earlier.

Michelle

In 1972 Sennett writes that 'class distinctions in both productive and emotional terms are growing sharper than they were under the old conditions of scarcity' (1972, p.74). The individuals interviewed attended primary school between the late 1970s and 1980s. Both Jim and Michelle wore their poverty to school and experienced the classification and stigma caused by poor appearance. Angie's appearance and 'scraggy look' contributed to her difficulties in school as she felt it was obvious to all that she was poor and uncared for. Simon's working – class background coupled with his parents lack of understanding and experience of the education system meant that he was never diagnosed with dyslexia and spent his entire school years feeling he was 'dumb'. Similarly, Patrick's background was one of transition from home to home where dyslexia was never understood. Isolation and multiple transfers within school developed Patrick's identity of a 'loner' from a young age, an anxiety that a lifetime later continues to cause him unease within groups. Stephen Brookfield (2005, p.67) describes ideology as;

..the system of ideas and values that reflects and supports the established order and that manifests itself in our everyday actions, decisions, and practices, usually without us being aware of its presence.

The feeling of inferiority and difference, that these students experienced throughout their early school years, gradually became internalised, a part of their identity and self-image. Each learned their place on the social scale and found it to be at the bottom. Sennett refers to Erikson's original meaning of the identity crisis as occurring 'when a young person perceives a conflict between the social materials he can use in his life and his particular ability or desire to use them' (1972, p.25). Michelle and Jim both believed that life would begin when they left school and yet neither felt prepared for this next phase. Sennett continues to describe this crisis of identity in late adolescence as 'one of evaluating the relations between the individual's image of himself and his image of the life outside that self' (1972, p.25). It is at this stage the late adolescent attempts to find a pattern between 'a self image and an image of the world outside the self' (Sennett, 1972, p.25).

That's the kind of.. don't ask me what it was, it was they kind of stuck together and they kind of looked down on us.. Ye, am... probably wouldn't condense it into say that they were all like that.

Mary

Well the school teacher, the priest...ye know...the doctor – people like that there – they were seen aswell better than us types, working types on farms....cause they were a step ahead of the rest of us...

Jim

Both Mary and Jim were conscious of their farming background and felt that it was not quite good enough for the people in the town. However, when Jim returned home he found the opinions were the same; as a group his family acted according to the views of those considered better than them.

And the worst part now thinking of it is that people at home believed it. Now I was a kid so I didn't know any better for a long time, it took leaving and meeting others for me to learn and know I could learn. So there was an element at home that, if you were shining bright and being very good at something, you were kept

down. It was like you weren't supposed to shine or you didn't have the right. It was kinda just like the teacher sayin' shut up to me, ye know. Kills the spirit it does.

Jim

'Kills the spirit' is the term Jim uses to describe the experience of shaming and belittling another individual. The absence of respect or care present in Jim's life is present in these three small words. Jim's decision to leave school was, like the majority of those interviewed, due both to financial circumstances and the belief that education was not for him: *'But well, in saying that school wasn't for me, it wasn't for me. I had a couple a very negative teachers'*. Stephen's mother had found work for him at the age of fourteen and he had no second thoughts of leaving school so young; *'I had a job, I was happy about it'*. Michelle, however, did complete her secondary education at her mother's insistence but also worked in the evenings. She used her spare time to earn as much money as she could to *'escape my life'*. Michelle had no destination in mind, merely a ticket away from the life she was living and the opportunity to begin again.

To do the work I helped my Mum with half and the other half to put in a bank... and I saved and I saved and I'm going to buy a ticket to somewhere. I didn't know where at the time but I just knew if I stayed nothing would happen for me. I was tired of my life and I wanted to be someone so I figured if I go somewhere nobody knows me I have a chance to be someone, still me but not the me people knew in Brazilia, you know, a fresh start. It was my chance and I took it.

Michelle

The withdrawal from school in favour of work and the escape of Michelle from her life in Brazilia were actions in search of that which had been denied within the education system and her home life; an opportunity to restore the dignity of the self and achieve recognition. Jim felt he had been *'classified'* into a sub group, one lacking in intelligence and finances, whereas Michelle felt she was *'nobody'*. The ticket she worked so hard to buy was her opportunity, her golden ticket to a life where she could count. Sennett writes that *'no more urgent business in a life can exist than establishing a sense of personal dignity – if forces beyond one's control call the dignity into question from the time one is*

a schoolchild' (1972, p.171). It then becomes incumbent on the individual to gain the power necessary to protect the self. He describes this as an attempt 'to be free of other's power, to be self-sufficient' (1972, p.171). Jim believed that his chatty manner would have been more acceptable if he had come from the town as opposed to the farm; Angie believed that her neglected appearance allowed the teachers to form opinions about her on sight. According to Sennett, 'teachers act on their expectations of the children in such a way as to *make* the expectations become reality' (1972, p.81). Appearance and therefore background and class were an important factor in the interviewees' experiences of education in school and the image of self this created.

It is at the stage of leaving school the individual enters a new relationship with this world beyond the self and must depend on previous experience in order to navigate these new waters. However, when the barometer the individual uses to measure her worth has never been filled she finds herself consistently lacking and the feelings of anxiety and fear continue. Erikson (1950, p.97) describes the consequences for the individual;

On the other hand, this is socially a most decisive stage: since industry involves doing things beside and with others, a first sense of division of labour and of equality of opportunity develops at this time. When a child begins to feel that it is the colour of his skin, the background of his parents, or the cost of his clothes rather than his wish and his will to learn which will decide his social worth, lasting harm may ensue for the sense of identity, to which we must now turn.

5.6 Exclusion – I Didn't Fit

Angie describes herself as '*a stray dog*'. She asks;

Did you ever see a little pup or a little terrier that's in the RSPCA and if you go to pick that pup up, or that pet, it will cower away from you?....That's the way I was as a child, school or home made no difference, I didn't fit.

These three small words '*I didn't fit*' are too little to convey the damage they contain and the experiences that can follow from such a belief. Patrick's diagnosis of dyslexia resulted in a change of school from Gaelscoil to a special needs class of older children

with severe disabilities. As compared to Angie's '*stray dog*', Patrick describes himself as an '*outsider*' and declares, '*I always considered myself a bit of a weirdo anyway so...*'. Simon's memory of leaving school was with the aim of college, not particularly for work or study but to fit in: '*I just remember coming out of school I always wanted to get into college. I always wanted to be .. I wanted to, ye know, fit in*'. The sense of exclusion from those around them and the ensuing feelings of difference this produced is a common theme in these interviews.

Erving Goffman defines stigma as 'the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance' (1963, p.5). Sennett attempts to show that a working class individual with limited education experiences a very different struggle for respect than that of an individual from a middle or upper class background. This radically different experience is due to 'where he stands in the society and what he does' (1972, p.76). The majority of those interviewed were quite aware that the position they held in society was on the '*outside of things*'. Hence Jim's family's acceptance that they are lower on the social ladder than wealthier, more educated folk.

A belief that I am useless, unlovable or incapable of much that others can easily do holds that I am less than and others therefore more. Projection begets perception. However, the actions following from such a state of mind paint a picture of an internal condition void of love and dignity. 'I think therefore I am' becomes 'I think therefore I see'. In this way perception becomes the result of experience not the primary cause. Perception is a witness to our internal condition. The way in which an individual perceives herself can illuminate her past history and life experience. Angie had learned that her safety depended on the approval of those around her and so she went to ever greater lengths to prove herself worthy;

I was terrified growing up as a child and that's where she was...what other people thought was so important. So then when I became, into my teenager years and when I got older – I cared so much about what people thought of me, that I actually physically allowed myself to be sold... to prove that - yes I am this great person, yes, I'll do anything for you, please don't leave me, ye know.

Angie

Angie allowed herself to be sold and abused in the name of love. Looking back at her experiences as a young adult she shakes her head saying, '*Yeah, I was thinking this is what you do to show you love someone*'. This experience of love for Angie confirmed her lack of worth and value and resulted in numerous suicide attempts. Erich Fromm writes of love in *The Art of Loving* (1989, p.63);

Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an ordination of character which determines the relatedness of the person to the whole world as a whole, not toward one object of love.

The injuries to her dignity, the lack of respect and care in Angie's life, had injured her character in such a way that love was founded upon her ability to please another. Similarly, although Fromm presents his interpretation of love as an attitude he is also emphatic about the compromising consequences of the capitalist system. Under such circumstance love is reduced to a transaction and the individual is objectified. An extreme of Fromm's concept of love in capitalist society is the selling of Angie by her girlfriend in the name of love. Sennett refers to Emile Durkheim, the French sociologist, when he writes of the effects of 'anomie'. According to Durkheim, 'people who are shut out, unrecognised' (Sennett, 2012, p.257) suffer from anomie; Durkheim's term to describe the loss of morale. Sennett describes anomie as 'a sentiment of rootlessness, of being cast adrift' (2012, p.257) and refers to it in an attempt to further understand those who have been excluded. Durkheim's interpretation of exclusion has grave consequences; 'people can internalise exclusion to feel that, indeed, they really have weak claims on others, that the exclusion is somehow justified' (2012, p.257).

I felt like I had to defend those people, and it happened me in my life a lot of the time – I felt different and awkward and so I just decided to get away and be me somewhere else...I guess I gave up on my life in Brazilia and left before I left, if you know what I mean. But it made me angry so...nobody ever stuck up for me ye know.

Michelle

She says, 'You are rehabilitated.' And to me not even understanding what rehabilitated meant at that time...Well I took it that she meant I was retarded – I was somebody that was no good and never was going to be any good. That was the meaning I took from it at the time. I'm sure she meant it maybe in a different light at the time. It was just like being the country boy in town and not feelin good enough or as good as everyone else. And same at home, noone had any belief in me, especially after the accident. I guess I realised that I would have to do for myself, I wasn't fittin so I left...left the farm and the school and the town...determined to make my way without anyone else. I figured that I must be a difficult person so best keep me head down, ye know..thank God those days are far gone.

Jim

Both Michelle and Jim learned from their experiences not to rely on others. At a young age they both left their homes and families and emigrated, Jim to England and Michelle to Dublin. Neither of these choices however were based on choice but on necessity. Michelle and Jim believed they did not 'fit' where they were and hoped to find a place for themselves elsewhere, 'a fresh start to be me', in Michelle's words. Michelle's journey led her to an early marriage and pregnancy. Now a single mother she reflects that it was a lack of support and recognition which encouraged her emigration and early marriage;

Massimo... and I stayed here. I met my husband and we had the kid. We didn't stay long together but he's a good Dad. Now I know that when I left home I was feeling like noone would care, I wasn't anything special and so when I started to get attention here, comin from Brazilia ye know, I thought it was amazing. I really started to think I was someone ye know. I changed a lot of things to suit someone else, I didn't even know it but soon I was just pleasing other people. I didn't even do that at home, there I was a tomboy on my own, now I just wanted to be ok. I guess I didn't want to make a mess of it, this was supposed to be my fresh start ha But now I can see that I just wanted someone to love me or want me, no reason to get married though.

Angie

Sennett writes that 'much of the loneliness in our culture, however, comes from the vicious circle people get caught up in when they try to prove they are adequate enough to

be loved' (1972, p. 67). Simon thinks '*there's a stigma above my head*'. His dream of college life and making new friends is jeopardised as he believes he is not accepted due to his age: '*Ye, I had visions that I was going to make friends and stuff and it seems people are turning away when they find out I'm mature*'. The lack of acceptance by his classmates has resulted in Simon trying hard to gain their approval and volunteering for work that increases the pressure on him in college and thus his anxiety. As a result his studies are suffering and yet he asserts that study is only a part of the experience, friends and belonging are equally as important. Jimmy also valued his friendships as much, if not more than his schoolwork. He reflects that he '*never took it seriously*' but he did place enormous emphasis on his relationships with his friends: '*The only impact that I can record is the people – being separated from friends not the thing of you're in the middle and you're not at the top*'. Similarly, the importance of team sports and the support of the team were equally valuable to Jimmy. On the field he believed he '*did his bit to help the team*'. Within the classroom however, Jimmy believed the work '*went over his head*' as he was more involved with his friends than his studies. Jimmy believed that he could not succeed in school and lacked '*the magical abilities*' other students had. His successes on the field were a contrast to this and compensated for his performance within the class room. The recognition of his friends for his capabilities on the pitch therefore allowed him the dignity he believed was lacking in school. In a recent BBC2 documentary, *Wonderland* (2012), a young Oxford student, Joe Cooke, discusses his experiences with severe dyslexia. It had so affected his confidence that his speech was garbled and difficult to understand. It was the influence and support of Joe's grandfather that turned Joe's life around and offered him hope;

He laid the foundations for me to make something of my life. It was just someone showing an actual...someone showing an interest in me, someone actually putting some time in and making it clear I could understand, I could learn if I persevered. Someone showing me that I was somebody.

The relationship with his grandfather gave Joe the self belief he needed to conquer his fears and become a straight A student. The value of interpersonal relationship in these interviews is clearly shown as supremely important for the development of confidence and self - esteem. According to Honneth (2005, p.123) ‘we necessarily affirm the value of another person in the stance of recognition’. It is when recognition is absent, in the case of misrecognition, that disrespect denies the value of the individual. The nobodies of school daydream about their future lives when they go to work and become someones; unfortunately however, this world is not the way of day dreams and the experiences of school are often repeated. Injuries of class and injuries of difference have consequences that stretch far beyond the classroom. Erikson (1950, p.97) writes;

Third, there is the danger (probably the most common one) that throughout the long years of going to school he will never acquire the enjoyment of work and the pride of doing at least one kind of thing well. This is particularly of concern in relation to that part of the nation who do not complete what schooling is at their disposal.

5.7 Conclusion:

In this chapter I have attempted to explore the early school experiences of the research participants. The predominant theme in the research data concerning these experiences was one of disrespect. Incidents such as being isolated from the group in punishment, being singled out for making a mistake or being slapped and silenced are consistent throughout these interviews and the language with which the participants describe these experiences is one consistent with the language of respect in Sennett and misrecognition in Honneth. The common feeling of the participants upon leaving school was generally one of relief and escape. In the following chapter I will explore the consequences of these experiences for the participants in later adult life through work and relationship.

Chapter VI

Nobodies and Somebodies

In this chapter I will explore the experiences of the research participants in the years between leaving school and returning to adult education. In order to do this I will examine the consequences of early school leaving for the individual in the area of work and finance. Formal educational qualifications are increasingly necessary in what Hargreaves (2003) describes as ‘the knowledge society’. This has implications for the majority of people who must struggle to survive in the new capitalism without the necessary skills. Although this is a time of recession and high unemployment that has affected both rich and poor, it is the marginalised and the poor who will always suffer the most. This lack of opportunity to achieve the validation in society that is central to the development of self respect and self esteem means that those who are marginalised must find methods to cope with the resulting injuries to dignity and personal worth. In this chapter I will address these issues through an exploration of working days, the use of things or stuff and uselessness.

6.1 Working Days

As children day-dreaming in school the interviewees longed for the days of freedom when the world was open to them and they could work. Work represented both a freedom they could not experience within the classroom and an opportunity to succeed. Jimmy considered work ‘*a savin’ kinda grace*’ and remembers that ‘*at the time it got me out of school*’. The opportunity to earn money coupled with freedom from school was a common incentive. However, more than freedom from school, work also offered opportunity, the opportunity to be someone.

To be honest I think when you have been told often enough you can’t do something at some stage in life you make a decision, you either believe what

you're told or you prove it wrong and that's what I decided to do. When I left school, left the farm and all behind, I decided that I'd make good of meself at work. And now at this stage you have to remember I didn't have work or a trade or anything but once I decided to make something of meself well then all sorts of things happened and not all of them good mind you neither. But I came from a farm and as low as townsfolk told me I was I also could turn my hand to anything, and once I remembered that I took myself off. I figured work would be my way out and way forward, if you understand my meaning.

Jim

I was gay and I was young, so young. I thought this was a chance for me to start again, to belong ye know, mad stuff like have a family that I never had....Ha, can ya imagine.... I thought I'd belong in this community and I'd work and shine. But sure any job I tried to get didn't work for me. There I was thinking I'd work hard and save and become well, I dunno but be better than I had been but I had nothin, no schoolin and really poor readin. Lookin back I'd say it was like I was waving a big flag sayin "Here I am, please like me, I'll do anything" and so it pushed people the other way or else they took advantage, even in work I'd get the crap jobs or wouldn't get properly paid. I remember once I was workin' at back of a kitchen in some crap restaurant and all the others were going home but the manager just told me to keep goin I wasn't finished yet. At the end of the week I didn't get any more money but it took me ages to leave, I was still afraid.

Angie

The world of work did not fulfil the hopes of the Angie or Jim but merely reaffirmed that they were indeed different and so would be treated differently, special but not in a positive sense. As with Michelle and Stephen both Jim and Angie hoped to experience the dignity and recognition in work that had been previously absent in their lives; they each held the initial belief that work would offer them a freedom of sorts, the freedom to be a person of worth. This search for dignity according to Sennett may appear positive and yet, 'the images of human dignity in society can be enormously destructive' (1972, p.54). The abuse of Angie by her colleagues and supervisor confirmed their superiority and her inferiority. Her inferiority in turn confirmed their importance. However, as demonstrated by Angie, work not only offers no escape from her lack of skills and education but also fails to restore her self worth. Sennett writes;

..the dignity of the body is a value all people can share; the dignity of work only a few can achieve. While society may respect the equal dignity of all human bodies,

the dignity of labour leads in quite a different direction: a universal value with highly unequal consequences.

(2004, p.58)

The work history of those interviewed is wide and varied, however the common denominator is the vast number of positions and jobs held by each individual. Angie had twelve jobs, ranging from cleaner to shop assistant. Michelle counts that she has had three jobs a year for the time she has been in Ireland and that is almost a decade, thirty jobs. Some were concurrent but all were low paid and temporary. Michelle describes her work history as '*being on the outside*'. She does not have one specific skill that she can employ to create a career or position for herself. She comments on conversations she has heard about professionalism and passion in work as '*a mystery*'. Society, she believes, is moving without her as she lacks the skills to become involved and so she fears '*I might be left behind*'.

But most of my jobs were like that, people just think they are better because you're not professional or I don't look the way they think I should.... It was just a job you know. I need the money...I'd do any job they ask me. I've been working like since six years old. But when they start treating you different well then that's when it's not a job anymore. Not for me in anyway.

Michelle

Michelle's experience, as with Angie, was that of being treated differently to other workers due to a combination of low skill, poor education and '*just not fitting in*'. In Michael Moore's film documentary, *Capitalism – A Love Story* (2009), Moore shows George Bush's encouraging speech in support of the present economic system;

Capitalism offers people the freedom to choose where they work and what they do, the opportunity to buy or sell products they want. If you seek social justice and human dignity the free market system is the way to go.

The implication is that if the individual values human dignity than this is a benevolent system, however should she lack the skills to succeed and engage in the free market she abandons opportunity and is therefore culpable. An individual with low skills, no

education and little self confidence or personal worth, as the stories of the research participants demonstrate, is easily cast aside in such a system.

In Sennett it is respect that is the casualty of capitalism in all of its forms; early, middle, late or neoliberal capitalism, the new capitalism in Sennett. Respect is central to development of character. 'Character,' writes Sennett, 'particularly focuses upon the long – term aspect of our emotional experience' (1999, p.10). He continues to write; 'Character concerns the personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others' (1999, p.10). The impact upon character when the individual is denied the pride of self that achievement allows is therefore an injury that is prevalent in a culture which values this 'ideal man or woman' (Sennett, 2006, p.5).

It was a heritage project for the hundredth anniversary of the rising. There's a lot to be done up there but I'd be more interested in the archives and that side of it than...breaking up topsoil backwards and forwards. After a while I got sick of it. Anyway, they were nasty people to work for. It's a separate issue. You got to thank them for having a job – kiss their asses for having a job because it's recession time now.

Patrick

It was management. Somebody new came in to job share with me and the job sharer got to run amok and got to change a whole system and left me isolated from what I was doing and what I knew best.....

Mary

Patrick's experience is common amongst those interviewed who are unskilled and working. It is so often not only the fact that the work is unrewarding but the treatment by colleagues and superiors which makes the experience one of humiliation and frustration. Patrick continues to say, '*I was actually in prison to be honest with you*'. So many school memories in these findings contain the feelings of fear and anxiety that it is not surprising when these feelings resurface that the memory is one of unhappy school days; '*Same as going to school – rumble in the stomach – dreading it. Back to the weekends going it's Sunday, ye know, back in there....*'. Similarly, the lack of choice involved in the decision

to work for Patrick is also reminiscent of schooldays as a child. He was told he could not leave the job voluntarily and so resorted to creating a number of situations to have himself fired: *'Fire and brimstone. I don't get on with that...going back to the whole school thing really'*. As opposed to Patrick's experience of many different jobs Mary held a position for over twenty years as a civil servant. She enjoyed her work and the responsibility that accompanied her position but consistently felt overwhelmed and inadequate. New demands and expectations were consistently made of her but were not accompanied by the relevant training.

Well in the latter part of the job that I was in I, em... there was a lot of changes, a lot of changes... and not just I was feeling it... but we amalgamated with a department and I had previous experiences; bullying experience in another office. Then amalgamated.... then this fear of new people... then change.

Mary

In Sennett the personal implications of work in the new capitalism are that the values encouraged at home are abandoned in work. These two different spheres thus involve opposing ways of being that are mutually exclusive and yet the individual must move seamlessly between both. The friendly neighbour becomes the competitive colleague, willing to undermine in order to succeed and leaving loyalty in the suburbs.

This environment coupled with the neoliberal penchant for the short term contract and a flexible work force means that the average individual can expect to have numerous jobs and positions. According to Sennett a young college graduate can change jobs up to eleven times in her working life and change her skill base at the least three times (1999, p.22). However, the individuals interviewed in this research did not have a college education and the majority did not complete secondary school. So what then are the predicted number of times they may expect to change jobs? Michelle has held almost thirty positions since her arrival in Ireland and has few good memories of either the work or the people involved. Angie also worked in numerous positions but again felt she

'didn't fit in' with her colleagues. The consequences for Angie however, were more than a change of job and resulted in a decade spent in prostitution.

I figured I didn't have anything people would want in a job, couldn't even read properly, so the obvious thing then was to sell the one thing I did have, a body. I know it seems crazy now to say it but at the time it made perfect sense and meant I'd never starve. And I was workin'.

The final indignity for Angie was to sell her body and yet in her words, 'it made perfect sense'. Patrick's dignity suffered each day he was forced to work with individuals who undermined him and were verbally abusive. Stephen similarly found the experience of work a repeat of the condescension he remembers from school;

I suppose I don't like somebody telling you what you have to do. If someone comes up and says to me, 'you have to get that done, you have to get that done, you have to get that done' – somebody being authoritative for the sake of the authority – and is knockin' down the peers to get a post ye know.

Stephen

Stephen believes that each individual should be treated with respect, not because of their position in work but because they are a person. This is not a question of equality for Stephen but a matter of respect: 'I don't think it's equality. You should respect that person, that's their job to do – that's their job'. Similarly, Jim's experiences on the building sites of Ireland and the U.K. were a lesson in human behaviour. Jim's decision to 'make myself in my work' was one which he carried with him long after he had said goodbye to the farm. This decision he believes to be one of the most important in his life as it allowed him to experience success and pride, two new experiences. Jim became well – known for the pride he took in his work and yet, although he is proud of this acknowledgement of his hard work he believes it also did not provide the recognition he craved.

In my working years on the building site, because I took my work to be good, at what I was good at – I always seemed to be taken advantage of. I always seemed to be full out workin', and everybody else was standing watchin' me. I saw the firm that I worked for, go from a hundred and fifty people down to twenty-nine people, and I was let go. You had foremen and charge hands going back on the

tools to hold their own jobs. I could bet you for a pound if I went back to that same firm in the morning, I would be workin' like a blue-assed fly, and there would be three or four of them still standing watching me ye know.

Jim

Although Jim is proud of his work he also is left with the feeling that his effort was not perceived as commitment by others but as ‘*showcasing*’. In hindsight he states that ‘*a man driven to prove himself someone cause he was so often put down can really be misunderstood*’. The lack of confidence and the humiliation Jim experienced throughout his schooldays set him upon a path to prove himself worthy through his work. Jim may have experienced pride in his work but he also found himself once again isolated and on the outside: ‘*I wasn’t one of the lads, not that I really minded but some days you felt it*’. This ‘*feeling of it*’ that is described in these interviews, that is the visceral memory of hurt and shame, of just ‘*not enough*’, is more than an emotion that lives within these individuals. The consequences of disrespect are represented by the whole person. As such these feelings are absorbed and touch every moment, shaping perception and forming an identity of not quite enough.

Highly competitive working conditions and short-term work contracts similarly prevent camaraderie amongst workers. As Jim unintentionally experienced, for one man to shine others must remain unnoticed or compete with him. According to Sennett ‘the social system creates tensions that can only be resolved through drastic changes in the self’ (1972, p.241). The individuals involved in this research were forced to take responsibility, not only for their situations but also for their limitations. The feelings of shame and humiliation confirm for the individual that the fault lies within; ‘these feelings amount to a sense that the “lower” a man defines himself in society in relation to other people, the more it seems his fault’ (Sennett, 1972, p.96). Material circumstances are the essential badges of worth of contemporary society, and as such there are consequences

when these are unavailable. As Michelle noted: *'It's all about the stuff and how much you have'*.

6.2 It's all about the Stuff

Michelle remembers how she would dress as though she was working in an office and then change in work. Appearance of wealth was a tool of compensation for internal poverty.

I used to be real caught up in buying nice things when I first got here. And of course everything had to be the best. But really it was all a con, I couldn't afford it and I didn't need it. It wasn't really till I had my son I realised how much I was messed up trying to wear the right things and all just so people would notice me. I didn't want to be known as the poor kid again I guess.

Michelle

She confides how spending money to make herself feel better inside compromised her hard work during the week in one foolish moment:

I remember I was wearing a pair of boots a few years ago and one of the girls in the shop was talking about buying them. I told her they were great but she just laughed and said that great for me wasn't great for her, mine were fakes you see....I couldn't spend 200euro on boots...But I was really embarrassed and started arguing with her that mine were real and it was just her crap taste that didn't know it. So, I was so angry but couldn't go to work without them so I went and bought a real pair. I spent my bill money and do you know what, she never said a word. I felt so stupid wearing boots I couldn't afford to stop some nasty person havin a go at me. But I think it reminded me of when I was young and the poor one...

Similarly, Jim reflects on the changes in the countryside in recent years. Small homes on farms have become *'lord of the manor estates'*. He is saddened that the same people live in the same places that their families have for generations and yet due to financial circumstances those who have not spent as freely feel too intimidated to knock on the door. For Jim this change in country living *'drives people away'*. One time close neighbours are *'afraid to go up near them in case they would come in with dirty feet to the carpet or something like that'*. This is not the case however, in Jim's home where he

declares: *'Our house is very fortunate. Our house his lino on the floor'*. These changes and *'fancy ways'* have no substance for Jim as he reminds me that in the country everyone knows what their neighbour has and any farmer can work out another farmer's profit. And so in Jim's eyes the upgrading of tractor's and the manor houses are a *'confusing way to live, no place in country living for it'*.

I remember us with a flat bed trailer behind a tractor and three men up on the back of it spreadin' lime out over the field. Broadcast way shovels. People would feel that it showed signs of poverty if they were seen doing that. It's not so much important to show that you have money. More-so it is important to be able to show that you don't – that you're not stuck for money. That way sort of thing. It's like the tractor in the countryside. The tractor tells a big story in the countryside. Aye. I see tractors that are now forty, fifty thousand pound. That's a status symbol for a farmer now. These young generation farmers. If the neighbour down the road gets a fancier tractor, the tractor has to be changed for looks sakes, over reasons why it would need to be changed. It's like the 135 tractor - it's a novelty now to see it on the road in Ireland.

Jim

Jim describes this as *'keepin' up with the Jones' by tractor'* and compares it to upgrading a car in the city. The consequences however are serious for both the individual who overspends in an attempt to prove worth, as with Michelle's purchase of expensive designer boots, or for the individual who feels inadequate beside those with more or better material things, such as the neighbours' fear to call to the manor.

The search for recognition and respect is therefore dependant upon the acquiring of those objects or positions deemed valuable in the new capitalism. In Sennett when an individual discusses proving herself she is attempting to cope with the threat to her self-worth (1972, p.63). Ressentiment in Sennett involves 'ordinary people feeling that they don't get any recognition, that they have no standing in the eyes of more educated or simply richer people' (2012, p.142). He continues to write that 'the status object is meant to salve that feeling (2012, p.142). The lasting effects of childhood trauma and low self-esteem also prevent these individuals from engaging with those they consider 'educated

types'. This however has consequences for relationship as individuals must compete for these positions or objects. The lack of cooperation is present throughout these interviews, as the individuals involved find themselves repeatedly isolated in their work environments.

To be honest I think sometimes you get a job but maybe someone wanted it for their sister or their friend.....so even before you start you're getting a hard time. And like then if you try hard to get noticed so you can keep the job, well that's bad tooyou make others look crap. It's just not worth it. I don't like signing on but at least I can keep myself to myself and manage you know, who needs that...

Michelle

When I left work I went home and sat in my flat and watched all sorts of crap on the tv...when I think of it now it was such a waste but I knew no better. The other lads would be down the pub after work playing up to the boss but I didn't have to do that coz I just worked real hard. As I said though it didn't win me any awards and made others lots of money, I was left mostly to myself in work and then at home.

Jim

Michelle has held numerous positions and believes this to be a common experience. She comments that '*a new job can be nervous enough but then to be a bit afraid as well, or to know that nobody might speak to you today is worse*'. Jim tried to rise above the situation he was in but could not quite shake the feeling of isolation that work induced. Mary was bullied by a colleague and also felt that while a lot of people knew about it nobody seemed surprised or concerned. She had recently started to job share and with her part time status she believed came a lack of the respect she once had:

It was like I wasn't me anymore, I was just someone who filled in for the other person when it was actually the reverse. And these were people I had worked with for two decades, it really affected me.

According to Sennett 'invidious comparison – the personalised experience of social inequality – can erode social bonds' (2012, p.169). Mary looks forward to working for herself someday, where she will not be at risk of this treatment. Similarly, Jim believes that the only way to ensure he is not taken advantage of is to work for himself. Patrick

has also never recovered his trust of working in a group situation and comments that to this day it *'makes my stomach turn'*. Sennett writes that 'among blue collar workers self – employment has persisted as an image of freedom that will remove the tensions they presently encounter' (1972, p.228). Self-employment is a common dream amongst 'those with little formal education' (1972, p.229) and offers a safe haven from the realities of modern working conditions. For the research participants the attraction of self employment is one of autonomy and independence. It offers them a way to achieve self respect in work and also preserve their dignity as it protects them from the judgement of others. The language of work is consistently expressed in terms of self esteem, confidence and personal worth in these interviews, values which a negative experience of education and early school leaving severely challenge.

6.3 Uselessness

The values of modern neoliberal capitalism are those which dehumanise and reduce human beings to mere objects, individuals that only become of worth when they have something to offer. Those in need or without the necessary prized attributes are the "useless" of society. The conditions of the new capitalism therefore have serious consequences for the participants in this research who have not had the opportunity to develop the resources valued by society. The world and its increasing illegibility drive these individuals further from the centre of things, until they reach the edge; both the edge of society and the limit of endurance.

And so when I went for help. I walked into their office – I thought they just dealt with foreign women and all....and I knew because I was.... going to brothels and I was carrying a knife but I was waiting..... I would be just sittin' there with a client and I would say, 'go on, make my fuckin' day.' I was waiting to kill somebody because I had reached....nothing was right and I couldn't go on or fix it. I had no place, I was surprised sometimes I had a name. I was nothing but I knew...just knew ... you reach that point where you just cannot bear anybody to come near you again coz I wasn't a person anymore.

Angie

Like I do sometimes get frustration, how my life end up. Right now I feel I have no control of my life. I have a kid and I thought by the age of twenty-nine I would be ... ah dunno. I would be someone amazing and I would have done all these things ye know. But instead I'm still noone like I was in Brazilia, but now I'm noone with a kid and that's much worse. I don't feel like I've been a good model ye know....I can't show him anything special coz I don't know anything. It used to make me really depressed, still does sometimes. Like I said I don't need to be a genius just show I'm ok ye know....I want him to say oh my mam does that. But I don't think he can be proud of me till I do something to be proud of so I feel even worse when I think about it because...it's like there's nothing I can do so what's the point?

Michelle

Both Angie and Michelle believed they had reached an end to their dreams for their lives; nothing had worked the way they had hoped and they both felt powerless and frustrated, Angie to the point of harming both herself and another. Their daydreams however were neither very grand nor unimaginable. Angie longed for safety and belonging while Michelle believed *'if it was just something useful I'd be okay with that'*. Jim also experienced a sense of loss even though he was proud of his achievements in work:

Now as I was saying I was very good at what I did in construction but once you walked out that gate in the evening you had nothing to show for yourself, in relation to your own self-esteem ye know.

He confides that he *'put on the show that was expected'* when he was around others but inside he still felt like the little boy from Donegal *'proving to the world I didn't need them'*. Sennett writes that the experience of adults with the work they do *'seems intensely personal. These people are powerfully driven to interpret their work as reflecting upon themselves as individuals (1999, p.71)*. However, new capitalism's conditions also place a higher value upon the work than upon the individual providing the service.

It would be a skill to do all the operations, because there's different techniques from different angles, so they just break it down into small chunks. If a girl drops dead - you can replace her. If a machine breaks down, you have to physically pull the machine out, get another machine up, so it takes about half an hour, something like that. You can replace a girl in seconds.

Stephen

Stephen's experience on the factory floor taught him the value that was placed upon the workers was minor in comparison to the machinery of business. He comments that the factory can '*replace the girl quicker than you can replace the machine*'. The machines are not only more important than the individual but due to the fragmentation of skill they are also designed to be easy to use, demanding little or no expertise. In 1999 Sennett returned to the Boston bakery which he first visited in *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1972). He discovers that much has changed in the intervening decades and that technology has replaced the bakers. As a result the bakers no longer knew how to bake bread and in the same vein the girls in Stephen's factory did not require the skills or knowledge of a tailor; the machines had been programmed to provide the skill and the individuals merely facilitated the work. In the movie *iRobot* (2004), the lead character, Detective Spooner, is unnerved by the power of technology and the relegation of humanities skills to the sideline:

Um, look, this isn't what I do, but I've got an idea for one of your commercials. You see... a carpenter, making a beautiful chair. And then one of your robots comes in and makes a better chair twice as fast. And then you superimpose on the screen, "USR: Shittin' on the Little Guy". That would be the fade-out.

The bakers in Sennett's bakery are aware of the contradiction in their work titles; they are bakers that do not bake bread and hence have a work life that is 'marked by indifference' (1972, p.70). This indifference stems from the lack of engagement in their work as they are now 'performing simple, mindless tasks, doing less than they know how to do' (1972, p.70). Patrick's experience in the cemetery was one of indifference and frustration that eventually turned to anger as the monotony of work he detested continued:

I was fascinated by graveyards, cause I liked history and that, and always was and after a while I wasn't doing anything that was to do with the mind. I was like a general operative..... Monkey work. You could train a monkey to do it. There was no thought involved, really, ye know. That was where I was going to be. Stay there 'til the day you die. We're in a recession now - they said I couldn't leave the job.

Patrick describes his work in the cemetery as '*monkey work*', work that involves no thought or creativity. It was anathema to his soul and one which he says would eventually have eaten him up inside. Similarly, Stephen describes the worker on the factory floor as a drone and '*that drone type thing*' for Stephen represents '*the set up where the machine is more important than the person operating the machine*'. Mindless labour in Sennett (1999, p.73) is an indication that 'contemporary capitalism's new tool is a far more intelligent machine than the mechanical devices of the past' as 'its own intelligence can substitute for that of its users'. This lack of engagement with work and its subsequent lack of meaning for these individuals exacerbates the already vulnerable situation in which they struggle to demonstrate personal worth. This process denies the worker the essential validation necessary for the achievement of recognition and the creation of self esteem.

Similarly, Mary's increased isolation in work due to technological advances meant that a position which at one time allowed her interpersonal satisfaction with both colleagues and clients was replaced with multiple emails.

We thought that we would still continue to work for the therapists that we were working for. And their work - their typing, their diary, planning their trips, outreaches - that was not at all. That was again taken out of our hands and even taken into the hands... with the two girls who were originally – the office girls. It was put into an outreach office and we were e-mailed the diary.

Mary continues to describe the increased reliance on technology in work as lacking in '*intimacy*'. The consequences for her were similar to those Patrick and Stephen described; '*You just didn't feel that you mattered, or your opinion mattered, cause how can you really make an opinion with an e-mail?*' This lack of connection to others reduced the interpersonal contact essential for relationship and recognition and, coupled

with the increasing fragmentation of work roles, resulted in a lack of legibility and coherence.

I do remember, I was standing in the hall with you and I was upset, I think that I was just so confused about what I was doing and all....things like the decisions I made, I couldn't understand why I was making them. I mean I wasn't sure what I needed to do to make things work and it was like the more I tried the worse things got. Sometimes I had frustration or I was really pissed off at myself. I think though now when you're not happy you can't make decisions coz maybe you don't see things the way they are so at the time we were talking I was afraid maybe I was making bad decisions again and I would end up back where I started.

Michelle

You're thrown into turmoil because you have to think about money coming into your life. You have to get the stamps or whatever it was – jobseekers. After that trying to get rent allowance for the flat and that, ye know. You have to remember I was working all me life and had never experienced anything like it. A big shock it was and yet it wasn't. You sorta felt it was comin' because people had talked about it for two years before it actually happened. But I still found it all confusing, I mean I didn't feel good at first about not working but then I didn't feel too good when I was working either if you get me. I was just flat out busy and tired so I didn't think too much, I didn't have the time to think and then afterwards well I still didn't feel good. You start to wonder is this life, ye know, is this really living when you don't feel good either way?

Jim

Both Jim and Michelle share the feeling that they do not feel good about how they are living and yet can not quite interpret these feelings apart from what they do each day. Michelle finds that when she thinks about her life she becomes frustrated as she cannot understand how she could change her decisions or what is so wrong with them. Similarly, Jim realised after being made redundant that he did not feel much different than when he had been working. The ongoing feeling of unease left him confused. In the *Fear of Freedom* (2001) Fromm describes automaton conformity as a process of social manipulation which causes the individual to strive to be the same as others. This longing is present in the urge these students had 'to fit in'. Automaton conformity espouses the 'personality package' of contemporary society and is intolerant of difference. Fleming (2011a, p.6) further elaborates on the consequences of automaton conformity as

preventing 'self-directed learning, critical thinking and autonomy in action and any possibility of individual moral action'. Social productivity is therefore the avenue of expression for social value and this system of values allows us to interpret the world around us accordingly. Fleming writes of the of automaton conformity that it 'prevents critical thinking and encourages disconnected knowing. It prevents one from seeing how individual decisions are influenced by broader social structures and forces' (2011a, p.6).

The experiences of the research participants thus result in a reduced sense of self which combined with an increasing state of detachment from others, serves to increase anxiety and vulnerability. This is not surprising when as Freire writes, the individual's view of the world is a reflection of her situation in it (2006, p.81). The consequence for these individuals is that the responsibility and cause of this failure to either develop or succeed in life is perceived as lying within. Those who have little or no formal education are at the mercy of an illegible world, a world in which confusion reigns and understanding is fleeting. Similarly, the message of society consistently lays responsibility for the frustrating and self-destructing feelings these individuals experience upon their own shoulders. As Michelle asked: *'If others can make it then why not me? I try and it doesn't work out'*. Sennett writes that a 'single sharp failure is the personal experience which brings most people to recognise that in the longer term, they are not sufficient to themselves' (1999, p.141). A life time of failure is therefore a lesson in not enough and personal inadequacy. Those few who have the armour that this world requires can persevere however, according to Sennett (1999, p.119), failure involves all of a person, 'failure to make one's life cohere, failure to realise something precious in oneself, failure to live rather than merely exist'. From a young age these failures that are social in origin are accepted as stemming from the individual.

6.4 Conclusion:

The encounters these interviewees experience both in school and later in work reinforced their lack of worth and value. Many lonely and troubled years were spent by some recovering from the injuries and indignity of childhood. However, before setting foot on a path to education these individuals first struggled through the consequences of misrecognition and disrespect. They each, through their own personal valour and with either the aid of another or an experience of clarity found a way to more than survive, a way to self validation and dignity. Angie received help and support within an organisation and Jimmy found comfort and validation in the written word. The findings reported in this chapter indicate the harm and injury caused to individuals when they are denied the opportunity to earn self respect through their contribution to society. The majority of the participants shared stories of anxiety, confusion and shame at their inability to engage in society through meaningful work. This resulted in their withdrawal from the work environment and a general mistrust of others. Respect in Sennett, recognition in Honneth and love in Fromm each involve both relationship with the self and with other selves. The intersubjective process is crucial as one's knowledge of the self emerges from encounters with other selves.

In this research the path to recovering the self is the space of adult education. The final chapter in this research will I believe locate the recognition and respect that had so often been lacking in early experiences of education and in the subsequent experiences of work and find it in these adults' experience of the adult education community classroom. I have attempted to explore throughout this chapter, the experience of work in the new capitalism and its direct impact upon the individuals in these interviews which eventually

motivated their return to education. In the final section of these research findings we shall hear their stories of returning to education, and explore their experience within the classroom.

Chapter VII

Second Chance

7.1 Who Am I?

I just wondered about the purpose of life and stuff and about money and havin' money and what's expected of someone. What's expected of me is to make money, fill the house, have a van, set up a construction and just do that.

Jimmy

In Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Prospero ends the wedding masque with a speech saying, 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on'. To live is to dream and without the dream the dreamer fades away. In Sennett (1970, p.95) these dreams are a part of the promise of life and for the individual represent 'the heart of how he conceives of his identity'. However, when life offers little in the way of fulfilment or realisation of these dreams and turns them instead to unachievable fantasy, what is left for the individual? The dreams of the schoolchild and her hopes for the future slowly fade as reality teaches a different lesson.

The world beyond the classroom is not so different after all for those who have no talent or position to offer protection. In such a world dreams are battered and trampled until the individual remains and 'the failure makes them feel the dreams were no good; subsequently, most adults await whatever routine is dealt them' (Sennett, 1970, p.95).

I'm not a lazy person. I just dunno how I'm gonna be like....where I'm gonna be...if I'm gonna have a job even. So many things have happened that I didn't plan for any of them and so it kinda makes me think, what's the point in planning when the shit hits the fan in anyway. I think if I knew more about who I am then maybe I could figure the other stuff out.....dunno....it's like who am I, what am I about?

Michelle

I don't mean to say I was looking forward to it but I'd stopped fighting it, if that makes sense to ye. And its funny now that I'm so busy and not working but at the time that was a big problem. I'd no job and I was a man of near fifty, that's unheard of in my world. So I was up walking the streets of Dublin at dawn, watching everyone running around and all of them busy and all. And I realised I didn't know what to do. I hadn't a plan to deal with the situation I was in. I

remember I sat down along the river and thought, bloody hell what's going on here? But I didn't find myself any answers sittin down so I started walking again. But it was a feeling that stayed with me for a long time, what do I do?

Jim

Both Michelle and Jim experienced a sense of dislocation as a result of life changes that were beyond their personal control. According to Sennett, 'the most difficult problem of building a sense of social inclusion, for those not in control of institutions, lies in the issue of work identity' (2006, p.72). The constant fluctuations of Michelle's life and Jim's sudden job loss and subsequent loss of routine and security created a deep rooted sense of anxiety that destabilised both their views of themselves and the world around them. Michelle remembers: *'I just didn't think too much, I think now that was a big part of it, not thinking just getting on'*.

The experiences of these individuals are reflected in Bauman's (1998, p.92) image of the 'vagabond', the individual who without acceptance or belonging is constantly on the move. The lack of welcome and the image of solitude that is embodied in the image of Bauman's vagabond is one which highlights the loneliness and isolation present in these interviews. He writes that although tourists may travel and move by choice 'the vagabonds move because they find the world within their (local) reach unbearably inhospitable' (1998, p.93). It was Shakespeare's Shylock who cried: 'You take my life when you take the means whereby I live' and yet what of life when the means are both inaccessible and illegible? Baumann writes that each individual in contemporary consumer society is 'doomed to the life of choices, but not all of us have the means to be choosers' (1999, p.40). The individual's in this research learned to tread the edge of society where choice is minimal. However, one choice each of them eventually shared was the decision to deny the life that lay before them and to dream of something new. It

is this longing for a life lived with meaning and hope which eventually inspired a return to education.

In sum, the material spectre of uselessness lifts the curtain on a fraught cultural drama. How can one become valuable and useful in the eyes of others? The classic way in which people do so is the craftsman's way, by developing some special talent, some particular skill.

(Sennett, 2006, p. 129)

7.2 Meaning – Making

Working class don't work anymore. They were kind of grow up, leave school, get a job, get your house, do that. Have my little babies to replace you and the cycle goes on. You know what I mean?.....

Patrick

Unemployment, low wages and menial labour are commonly recognised as reasons for adult learners to engage with education. However, the predominant theme in these findings is not that of career or financial gain but one of meaning. The drifting individual described in Baumann (1998) is one who has been shown to live a fragmented existence without long term commitment or witness. The response of these interviewees to this modern dilemma was a return to the space where they first remembered experiencing disrespect, the classroom. This return had a variety of causes and yet one common purpose, to demonstrate personal worth and to find meaning.

I had nothing going on at the time that's why I went to the evening class and I thought if I don't like it it's my choice I can leave. And if it works well it could mean a fresh start for me. Like I said, I wanted to make my kid proud of me, ye know, bring him to work and show him what I do.

Michelle

It's funny now because it's not something I had ever admitted to anyone but I'd see the engineers in work ye know and sometimes I'd have to put them right and I used to think if I'd ever had the chance what could I have done. So I decided to go for it. And I surprised meself at how excited I was, thought I'd be more nervous but I think I just knew this was a chance for something for me, if that makes sense, not the job or the money just for me.

Jim

The decision to return to education for these interviewees is one which entails more than financial gain. In their minds the world of knowledge and learning is synonymous with an image of self bordering on the magical. In these interviews education is perceived as a path to freedom and an expanded role in life that offers the individual the opportunity to begin again, to remake herself in a form she recognises as more authentically true. Angie believes:

If I can do this college thing then I have a chance to make it mean something, all of the crap that happened won't have been for nothing and I won't be just another victim, I'll be a survivor and I think back to school can help me understand this.

Both Stephen and Patrick are motivated by a longing to engage with the world around them. They each want to enter those conversations they have previously shied away from and give confident opinions without the fear of humiliation. In both of their eyes, a college degree is the badge of ability which allows the individual to air her opinion or to make a mistake. Patrick laughs that a college degree implies an '*honest mistake*' whereas a lack of education just means '*you're wrong*'. For Stephen it represents a '*better understanding*' that adds to social acceptance. These interviewees identify education as a means to validate a self and develop an internal wealth that no job or circumstance can take from them. Sennett writes that the badge of ability 'bestows the right to stand out as an individual' (1972, p.64). Patrick '*was fed up with dead end jobs - as dead end as they come*' and believes education offers the chance '*to use myself to better my capabilities*'. Education for these students is a demonstration of their ability and legitimises their opinions and experiences.

The absence of meaning in the life of the individual can result in a life without anchor and purpose. Jimmy recalls a critical incident which caused him to drastically change his life and paved the way forward for his return to education;

I was workin' and there was kinda things happenin' . Then one day I was on a train and the train was packed and people were jumpin' on the train. There was this guy in a wheelchair and he was waitin' to get on the train and waitin' for someone to come...and everyone just got on the train and the train just pulled off. I seen the guy who was trying to get on the train and I felt like crying. You didn't do anything there and I was almost going to breakdown and cry and I said, 'What's going on with myself?' ...And I thought everyone here... and they're all workin' and doing their thing and they're not able to sort out a little problem. Me included. I remember that kinda thing very clearly

Jimmy

This incident was a momentous moment for Jimmy that crystallised emotions and thoughts he had been experiencing. It left him shaken and questioning both himself and his fellow passengers. Jimmy confides that he wondered was he losing his mind, '*crying for a stranger*'. In *The Sane Society* (2002a) Fromm argues that sanity is based upon the natural and authentic needs of humanity. It is these needs and desires which drive us as human beings and in being thwarted result in feelings of alienation and isolation. He (2002, p.70) writes;

Mental health cannot be defined in terms of the 'adjustment' of the individual to his society, but, on the contrary, that it must be defined in terms of the adjustment of society to the needs of man.

The individual's in this research are forced to continuously reinvent themselves and adapt to ever fluctuating circumstances. This chameleon like existence produces anxiety and insecurity, as demonstrated in these interviews. Their searches for respect and recognition are amongst the needs and desires which drive human beings but they require a social dimension in which to develop. However, anxiety, insecurity and fear have resulted in the increased withdrawal of the individual from social participation. Sennett (2012, p. 188) writes;

This individualised withdrawal seems the perfect recipe for complacency: you take for granted people like yourself and simply don't care about those who aren't like you; more, whatever their problems are, it's their problem. Individualism and indifference become twins.

The incident on the train highlighted for Jimmy a fundamental flaw in the way he was living. He questioned both himself and his fellow passengers as not a soul stepped forward to offer assistance. On the days following, the effect of this incident lingered and caused Jimmy to see his life anew.

I then remember a few days later I was workin' somewhere. I was workin' with this guy - he was an older guy. He was just being angry and....he was nice at times but one day he was just angry and I just had enough of it. So I went up to the foreman and I said I have some problems at home. I just made up somethin' and I said I won't be back.

Jimmy

Jimmy had witnessed his father's unhappiness and recognised it in the workers around him. The initial incident on the train coupled with the anger of his co-worker confirmed to him the danger he was in and the reality that this is the life that lay before him. His decision to leave work was a hope that '*there must be something else out there*'. That something else for Jimmy was '*to be able to do something*'; it represented a search for meaning which eventually lead him to play the piano and read music. Similarly, Angie experienced an incident which caused her to question the meaning of her life and her connection to the world around her:

So I knew I was going to kill someone if anyone hurt me again, I promised I would never be raped again and that was it, the game had changed... to me I was better off in the Joy because it was somewhere warm to sleep.

This decision to not allow herself to be harmed was a moment of change for Angie as she realised she could no longer continue to live her now old life. She describes prostitutes as '*a different race*': *First you meet a person – you suss them – you find out what their game is and what they're about. You find their weak spots OK – and that's what you use against them.* Angie's words reflect the devaluing of the individual when she is objectified and reduced to a means to an end. When Angie decided to reach out for help it was because she believed she was lost. She had not found the safe place she dreamed of

in childhood and instead thought only of imprisonment, a bed and a certain tomorrow. Her cry for help instigated a flow of circumstances which caused her to reevaluate her world and her place in it.

And if some old lady had tripped up I'd say 'ye fuckin' eejit ye' ha ha ha...I'd gotten like that. Do you know what I mean? I was hard. And if I was standing in a queue, and some old lady was trying to bustle through me, now it's, 'no no no go ahead' whereas back then it was, 'get to fuck. Come here you' I'd be grabbing her by the curlers and putting her back in line. Do you know what I mean?

Angie

Angie's consistent humiliation and degradation led her to believe she was alone and of no value. The result was an emotional and physical withdrawal of self protection. Sennett (2012, p.190) writes that voluntary withdrawal 'is the desire to reduce anxiety, particularly the anxiety of addressing needs other than one's own'. Angie believed she had reached the end of the road and decided to 'look after number one'. Somewhat ironically it was this decision which brought Angie back to life and gave her the strength to ask for help.

In anyway, I think after about a month of being there they asked me to go to classes and I thought I better I if want to stay – I did a thing called Steps and after about a month I started to think about things and think about.... and I went through a phase and I thought, I did this and I did that and Oh my God, I went through this and I went through that. Then asking myself, 'Why did I do that?' I found myself constantly, 'Why did I let her do that to me? Why did I let her?' – then thinking like – I sat there while my girlfriend gave my bra size, knicker size, waistline, height, hair colour, tanned..... I sat there while she gave those descriptions of me to sell me all because..... and then looking over and smiling and saying, 'I love you baby. You're so strong. I could never do what you're doing.' I did all that to give her an education.

Angie

Angie's return to education was part of her struggle to make meaning out of a life of hurt and sadness, to perhaps share her story and help other young women. In Sennett (1999, p.131) it is incidents such as these that help individuals to interpret and make meaning of their lives. These incidents demonstrate the changes that occurred and shaped the life narratives of the research participants. Such moments allowed for a break with reality and

the creation of a new paradigm with which to interpret life. It is this new paradigm which opened the participants in this research to new experiences and inspired a curiosity and subsequent interrogation of their reality. Most importantly, it is also this shift in perception that allowed these individuals to consider an alternative way of living.

7.3 A Change of Direction

The individuals in this research are engaged in a process of change in their lives which began before they returned to education. Although a wide variety of factors and motivations triggered these changes and return to the classroom the common theme running through these interviews is one of positive change.

Well, I probably again go back to the inadequacy because I would again think, 'did I really, really like office work?' did I? I have a big thing when my life started here that I would set out opening a coffee shop or....and still I observe everything around food and around that lovely feeling of meeting for coffee and a nice little coffee shop. I enjoy baking.

Mary

With the music and the reading. With the music's aim and then the reading helped me understand more about music and different things. Started all this interest in reading literature. I started reading novels....going to the library getting' books and poems because I had this time to fill. Then I read this book and I know some people would go that I took it up wrong - or shouldn't have...but I looked at it that this was a very important message in it...like talking about the golden age.

Jimmy

Redundancy offered Mary both security and opportunity as she '*positively retired*'. Her '*happy out*' represented an opportunity for Mary to remove herself from a position which highlighted feelings of inadequacy and also to consider work which might '*satisfy the soul*'. Similarly, when Jimmy '*was able to say I don't want this good money, I wanted something else*', he could not articulate at the time exactly what he wanted but he is definite that his life at the time was not working and served no purpose: '*I was able to say I'm not happy, I need some kinda change*'. The change Jimmy sought was one which

would hold meaning for him and clarify a purpose for his direction in life. He remembers *'I already had decided not to start workin'... but I had no reason. Where was it going?'* Jimmy had always had an interest in music and so he began to learn the piano. His success at the piano led him to consider more than playing an instrument and the ability to create music began to interest him. This interest motivated Jimmy to begin reading again and improve his skills in the local library. The book he eventually read which was so influential was Thomas More's *Utopia*, a book he had heard friends discuss. This book helped him to clarify his purpose and allowed him to articulate a reason for his feelings and life choices. For Jimmy More's *Utopia* validated his urge to not engage in work he disliked and to spend his time reading and learning. He was not lazy or *'coppin' out'* as some said, but allowing himself a time for personal growth.

It was the initial dissatisfaction with life and work that motivated the urge for change for both Jimmy and Mary and this sentiment is echoed throughout the stories of their classmates. However, this change was not primarily identified as educational but as one of increased autonomy. Sennett (1972, p.241)) refers to William James' notion of 'a second birth' to demonstrate the image of the birthing of a new self which change necessitates. He writes;

The birth of the new self is preceded, as in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, by a traumatic period in which the individual wants to act much differently, but feels held back by circumstances beyond his control.

He continues to write that 'the social system creates tensions that can only be resolved through drastic changes in the self' (1972, p.241). Change in Sennett connotes a negative image of the individual struggling to survive and adapt to an uncaring world. In contrast to Sennett's interpretation of change the individuals in this research experienced the

change that brought them to adult education as a positive, self affirming occurrence.

Michelle had reached a point in her life where she felt stuck.

My work was boring and I was feeling kind of isolated, I thought I needed to just shake things up in my life and do something new so I started a spelling course cause my spelling was getting really bad and I wasn't reading enough and the more.....I feel in life I don't do things constantly, daily....I forget. So I went to the spelling.

Michelle

It is this world of insecurity and anxiety which inspired the positive change which returned these individuals to adult education. Their experiences within the modern work environment mirrored that of Sennett's interviewees (1999) and were overshadowed with consistent anxiety and unease. In contrast the change of returning to education in these interviews is a positive and one equated with respect and dignity. The difference in these two forms of change, the one creating insecurity and the other promoting personal growth, is the ability to become the author of one's own life. The change which has materialised in a learning journey for these adults is a personal choice and as opposed to a change being inflicted upon them it is now a matter of personal agency. This agentic change has resulted in a renewed inner belief and strength for these individuals as it presented almost a moratorium within which to reflect upon their life situations. In Sennett the search for autonomous work that demands 'the change in self implied by "professionalising" one's self keeps one still immersed in the old world but no longer exposed to its wounding power' (1972, p.242). In contrast, the change these individuals have engaged with in adult education whilst offering the potential to 'professionalise' also offers the internal wealth they believed was previously lacking; they have reaffirmed their ability to use their own minds to examine the world around them. When the individual believes she has a certain amount of control over her life the future becomes a

safer place. Life is something happening, a process involving the self as opposed to something which happens to me.

Everybody's job is as important to them as mine is to me, no matter what job they're in - you know what I mean - cause everyone has the same struggles in life, they really do ye know. I had the freedom and the opportunity and once I saw that sign for adult education I was set, that's me I remember thinking, I'll change things around for myself and get back to learning new things. And as I said to you all through last year, this time its for me not for anyone else.

Jim

7.4 Sapere Aude

A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his.

(Emerson, 2001, p.26)

Kant's (1784, p.1) cry of "Sapere aude" is the Enlightenment call to intellectual liberation. Similarly, Mezirow (1997) writes of transformative learning, or the process of transforming frames of reference. Adults interact with the world based upon paradigms which are often unconscious or uncritical. This involves a set of assumptions which enable us to interpret and understand our experiences. According to Mezirow (1997, p.5) the human condition demands that we understand our experience. Similarly, in Freirean literacy the way we 'read the world and the word' (2001, p.43) connects education with social change. Literacy for Freire equates with consciousness raising and in turn involves an 'intentionality toward the world and towards reality' (2007, p.124) which masters the word in order to transform the world. This involves an 'archaeology of consciousness' (Freire, 1985, p.115). In this way becoming more human is dependant upon the recognition and respect of all persons and their overcoming of alienation. In this research the participants have consistently emphasised the importance of interpreting experience and understanding the world around them as an important element of the learning journey.

Just to understand things. You're looking at things and you're saying – even the present day situation the way it is. You're wondering, 'Why are people accepting what they're accepting? Why are people doing what they're doing?' Nobody's giving an explanation for it as such. Do you know what I mean?

Stephen

I just wanted to better myself to be honest. I don't think college is going to change me as such but I think it will help me to understand things in a way I didn't before ye know. I'll be able to say oh that's because of that and understand more of what's really going on around me. I hate all the bullshit on the news and in the papers, kinda being told what to think. It's like in Ireland the government makes a decision and we all go 'Oh well, what can you do?' Ye know, but that's not right. That's why I'm taking sociology now so that I can understand more about how things work and make my own decisions about how things are.

Patrick

The return to education for these individuals heralds a time of questioning and truth seeking that was not previously present in their lives. There is a thirst to no longer merely accept the world as it is but to understand it and perhaps even gain control over a small part of it. The circumstances these individuals wish to control are not only work related but involve their place in the world and the meaning it holds for them. Patrick's need to make sense of the world around him without being instructed on the correct opinions to have is a refusal to accept the pseudo opinions of others. In Fromm (2002b, p.246), living with feelings of anxiety and helplessness cause both mental and physical operations to 'become distorted and paralysed'.

The stress of modern living, even more insidious in 2012 than in 1947, at the time of Fromm's writing, ties the individual in so many knots that she struggles to engage with the world beyond the immediate self. According to Sennett 'withdrawal from institutions was tied more directly to people's experiences at work' (2009, p.36). This sentiment is echoed by Michelle as she celebrates the fact that she now has time to think and plan.

For me, what I kind of realised...I realised I didn't really think much. I don't reflect much on my actions. The journaling we started on the pre access was the first time I really looked at what I was doing. So that's one thing that I noticed

since I went back to college, and now I have opinions but they're not angry ones, they're real ones that express who I am now.

Michelle

Each of the individuals in this research struggled on a daily basis to cope with the demands of the modern economy. Although they each managed to carve out a space for themselves they also consistently felt as though they could never quite 'get ahead' or manage to 'see things clearly'. Sennett writes that a 'larger sense of community, and a fuller sense of character, is required by the increasing number of people who, in modern capitalism, are doomed to fail' (1999, p.135). The positive effects the participants in this research feel as they develop confidence in their abilities to reason and then to apply this reason to the world is a common theme throughout this research and one indicative of increased personal worth. Fromm's (2002a) 'social character' is one which reflects the prescribed opinions and values of the day. These individuals express the belief that they have developed their own characters and in Michelle's words, become '*more of myself*', since returning to education.

Confident in that, if nothing else...if I don't do anything with it outside of the home - that it has built my confidence in that I do know more than I thought I knew.

Mary

I was told I could learn and I didn't believe I could learn. So I decided to go and do the course anyway and I was absolutely amazed – I actually learned. I couldn't believe it. And it's not that I just learned stuff but I began to ask more questions... it's completely changed me as a person.

Angie

The process of transformative change in Mezirow (1997) challenges the individual's frame of reference and assumptions about her life. When Angie could no longer continue with her '*normal life*' she became frightened and sought help. Similarly, Jimmy's life was impacted by the incident on the train and he found he could not continue with his daily routine; something internal had shifted and he wanted to understand it. This is the 'natural interest' that Sennett (2004, p.242) writes of, one that 'can come only from

within, from our own curiosity, not from circumstances alone'. And it is this natural curiosity and interest that once inspired can lead the individual on the path of adult education.

I had decided kinda before that, that this is what I feel I'm really interested in. I spent so many years just playing the piano and just being interested in music. Finding out about its theory, its history and different things. This is what I had been doing inside in the library - so go in and I suppose, and crystallise that knowledge. Go do a degree.

Jimmy

7.5 The Craft of Learning

I always thought school would be right and wrong but I learned that it's more than that, it's about learning how you think. I made more progress last year than I have in the past twenty when it comes to thinking and allowing myself to think. I'm learning all of the time now and not doubting myself or my right to do it. I'm now doing Communications Level 5 in the college and I really am turning heads in my writing and what I have to say.

Jim

Every body was always constantly interacting with each other. But I was terrified to say anything in case they all laughed ha And then I remember a discussion started about homelessness and I was homeless at the time so I said now this will be interesting, thinking I'd catch everyone out. I was all on the defensive ye see and then I heard the most amazing stuff, I mean things I had never heard like maybe it's not my fault I'm homeless and not my fault if I didn't finish school.

Angie

Both Angie and Jim expressed how learning and engaging in a process of reflection promoted a change in their perceptions which enabled them to better understand themselves and their world. As an anchor in material reality education offers the individual a space in which to develop the tools necessary to investigate the world around them. Sennett writes: 'Poor craftsmanship was a barometer of other forms of material indifference' (2009, p.29). This reading of craft translated to the space of education implies that learning coupled with reflection can act as a buffer and as opposed to material indifference promote active engagement in the material world. This is the 'know-how' in Sennett (2009) that is the basis for self respect and personal dignity. The

technique and craft of learning encourages the practice of learning for its own sake and challenges the individual to consistently engage with her world and to be present. The recognition of effort and commitment to the process of learning and the subsequent increased personal worth the individual experiences are very often the first experience adult learners have of pride in their work.

Ye definitely. When you write something or that, people listen and encourage you – saying something positive about it. Even if someone's being critical, and you argue back then, that gives you confidence as well cause you're backing up what you're saying.

Jimmy

Ye. Something I can use.... my brain. OK I've had a few months of Joyce, Joyce, Joyce but my actual thing that I had to hand in at the end of January, cause I'm finished English now. Five or six questions and I'm going with Ulysses about the banning of it. I can mould it into what I'm interested in and talk about my...like Ireland at the time. 2500 words isn't really that much when you get going...

Patrick

Pride in work is something which the individuals in this research have, for the most part, been denied. Work was a place of ‘imprisonment’ and ‘stomach turning hours’. Jim, Patrick and Jimmy each experienced the work environment of the building site and although they had differing experiences of the work the common element for each was the general poor treatment of the workers and the high rates of alcoholism. Sennett writes: ‘The construction industry in free-market Britain suffers from low productivity; its craft workers are treated badly or indifferently; onsite initiative is discouraged’ (2009, p.30).

In contrast to this experience, initiative is something which forms the central premise of adult education as its learner centred ethos promotes reflection and critical thought. Reflection is paramount for authentic learning to take place. Sennett places emphasis on the ‘stages and sequences of the work process, indicating when the craftsman can pause in the work and reflect on what he or she is doing’ (2009, p.296). This reflection

maintains the head and hand connection so important for authentic engagement with work and learning. Similarly, the process of learning requires essential pauses to reflect on the journey so far and to integrate the knowledge gained so that it forms a coherent pattern to the student. These moments of reflection are both individual and group exercises that, for the learner, enhance the sense of control she believes she holds over her self and her learning. It is a form of disciplined practice which enables mastery and continued growth.

Well, now that you ask one thing that surprised me was the journaling and the chatting afterwards, if we wanted to ye know. But I'm a man from the country and that's not a place where you talk about certain things so questioning your feelings and thoughts on paper that was a new experience for me. It was odd because they were nothing new to me but the fact that they were so regular was what really made me notice the patterns. That's something that I try to do now, just take a moment and what did ye call it, "check in with myself".

Jim

Like I said earlier, I never used to think much about what I was doing but that course changed that. Everyone had an opinion and you really had to try to keep up, it was great. Maybe I think too much now ha but at least now when I mess up I don't kick myself I do what we used to do in class and I try to learn from it. I do that with my kid too when he's been bold or cheeky. And I also take stock of myself regularly and my life, like I mean I'm more on top of things because I feel I'm more aware of what or why I'm doing stuff ye know.....and then college too gives me hope coz I feel I have a future to look forward to and I'm making it happen, that's cool.

Michelle

Both Jim and Michelle feel the positive effects of reflection in their daily lives. This process proposes that everything that is held to be 'true' is questioned and interrogated and recognised as temporary and relative. The participants in this research believe they have experienced an increased sense of belonging and grounding in physical reality which has in turn encouraged them to re-engage with the world around them. As self awareness increases so too does the awareness of the world as a work in process, one which can be crafted anew each day.

However, craft is not an isolated event but one which promotes engagement. Sennett writes that ‘any person who stands out has to *prove* him or herself to others’ (2009, p.71). The return to education and the craft of learning allow the individual to engage in a process which supplies her with the tools with which she can then develop an internal sense of worth that removes this fear of standing out. The dread of unwanted attention is reduced as the individual’s sense of self increases and she no longer believes herself to be without talent or ability; the craft of learning as such offers a way to gain the know-how to engage with others and collaborate. Following this interview I returned to ask Stephen if his motivation for learning as stated previously was still relevant. He has recently been accepted for a degree and has managed to balance this with part-time work. My question to Stephen is, “What is your motivation for further study?”

I used to think people with a college degree were so special and now that’s me too. And ye know what, I’m the same person I just read and think about things a bit more. And I’ve an easiness with myself that I didn’t have before, like I’m doing something and I know I can do it too. Like before, I told you I used to wonder how people know things or think of them now I just realise they have spent more time finding things out than me. And if they can do it so can I. You don’t have to be special to learn but you just have to make the time.

Stephen’s words highlight the increased self-esteem and confidence gained through engaging with education. In many ways the external and material circumstances of his life have remained the same but internally much has changed. Stephen acknowledges this internal transformation when he remarks on his new found confidence in his opinions, the growing belief that he knows things and the realisation that he is the same as everyone else who is educated. His achievement has taught him that with effort and time he can do and achieve as well as others. The ‘*easiness with my self*’ that Stephen describes is a self confidence and esteem that is grounded upon personal worth and validation. Sennett writes that this mastery and craftsmanship is one which serves to protect the individual: ‘Becoming an expert insulates you from others’ (1972, p.237). In this way the craft of

learning becomes the armour the individual requires to navigate contemporary neoliberalism and to reclaim her visibility and position in society. As Emerson wrote;

Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design;—and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients.

(2001, p.35)

7.6 In this Together: Community

Well last year was very non-judgemental and everybody was very open and confidentiality which I think about - very secure in the group as well. There was some conflict but again you learned how to handle that. Getting over the comfort zone - the comfort zone was being stretched. If I came in and the room was changed...I just learned to handle it. This is life now.

Mary

Well, I think we're kind of a special group because everybody has really strong personality, and they weren't just regular people. They were amazing or something in a music way, or in ideas, or politics or they were... Had something real incredible.... I guess I learn not to judge people. I mean I talk about racism coz I'm Brazilian but I must be doing the same a lot if I think I won't get on with someone just coz they're different to me. And actually, they weren't that different in the end.

Michelle

The classroom is a space where learners challenge their views of others and of their assumptions. Throughout the year connections can be renewed and remade and community created. In such ways adult learners must abandon the purified identity Sennett (1970) refers to and learn to navigate a multiplicity of identities as difference is met and befriended. This meeting of differences is central to adult education as a location for the practice of citizenship and democracy and challenges purified visions of the world. It is often the first time individuals encounter someone from beyond their community and plays an important role in breaking down barriers. This is an important part of the community building Sennett (1970) refers to as cooperation and community are ethical choices as opposed to insular acts of protection. The social context in this study is the adult education classroom as cooperative community engaging in the craft of learning.

The experience last year really prepared me well for this first year in college. I mean when I started last year I was afraid to stand up and speak in case I did it wrong or someone asked me a question and I couldn't answer it. But then I saw everyone else just doing it and they were as nervous as me so I had no excuse and then a couple of the others had dyslexia too.... I didn't feel I was the dumb one...I mean they could laugh at themselves and stuff, it made it easier I think..

Simon

The increased esteem Simon experienced as a result of his engagement in education resulted in an ability to speak and engage in group activities which had previously been lacking. Similarly, Angie also discussed the rewards of finding her voice and now seizes each opportunity to *'talk to other people and see what we can learn from each other'*.

The discussion and group interaction in the learning process emphasises to the participants in this research that they are not alone while also reassuring them that they are not different, others feel or believe the same. The subsequent discussion offers much in the way of truth seeking but more importantly removes the psychic barriers that for so long have convinced the individual she is alone and not enough. These interviews demonstrate that the shared experience and the company of others can restore the individual to an active role in society in the way more overt successes cannot. Sennett describes the process of finding 'voice' as 'both a personal and a social issue' (2011d). The decision to voice a concern, as in Angie's decision to discuss homelessness and its effects, can under the right circumstances restore dignity and self respect. In Sennett the modern 'we' of teamwork is a weak form of community that offers little to the individual. In contrast to this the adult education classroom allows for community to build over time and also through difference.

And sure not a single person in that class would I ever have met or thought I'd get on with and now I can't say a word against them. I don't think I could bring half of them home ha but it just shows that different is okay ye know. It's like a class I dealt with in ----, same as yourself doin' the course, everybody was supporting one another, instead of people trying to bring you down or that ye know.

Jim

Jim's experience of returning to learning brought him into contact with individuals whom he would never meet in his daily life. Similarly, Angie, Michelle, Simon and Patrick found the diversity of the group challenging at first. In each of the interviews it was the *'getting to know each other'* which removed the fear and judgement of the unknown. Mary too felt her *'comfort zone was being stretched'*. The variety of life styles and personalities were sometimes challenging but through interaction and time spent in class and in the engagement in learning a sense of camaraderie developed. These differences primarily dissipated through discussion and through the support each participant received from their peers. A prime example of this situation is the surprise Angie felt when differences of opinion did not result in arguments. She was shocked at how respectful each member of the group was and although the discussion was heated it was also in good nature: *'I was shocked that they just sat there and listened to each other and some even made jokes but no one got offended or angry. It was a first experience for me'*. Similarly, Angie remembers that she immediately thought one participant was *'a hard one'* and so she tried to maintain a distance. However, she quite quickly reevaluated as his behaviour over time showed her he was *'a gentleman'*. This experience led Angie to comment that *'people are just full of surprises so best get to know them before hanging them'*.

In Sennett: *'Strong bonding between people means engaging over time their differences'* (1999, p.143). This is central to acquiring the skill of collaboration central to democratic practice. Similarly, the challenges of diversity are central to a critical pedagogical practice. Inherent to critical thinking is the identification and challenging of assumptions about reality and nowhere are these assumptions more obviously challenged than when

the individual must step beyond her comfort zone and social circle and encounter those whom she does not know and even more importantly believes she cannot know. In Brookfield (2010, p.76) assumptions are 'guides to truth embedded in our mental outlooks'. As such, they frame how we make our decisions and judgements.

The diversity we meet within an adult education group, particularly for students who have not ventured beyond their local area, is challenging and rewarding. As discussed above, individuals who may never usually meet or who may consider they have nothing in common find that through engaging in the process of learning these barriers are dissolved and relationships grow. In Sennett this process is central to the creation of community that forms the foundation for a democratic society. In adult education this is the process which engages adults in the critical investigation of the world around them and through this process similarly develops the collaboration and critical thinking essential for democratic practice. The value of collaborative learning within community for breaking down barriers and creating relationship is evident throughout these interviews. It is the relationships and the bonds that developed which created the space in which learning occurred.

Jim had recently experienced the turmoil of redundancy and prior to returning to education had found the loss of routine and financial security disorienting. In order to ensure his personal well-being he required both structure and meaning in his daily life. The individuals in this research, with the exclusion of Stephen, are each unemployed. However, as opposed to unemployment having a negative connotation it was generally experienced as a positive. Over half of those interviewed had removed themselves from work by choice as they each found the environment stressful and the work unfulfilling.

Although unemployment brought with it limited finances it ironically also provided some financial security and stability. As Jimmy said; *'At least ye know each week what you're gettin' on social welfare. It might not be much but it's guaranteed and no crap for it either'*.

The negative experiences in work had caused these learners to withdraw in order to preserve their well-being and morale. Interestingly, it is also the security of social welfare which allows them to return to education and plan a five year journey towards a university degree. Both the detachment from work and the reattachment within the adult education classroom are actions these individuals have taken in their search for morale and well being. According to Sennett: 'Morale is contained in our phrase "well-being" (2012, p.253).

Coming back to class was for me....I wasn't used to being at home and so much time too...planning a career at my age takes confidence and I knew that I wouldn't get that at home on my own so as I said I figured I'd try and if I didn't like it, I mean it's not like a job, I can leave.

Mary

Erik Erikson writes of the psychosocial moratorium often experienced during adolescence as a period of time 'during which the individual through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society, a niche which is firmly defined and yet seems to be uniquely made for him' (1956, p.66). The return to learning for the adult provides a similar break from daily routine within which he or she can explore alternative realities. Erikson writes that this offers a sense of continuity from who the individual was and who she gradually becomes. The individuals in this research experienced the learning environment of the classroom as a moratorium which allowed the opportunity to examine and problematise life experiences.

Ha, Surprised the hell out o' me I can tell ye. Coming from where I was ye didn't share anything and showed no weakness. Relying on someone could get you hurt

ye know ..but to be honest I was comfortable and I'm not sorry I did it. It was a first for me like, sharing that experience. I got a lot out of it and when I explained how I ended up where I was it kinda seemed like 'Well how could ye not?', ye know. I mean I was hardly gonna end up well adjusted was I?

Angie

Oh yeah, I mean like I said I wasn't thinking. I was just going forward real fast like but I didn't know where I was going or why, ye know. Going to class in a group of supportive people where I could kinda think things through was cool. I made lots of changes and stuff that year that I never would have made if I hadn't taken the time and I guess kinda took a step back from what I was doing.

Michelle

Sennett emphasises the possibility of acquiring the skill of cooperation as craft in order to improve the individual's relationship with the world around her and counter modern society's 'de-skilling people in the conduct of everyday life' (2012, p.x). For Angie the group interaction and the relationships she formed throughout the year, particularly with the male students, was central to the process of regaining trust in others.

All in all it was like a waking nightmare and then it turned into a fairytale coz everything I thought was wrong. And now I've been a part of something amazing... like even how people would relate to you. Do you know what I mean like ye know. Just please and thank you - the simplest little things. Like somebody going, 'Oh sorry excuse me and respecting your boundary, ye know.' not, 'Get the fuck outa the way!' - I was used to that. And listening when someone was speaking even when what they said was the opposite to what I was thinking, that was something I'd never seen before. And there was a hell of a lot of differences in that room ha but we all made it and we did it together. Even helping each other with work and the project, yeah that was the best part, just the support. I mean it really was a first for me.

Angie

The support Angie experienced from her peers allowed her to engage with the group and trust in the process. This was a new experience for Angie but with time and consistency relationships developed and trust grew. Freire writes: 'To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world' (2007, p.3). In such a way the adult education classroom becomes the location for the collaborative exploration of material circumstances essential to building the types of community within which the individual can engage democratically and practice citizenship. As such, cooperation in Sennett

(2012, p.x) becomes craft as it 'requires of people the skill of understanding and responding to one another in order to act together, but this is a thorny process, full of difficulty and ambiguity and often leading to destructive consequences'. However, collaboration will always entail moments of struggle and resistance and yet to withdraw from the effort is to withdraw from life itself. Sennett writes:

Still, pragmatism insists that the remedy to these ills must lie in the experience, on the ground, of citizen participation, participation that stresses the virtues of practice with its repetitions and slow revisions.

(2009, p.291)

Practice and repetition are disciplined habits the adult learner soon becomes accustomed to both in and out of the classroom as she endeavours to improve her craft. The central theme of craft is the process of engaging fully in the task at hand in a way that is meaningful for the individual. It is also this process which enables the individual to develop the necessary skills and abilities that allow her to restore belief in herself and develop her confidence. Michelle believes that the year she spent in education had positive results that have allowed her to rewrite her life in a way that represents who she is.

I'm not who I thought I was and I don't want to be who I am so I think I still want to be someone different and maybe college can help me with that. I think I have this fear of getting old that's my biggest...of being older and being the same ye know, that's scary. But this year has helped me feel maybe this won't happen. I mean on the outside everything looks like the same but inside it's like so different. Like the story I read to my kid, you have to believe and do your best and things will be ok...I mean it's a story but I took a chance and I did my best and things have changed, I mean I've changed and that means that everything I do now is different because I'm different.

Michelle

Conclusion:

In this first section of this chapter I have concluded the initial findings with an exploration of learning and what it means for the adult learner. The voices of the research participants confirm the growth and development that occurred throughout this year as

they speak of the positive changes that engaging in education can foster. The emphasis has been on relationship and the growth of confidence and self-esteem through interaction and achievement. It is through the interpersonal context of this learning experience that recognition has been achieved and respect experienced. This experience of learning stands in contradistinction to the negative experience of early school and work.

As stated in the previous three chapters, *Memories of School, Nobodies and Somebodies* and *Second Chance*, I have attempted to clearly state the experiences of the research participants at each of these three stages. My aim has been to weave the thread of both respect and disrespect throughout the life narrative of the interviewee in order to uncover the consequences of the presence and absence of respect. Before concluding this chapter I believe it will be of benefit to this research to further explore the experiences of the research participants. Two years have passed since the above research took place and during this time I anticipate much has changed in their lives. In order to ascertain if the conclusions reached in this research have longevity and relevance in the learning journey beyond that moment in time I once again interviewed the research participants.

7.7 The Research Participants: Where students are now?

Interview 2 does not ignore or alter the central premise of this research which is to explore how respect is experienced in the adult education classroom and the impact this has on the learner and the learning. Below are the research questions which motivated this study and shall continue to guide my research.

1. How do adults experience disrespect and respect in education?
2. How do these experiences affect their identity, their relationships and their life choices?

3. Has this return to learning had an impact on confidence, self-esteem or personal worth?
4. What does education mean to them?

Interview 2 is valuable for ascertaining the transportability of the initial findings on respect and the learning journey. I am especially interested to find out if the experiences of the participants will be similar two years later. What do students say now? Has the experience on pre access endured the in between years? What is most valuable about the experience on their learning journeys? What is the ‘learning’ that has endured, the consequence of the return to education? I anticipate the interviews will yield answers to these questions and more.

At this time the research participants have been engaged in education for a number of years and I believe this extended timeframe will allow for the benefit of more diverse educational experiences. Below is a chart locating the research participants within the education system.

Name	Male/Female	2011	2012	Left School
Mary	F	Level 5	Home	17
Jimmy	M	Access	Level 7	15
Patrick	M	Access	Level 7	16
Simon	M	Third Level	Level 7	17
Stephen	M	Access	Work (part-time)	12
Angie	F	Creative Courses	Personal Dev/ CE Scheme	13
Jim	M	Level 5	Level 6	15
Michelle	F	Level 5	Level 7	17

As can be seen in the first year following this research all of the participants were engaged in education at various levels. The following year all but Mary and Stephen progressed to the subsequent year of their courses. However, for both these were positive decisions. Mary achieved distinctions all round that both boosted her confidence and confirmed to her her own ability. Stephen gained from the experience of Access but felt the juggling of study and work was too much at the time. He decided to defer and is returning to study in the Autumn of 2013. The remaining 6 research participants are currently engaged in education.

The original data gathered had demonstrated a strong experiential connection between enhanced personal worth and respect, the process of learning and positive, supportive relationships. This final stage of research yielded 4 key themes that enriched my understanding of respect and education and expanded on the initial research data. These themes are independent thinking, meaning-making, community and approval. In the following pages I will explore each of these themes and their importance for the research participants.

7.8 Independent Thinking:

I was really curious to know why things are the way they are and what's going on with the so called 'thinkers'. I read everything I was told to and spent days in the library. But the problem was I didn't get any great answers just more questions or ideas. Then I realised, that was it. I'm not stupid because I don't have the answers, nobody has them. And so, from then on I made sure to think for myself no matter what big name said different. I wish I'd known this years ago, but then I wouldn't of believed it I guess. I was too busy putting myself down.

Stephen

I went through a phase of thinking so much that I thought I was going mad, I mean I couldn't sleep properly. I just kept asking myself why, ye know, why didn't I use my brain before now. All those years and I was like on automatic. So that's what I do now, I think. I know it sounds mad and maybe it is but I think and get my son to think and I don't try change his mind.

An oft heard statement the adult learner makes when returning to education is that she wants to 'learn how to think' or 'how to use my brain'. Two years later and the research participants have gained confidence in not only their own thinking but the thoughts they produce. Patrick no longer thinks in '*black or white*' and is more comfortable with the grey areas of life. The not knowing he often experienced in the past has transformed into a book he didn't read or a concept he has not met with previously. Similarly, Jimmy now laughs at the magical ideas he once had of how people learn and think.

I look back and laugh to myself but I know I knew no better. I just couldn't figure out how they knew stuff or how they could maybe argue with a teacher over the meaning of something. I honestly thought it was a gift that I didn't have. Now I know they did their homework, just like I'm doing now. And you know what, I can give as good as I get now and if I have an opinion and I think it's informed then until I change my mind I'm ok with it.

Thinking and informed opinions are no longer something that just happens to the individual innately but take time and effort. The learning process has allowed these adult learners to develop the skills to engage with ideas and concepts previously unknown and to do this with confidence. The result is an individual with increased confidence and belief in self. For Patrick a discussion is no longer '*a matter of life and death*'. He admits he still struggles with defensiveness but is confident that over time and as his confidence continues to grow he will be able to '*face these differences of opinion without wanting to run or lash out*'. The achievement for Patrick is that his faith in his own thinking has developed sufficiently to open up to those around him and air his differences as opposed to '*just watching the clock*'.

Sennett writes that 'nearly anyone can become a good craftsman' (2009, p.268), meaning that with commitment and time ability develops. He continues to write that craftwork 'embodies a great paradox in that a highly refined, complicated activity emerges from

simple mental acts like specifying facts and then questioning them' (2009, p.269). These simple mental acts describe the process of learning which the student engages in whether studying alone or in a group. Although both Simon and Patrick are positive about their achievements and their future in education I was curious if dyslexia had caused any difficulties for them in this process. During the pre access course they had both expressed concerns about the possibility of dyslexia impacting negatively on their performances academically. As a result both Simon and Patrick registered with the disability office on campus but only Simon has used the service. Patrick decided to '*try it on my own*'. He has achieved consistent honours in his assignments but no longer worries about his spelling difficulties: '*It was the spelling that always stopped me and held me back. I just decided that's the way it is and get over it...it's not going to change. Since then it's been fine and no one has made a big deal of it*'. Simon however, has worked consistently with the disability office and has found it an essential support.

They help me with all aspects of organising my time, my assignments and my worries about them....they also liaised with tutors for me when I was panicking, so that was great and it let tutors know I'm not lazy it just takes me longer sometimes. I still hate being dyslexic ...I mean I hate how everything takes me ages but the supports are amazing. I'd recommend anyone to try them...it makes it not as big an issue as it could have been.

Over time and through the engagement with education these adult learners have continued to increase their confidence in not only their ability to think and understand but also to not know and not understand. For Stephen it was a '*big moment*' when he witnessed students asking the questions he was nervous to ask. His reluctance came from a belief that '*not knowing might show I really shouldn't be there at all*'.

I think they were big moments for me, especially when I could explain things that some others thought they knew but didn't. I mean I just assumed my knowledge was too simple but actually half the time I think things are made more difficult than necessary. So yeah I started asking questions and got comfortable with not knowing everything. I mean, I do know some stuff but who knows everything?

Stephen

The prospect of continued education and self development continues to be a motivating factor for the research participants. Both Stephen and Patrick were motivated by a longing to engage with the world around them. They each wanted to enter those conversations they previously shied away from and give confident opinions without the fear of humiliation. They both believe they have already achieved these goals as the mystery of education and knowledge has become something *'anyone can do if they want'*. Patrick believes he now has *'more questions than when I started all this'* but he is more comfortable with this not knowing than previously.

Well with my experiences of school and teachers not knowing something was like being thumped...I mean somewhere along the way I thought everybody else knew it, I don't even know what 'it' is butnow I know that I don't need to worry about not knowing. I used to think it meant I was thick, now I think it means it's new to me.

Patrick

Similarly, Stephen has accepted that he is *'a curious person'* and will always have a *'curiosity to learn'* however, knowing itself has transformed on this journey.

The last time we did this I remember I was kinda disillusioned a little bit with having to 'back up' everything I think, ye know like using someone else to show what I said was ok. I'm still not sure with calling this learning, I mean what do I know if it's only ok when someone dead 300 years said it...so I think that aspect of education has shown me that we can all know if we read and study, that kind of knowing I mean. But there's other knowing and that's what I know and don't need to quote a dead genius to be sure. My point is I have more faith in what I know than before I came to college. But I have the bug as they say, I'm still curious and I think that's why this suits me.

Stephen

Stephen has grown in confidence enough to challenge the so-called 'genius' and trust his own thinking. This 'other knowing' that he speaks of is epistemological and stems from his life experiences. The know-how of college knowledge helped Stephen and Patrick to realise that their own thinking is not deficient and as a result they are each more willing to trust themselves and to engage with others. Similarly, Angie has learned to trust herself

and follow her 'instincts'. Whereas previously she relied on others to make decisions she now lives independently and prizes both her personal space and her independence.

It's mad looking back but I would wish someone would have shaken me but then I'd not be me so this is who I am and I'm ok ye know....like a lot of the trouble for me was not using my own head and letting others do the thinking for me...that certainly doesn't happen anymore. I trust myself completely now. If I'm with someone and I get a bad feeling I would say straight up I have to go, I'm not comfortable. That's what I've gotten from education, that I'm responsible for myself so if I'm not thinking then there's trouble. All of the courses I've done in the past two years have been about thinking clearly and challenging my beliefs, ye know about myself and other people. So I'm a new me or the real me I should say.

These interviews have highlighted the connection between independence of thought and personal worth. According to Freire (2000, p.72), without this curiosity about the world, 'individuals cannot be truly human'. This consistent inquiry coupled with the development of the individual's creative power and newfound trust is the path towards the realisation of the individual as co creator of her reality. The 'real me' Angie describes is the result of a process of humanisation where the individual is recognised as an independent being of value and intelligence. Independent thinking coupled with the ability to trust one's thoughts has allowed these individuals to abandon passivity in favour of a more engaged and confident way of being in the world.

Each of the research participants has experienced an increase in confidence that they associate with an increased ability to analyse problems, research solutions and communicate clearly. As such, a key element of this growth has been the essay writing and group work exercises that a third level course demands.

The pre access really gave me the foundation to build on, without that I would have been at sea. I'd already done work there and I got distinctions so I had to keep reminding myself of it. And I know what a difference that year made so I just focused on the fact that it would be the same this time. I mean if I applied myself and took it step by step I'd be ok.

Michelle

I realised during the first essay that I'd only learn this by doing it. The first one was the toughest but that doesn't mean they're all not tough....I've learned how to do them so I can manage it now. But they certainly stretch ye, like make you think and then put that on paper. I always prided myself as a man who could talk but this was different and took practice.

Jim

During this process the students are learning not only to think independently but are also learning about themselves. According to Sennett (2009, p.8) 'people can learn about themselves through the things they make'. Freire writes that 'only through communication can human life hold meaning' (2000, p.77). It is clear the research participants have increased their ability to communicate but has education continued to bring the meaning to their lives that they longed for?

7.9 Meaning-Making

A predominant theme in the initial findings the students raised was not that of career or financial gain but one of meaning. The research participants returned to education with the hope of better understanding the world around them and also of engaging in meaningful activity. Two years on and purpose is not lacking in these stories. Instead the opportunity to learn is described as '*the centre of my life*' by Jimmy and by Angie as '*getting the real me back, not the shadow of myself that I was*'. The change in direction which both Mary and Jimmy associated with a more meaningful life was an intensely personal change, one which would remove the hum drum of daily automated activity and allow them to engage with their lives in a more positive manner.

I still don't have my dream coffee shop but I haven't given up on it. Finishing with distinctions was great but it wasn't the main thing for me...it was just the fact that I did it. I wanted something for me not for my kids or family just for me and I allowed myself to get it. I learned to believe in myself, kinda like the kids cartoons tell you to.....but this meant something for me and I took the steps towards getting it. For the first time I was doing what I wanted ...it's a great feeling and it's really boosted my confidence. It's also given me skills towards getting where I want to be in life.

Mary

The main thing I knew was I had to do something that meant something to me and I had decided on music. Now two years after pre access and three years after starting all of this I'm going into second year with a first...if anyone had told me this I would have laughed...but the thing is I haven't had any real bad days like I used to, being angry or depressed, nothing....it's like I've so much now to catch up on that there's not enough time ye know. I mean everyday is important where before I was literally killing time and nearly killing myself with it.

Jimmy

Mary's experience was her first opportunity to do something that held meaning for her personally beyond family and work. This was an important step towards recovering the confidence she lost after her experiences with bullying. Jimmy had withdrawn from work in search of a meaningful life and has found what he was searching for in education. The meaning both of these adult learners had initially experienced upon returning to education has continued to motivate and inspire confidence. Fromm writes that man must 'accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life' (2002b, p.45). The depression Jimmy had previously experienced was due to the dichotomy of his internal needs and external life. As discussed previously, sanity in Fromm (2002a, p.70) is founded upon the fulfilment of the individual's natural needs for connection and authenticity. This requires the environment to adapt to the individual not vice versa. According to Fromm (2002b, p.45);

Only if he recognises the human situation; the dichotomies inherent in his existence and his capacity to unfold his powers, will he be able to succeed in his task: to be himself and for himself and to achieve happiness by the full realisation of the faculties which are peculiarly his – of reason, love and productive work.

Like Jimmy, Patrick had also attempted to remove himself from the world of work due to incidents of disrespect and a growing resentment of his situation. And like Jimmy he also has continued to find the experience of education fulfilling and meaningful. Previously he had found his work 'deadening' and '*as bad as going to school, feeling sick and not knowing what might happen*'. Three years later he gets '*a kick out of spending his day*

thinking and learning' and spending his time in a way that *'makes a difference'*. The difference Patrick speaks of is the difference in his own life.

This is all about me doing something that means something to me, not to anyone else. It's not about a job or money or being someone different, it's just about me showing myself what I can do...and yeah it's tough some days but everything worthwhile is tough...I mean that work I told you about that wasn't tough that was soul destroying. I'm still loving learning about things that actually mean something, I still wouldn't recommend Ulysses to anyone ha but I understood it.

Patrick

The central importance of meaning as a motivation to study has not lessened during this two year period; if anything it seems to have deepened into a fundamental need that has helped these adult learners grow in self worth and in ability. As discussed previously these sentiments are echoed in Sennett's writings on craft and the suffering that occurs 'when hand and head, technique and science, art and craft are separated' (2009, p.20). The result in Sennett is that 'both understanding and expression are impaired' (2009, p.20). Perhaps Angie's words will best summarise the central importance of meaning in the lives of those who have previously been denied its presence.

Education for me like I said was like learning to be human again. The courses I've done in the past three years have shown me that life isn't worthless...everything I've learnt has helped me understand what happened to me...I mean last time I was saying I'm a 'stray dog' and stuff like that but not now, that's all behind me. I believe I have found my calling and I know the work I do will save women all over the world. We are fighting for men to be penalised for prostitution as a criminal act not women. It's not about just getting through the day anymore for me, now it's a bigger picture, it's about making everything...all the shit that happened to me, it's about making it count.

Angie

When I last spoke with Angie she did not blame anyone for her experiences, either in childhood or in prostitution. All of the hurt and pain was blamed on the fact that she was 'a mistake' and in her logic of the time if she was a mistake then whatever happened to her just happened; God had no time to make a plan for mistakes or to protect them. Two years later and as shown above much has changed for Angie. However, the more noticeable changes cannot be expressed in transcribed conversations as Angie now

speaks clearly, maintains eye contact easily and laughs genuinely, not at the sadness of her life as before but at the great things that are happening to her. She ascribes her new found confidence to *'knowing my life means something and I wasn't a mistake, and knowing all that happened to me will make a difference and help other women'*.

7.10 Community:

The course taught me to interact. We have more men involved in our campaign than women. These guys are like girls... You can sit down and have a conversation. When I went to class I was in groups and I had a responsibility to get on. I realised they're not just men and women, they are humans. Without that experience I couldn't do what I'm doing now, I mean I work with men all of the time. I've learned to connect with others and it's not dangerous, it's actually good for me.

Angie

I always thought studying would be something I did on my own but socialising would be a separate thing. I mean that whether or not I succeeded was down to me alone and the people I meet are like outside of that in a separate area. Now I know that's not the way at all. I mean without the people around me I wouldn't even be there. I've had so much help all along from disability officers, tutors and friends.

Simon

A core finding in the initial interview data was the importance of relationship in the learning process; relationship with the tutor and with fellow students. In this final stage of the research the importance of connecting with those around us has not lessened. The relationships with both tutors and fellow students are as important as ever and play a central role in how we learn. Angie has overcome her distrust of others, particularly men, through spending time in class with them and working on group projects. The classroom atmosphere allowed her to re experience relationships and reconnect with those around her. She considers the return to education as central to developing trust in herself and others. Simon had concerns that he would not manage the workload of college life but with help and support he is progressing to second year. He has found the sense of

belonging that was previously absent in his life and feels *'more normal, like a regular person'*.

As in Interview 1, the students in this research have continued to benefit from the community they experienced within the adult education classroom. In Sennett cooperation is the alternative to collusion which tries to 'join people who have separate or conflicting interests, who do not feel good about each other, who are unequal, or who simply do not understand one another' (2012, p.6). These research participants are not the typical third level student and bravely entered a new world when they applied to third level education. The interviews highlighted the fear of stepping into first year as a full-time mature student not from the *'normal background'*. For these learners their fears of past exclusions resurfaced upon leaving access and entering third level, the space of traditional students. Michelle worried she might be *'the odd one'* and similarly, Jim remembers his fear of *'the kids'*. However, two years later and these fears, although very real at the time, have proven to be unfounded. For Jim *'the kids are refreshing'* and Michelle has made strong friendships and enjoys the mix of ages and the *'different outlooks'* of the younger students. Sennett refers to Aristotle when he writes that tribalism *'involves thinking you know what other people are like without knowing them; lacking direct experience of others, you fall back on fearful fantasies'* (2012, p.4). In Sennett this is the modern stereotype that causes communities to seek purification in its members and sameness all round; no doubt Aristotle would recognise it in the fears the research participants had of meeting new people, people they considered to be traditional students. The continued experience in education has allowed the participants to overcome their fears and to find friendship in difference. For Angie the experience of interacting with so many people has been *'life changing'*.

I was like a rabbit in the fog lights but I found as time went on I could interact with others. It's helped me deal with the world realistically. I was still finding my way. I'd learned a disrespect for men and that changed when I interacted with all of the guys on the courses. There was such a range of different,...like women have all those things as well...I didn't think men had those emotions or feelings. I learned never to judge a book by its cover and I never have again.

Angie

The increased confidence and agency the research participants have experienced is evident in the active engagement they demonstrate on their learning journeys. According to Sennett the student pursues the quality of her learning as 'a matter of agency, the craftsman's driving motive' (2009, p.97). However, 'agency does not happen in a social or emotional vacuum, particularly good quality work' (Sennett, 2009, p.97). As such, the great progress these individuals have made has not taken place in an isolated vacuum separate from either the environment or their emotions; both of which in Sennett are central to quality craftsmanship. In these interviews support of tutors and fellow students are equally important. A low grade on a paper resulted in an invitation to a small tutorial by Simon's tutor, an act of support which made him feel '*there was hope for me*'. For Patrick a willingness to '*hang around for a while and chat*' made tutors seem '*more approachable*'. A tutor's recommendation of Jim's work for a craft show was '*incredible*' as it was '*beyond the call of duty*'. And for Michelle, the supportive attitude of tutors due to childcare issues was one which made her believe she would one day have a degree. The supportive environment allowed the students to relax and let down barriers they perhaps did not know they had. Patrick was the student who had consistently described himself as '*a loner*' and so I was interested to find out if he too had continued to place importance on the relationships he had created.

I'm over defensive and have to get my head around that. All the initial stuff from school does reoccur and haunt you I think.....I get defensive when I'm challenged and need to grow up a bit regarding that but I'm starting to realise that it's me who pulls back coz I'm afraid of being challenged, and maybe my reaction. So I'm still a loner like I said and always will be but I can definitely see more of where I am in relationships and how much I'm part of the problem... I mean I'm

on the defence before anything has happened so it must get people's back up and then I say they're weird ha But I'm more relaxed now and not on edge as much so I think next year will be better..

A supportive environment has allowed Patrick to *'relax'* and recognise some of his own patterns that may have been previously unconscious. As a result he has decided to be less of *'a loner'* and *'give people the benefit of the doubt'*. This is the *'skilled cooperation'* in Sennett (2012, p.6) that allows the individual to learn how to communicate and behave with others. He writes:

These run the gamut of listening well, behaving tactfully, finding points of agreement and managing disagreement, or avoiding frustration in a difficult discussion. All these activities have a technical name: they are called *'dialogic skills'*.

(2012, p.6)

Dialogic skills require the individual to work with others, not as a competitor but in dialogue. Angie has learned that being *'street wise'* can keep her alive but *'people skills'* are essential if she is to live her life. The learning process has reduced the threat of relationships for many of the students, and allowed them to recreate relationships along new paradigms. In Sennett *'what we gain from demanding sorts of cooperation is insight into ourselves'* (2012, p.6).

7.11 Approval: Mine not Yours

A final theme from Interview 2 was the lack of reliance on external approval for personal worth and validation. In the initial interviews the relationship with the tutor was of paramount importance and later this extended to fellow students. I had mistakenly assumed this would continue to play a central role in the learning process. However, although the relationships and connections with tutors and students are still important, as stated above, they are no longer vital. I had assumed this reliance on relationship was a

priority at all stages of the learning journey. Two years after the initial interviews and the stories of the participants have transformed. The findings testify that the growth of personal worth and respect has lessened the reliance upon and the requirement of external approval and validation. I found this intriguing as other key themes discussed were the importance of connections with fellow students and tutors. However, although this initially appears as a contradiction, the research participants are quite clear about the distinction.

When I was on pre access if you had said boo to me I would have been gone. I was ready the whole time for an excuse not to stick with it...but it never happened. Like I said, I realised I'm ok, if others that are normal think I'm ok then I must be, kinda thing. Because I thought so little of myself, and coming from where I've been I've learned that I actually am an important human being and I do have the right to live my life and therefore I want to teach others. It's empowered me...so I'm not afraid anymore and I really couldn't care what people think of me. I spent my whole life trying to make others happy and now I don't worry about it. See, I thought it was my fault if you didn't like me but now I know it's nothing to do with me.

Angie

Like the first time round I was hanging on every word or worrying if I didn't quite get something maybe you or the others might think 'Who's he think he is wanting to do music?'.... I mean I still want to do well and get on with everyone but it's just not a factor in my being in college anymore....I mean I'm not going anywhere till I'm finished whereas three years ago a look might have sent me home ye know.

Jimmy

The experiences of the intervening years have restored the dignity and personal worth of Angie and Jimmy. Both had struggled with low self-esteem and had doubted their own abilities. However, two years later and the thoughts or opinions of others while still important are no longer definitive. The feelings of inferiority and shame that caused these individuals to doubt their worth have been shown to be unfounded. As such, others are no longer seen as a threat and potential situations do not have the same power to harm. As the sense of self grows stronger the reliance on external approval for validation is lessened. In Erikson (1959), ego identity is the conscious sense of self that develops

through social interaction. New experiences and the information we acquire in our daily interactions with others are a vital part of this process. Ego in Erikson describes 'a concept denoting man's capacity to unify his experience and his action in an adaptive manner' (1950, p. 15). According to Erikson (1968, p.22);

Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him.

Lack of personal worth, experiences of disrespect and a deep sense of inadequacy had caused these individuals to doubt their worth and their abilities. They had learned to judge themselves in the same way they had previously been judged by others and relied heavily on approval. However, two years later and both thoughts of judgement and self perception have changed.

I used to wake up during the night in panic when I first started back and had an essay or assignment. Then in access the bar was raised again and the panic came back...like can I do this? What if they think it's rubbish? ..that kind of thinking ...but now it's different....it's not any one thing that changed just time and staying at it and I guess knowing I've already done it so I'll do it this time. It's great to get good feedback and in fairness it's never been harsh or really negative ye know...I like all the tutors I've had but even that doesn't matter as much like I'm not as worried anymore. If it's not good I'll just fix it and try harder...

Jimmy

Starting first year was a bit mad after access, ye know complete change of tutors and class...I was really watching everyone the first while and wondering what their story is ye know, being my defensive self ...but everyone just did their thing and got on with it and small tutorials were fine. I did my work and they were real helpful, nothin' like school. So if they say something to me...I have to take it as helpful coz I know that's what it's about....I mean the marks I get or the feedback, it's not personal, so I don't need to be defensive. I just go about my business and do what I have to do ye know, it's not the end of the world. It doesn't matter if I like them or they like me, it helps but like I said it's not personal and everyone's in the same boat.

Patrick

Both Patrick and Jimmy are doing well and making great progress. Patrick's increased self awareness has allowed him to reflect on defensive behaviour that is no longer

necessary or healthy. As a result he can now say that criticism may take the form of guidance and is not personal. This has allowed Patrick to take the focus from those around him and refocus on his own learning journey. Jimmy's consistent positive experience and good relationships with tutors and classmates has allowed him to release the fear that the judgement of other once inspired. In addition to ego identity, Erikson also believed that a sense of competence is a motivating factor in behaviour and action. As the learning journey has progressed students have continued to develop the skills, both academically and interpersonally, that bring them closer to their goals. Both the acceptance and achievement each student has experienced in their various courses have allowed them to develop the strength of ego (Erikson, 1959) that is essential for enhanced personal worth and well-being and to increase the potential to cooperate with others. The freedom to choose roles in western culture can be a source of enormous anxiety to the individual, particularly those who have less power to choose, such as the individuals in this research. According to Erikson (1950, p.253), this freedom and abundance of potential choices impacts the development of an integrated identity. He writes that 'in general, it is primarily the inability to settle on an occupational identity which disturbs young people (1950, p. 253). The participants in this research vary in ages from early twenties to late fifties; however, they have also each benefited from the experience of being a student. The role of student has allowed these learners to strengthen their identities and develop boundaries that in turn have enhanced self respect and relationships with those around them.

While interviewing Michelle I was reminded of the story she had previously shared concerning a pair of boots. I referred to this in Chapter VI in order to highlight the importance of material possessions, or '*stuff*', to those who feel inadequate. At that time

Michelle had used possessions to validate her worth in the eyes of those around her and therefore gain approval. Two years later she comments on this sad moment:

At first when I thought of that time I used to be mortified, I mean buying a pair of boots with my rent money and I'm a single mom with a kid, what's that about...but then I realised it was a lesson and that's how I look at it now. Whenever I start to compare like me with someone else I remember how stupid I felt...I mean nobody even noticed I was wearing them....Now it's about me and my kid and my future. And I can ignore that stuff because it got me nowhere. I mean no-one in college asks about my clothes, that's bullshit, they ask about my kid and my essays. That's how I invest my time now and my money, not in crap...

Michelle

Michelle's experiences in education have allowed her to carve a life that is meaningful and goal oriented. She speaks with pride of her achievements and her exciting plans after graduation. This journey has allowed her to 'invest' in herself and the creation of a better life. As a result, she is no longer as concerned with the opinions of others and counts her own approval of herself as a sign of 'a more healthy person'.

In this section I have attempted to demonstrate the interesting findings these second interviews yielded concerning approval seeking. My conclusion is that the learning journey has allowed renewed self respect to counter the fear of what others might think and as such, it no longer carries the weight it once did. The following words of Mezirow (1997, p.5) summarise the experiences of these students which contributed to their new found confidence and well being;

A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience. For some, any uncritically assimilated explanation by an authority figure will suffice. But in contemporary societies we must learn to make our own interpretations rather than act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others. Facilitating such understanding is the cardinal goal of adult education. Transformative learning develops autonomous thinking.

7.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings in both the initial and the second interviews clearly demonstrate the central role of both relationship and achievement in the learning process. Relationships with teachers are shown to be of central importance for the self belief that tells the learner she can learn. Achievement and the subsequent validation of the individual demonstrate to her that she is indeed a being of worth and value. However, as confidence develops the student learns to rely on herself and the reliance on external approval is reduced. This promotes a more relaxed interaction between tutors and students as learners gradually grow to perceive themselves as a valid part of the learning community. In this way education, the relationships formed within it and the opportunity for success that learning offers, can contribute to the development of well being amongst individuals in an interpersonal context. This process is also fundamental for democratic practice and the collaborative nature of adult education both encourages and fosters this skill. And finally, the site of adult education has been emphasised throughout these interviews as a place where the individual can restore the respect and dignity that have been previously lacking.

In Freire (2006) an essential element of the path to humanisation is the perception of the self as an active agent of change. In this way the world becomes a mutable entity and the individual reclaims her power to exert influence over her life. According to Freire (2001a, p.26) the agentic individual experiences increased responsibility which denies the self as a determined genetic or cultural product. He writes: 'It means recognising that History is time filled with possibility and not inexorably determined – that the future is *problematic* and not already decided, fatalistically'. As such, the individuals in this research are writing new scripts for their lives and refusing to be the helpless products of

their pasts. Instead, through education they have found a way to create their lives afresh and make both the internal and external changes essential to lives of dignity and personal worth.

Chapter VIII

Conclusions & Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This research study grew from the conversations of adult learners within my classroom. These conversations revolved around the story of the individual; what brought her back to learning, why she did not complete her education and the consequences of this lack of schooling. Throughout these stories however, were other stories involving incidents of slapping, humiliation and confusion. As time progressed it is these incidents which gained centre stage and the stories told became something else entirely. These stories or life narratives described the adult learner's journey from school to work and back to education.

As I continued to meet and work with groups of adult learners I noticed the pattern of these stories centred on moments of humiliation and shame. These stories have had an impact on the type of learning that occurs within my classroom as learners consistently choose to share their stories and motivations for learning. It is also these stories that raised my awareness of respect as a fundamental need and requirement for the development and well-being of adult learners. Similarly, I realised that these incidents of disrespect and the consequences for the adult learner received minor attention within the field of adult education policy and discourse. The need to explore this subject and develop a context for the exploration of respect and its implications for adult learning motivated me to begin this research.

During my MA thesis I was introduced to the work of Richard Sennett. As discussed previously, his book *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1972) explores the life narratives of

workers in Boston in the 1970s. Sennett's concepts and the experiences and stories of his interviewees resonated with me and echoed those of the learners I heard in my classroom. When considering this study I returned to the work of Sennett in greater depth and realised I had found an important conceptual ally for my research topic. When beginning this project I was introduced to the work of Axel Honneth and his theory of recognition. Honneth champions recognition while Sennett champions respect; both however place the fundamental need of the individual for personal worth and validation as central to healthy relationship with self and others. As such, both Honneth and Sennett advocate relationship as key to personal well-being and societal well-being. In these two theorists I had found two allies who could inform the theoretical exploration of my research topic.

This study gave me the opportunity to attempt a forensic exploration of respect in education and its implications for the learner's journey and her overall well-being. I hoped to illuminate the research participants' experiences of respect, interpreted as self-esteem, dignity and personal worth, in order to contribute to a field of research in this area. I was also influenced by the realisation that the experience of respect in adult education and the growth of self-esteem through the collaborative process of learning together in the community has implications for the adult education project of active citizenship and the democratic process. According to Sennett:

Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake. Craftsmanship cuts a far wider swath than skilled manual labour; it serves the computer programmer, the doctor, and the artist; parenting improves when it is practiced as a skilled craft, as does citizenship.

(2009, p.9)

As such, the desire of the individual to do a job well and to achieve is a basic human impulse that promotes well being and respect, and is central both to learning and citizenship. The findings from these interviews are presented over three chapters. I have

attempted to apply Sennett's concepts as a lens with which to explore and review these findings while also including key theoretical allies along the way. My conclusions are presented in the following pages. At the end of this long journey I would like to briefly discuss the challenges I found in choosing Richard Sennett as my main ally in this research. I will return to the research participants' experiences of respect and disrespect in education, *Respect & Learning*, using the initial questions which prompted my research and in the following section I will discuss an *Architecture of Education* that identifies the structures within adult education which both promote and challenge the potential for respect. And finally, I shall conclude with a summary of the key findings in this research and their implications for educational policy and educational institutions welcoming non traditional students.

8.2 My Experience with Sennett

I have relied greatly on the work of Richard Sennett in this thesis and I hope that his valuable contribution to this research will inspire others to explore his work. I have found Sennett to be accessible and comprehensive in his exploration of the individual and society and admire his consistent critique of our modern world. The central focus of my interest in Sennett has been his writing on respect and relationships and the implications for personal worth. In this he has been a source of support and direction as his research has so often echoed my own experiences within my classroom. However, Sennett's thesis is often as wide as the world itself and although containing the consistent thread of questioning the human condition within it, his work has been so all encompassing as to pose a challenge for the researcher.

There are some critics of Sennett who accuse him of gazing at the past through rose coloured glasses and of creating characters to support his arguments. A thorough reading however shows these accusations to be unfounded; the past is not lamented but nor is it abandoned entirely and Sennett has been straight forward with his audience regarding his creation of general characters who embody multiple voices in his research. As someone who has been immersed in Sennett for a number of years my critique of him is somewhat different and personal. The writing of a thesis demands a forensic exploration of material and a coherent positioning of the researcher within the theory it produces. This process takes place within defined parameters of time and must also adhere to rigorous academic standards. I have found Sennett's body of work to present a challenge to each of these requirements. In my experience the mercurial and fragmented nature of his work has limited both my access and my interpretation of his research. Although accessible and socially relevant, Sennett is nevertheless a challenge for a student aiming at a finite piece of research. During this process I often missed the availability of a coherent, grammatically presented edition that would announce quite clearly Sennett's thesis and positioning; work that might make Sennett more challenging to read but at the same time easier to access theoretically. I am curious as to why Sennett has not taken this step. He has produced two books since I began this journey and I wonder why he moves so quickly, gathering ideas without perhaps copper fastening them into a solid work of Sennett. I can only conclude that Sennett's intentions are far removed from my own; he serves the intellectual community very well but not necessarily the doctoral student.

I believe that it is this factor which causes some to question Sennett's contribution; he has yet to write his magnum opus or great tome that captures everything in a Habermasian sense. This would have been of enormous benefit to a doctoral thesis and would have

allowed me to easily capture Sennett in a paragraph or two. Instead, I have had to meander through possibilities gleaned in his books and attempted to position him within his thesis of respect in a way he has so far neglected to do. Therefore although Sennett is accessible in a way many are not, what was not so accessible during this research process is his great coherent position. This is something the student and researcher must create for herself. Sennett may be attractive for members of the sociological community who can look forward to regular publications and appearances but his work lacks the coherent, schematic and thematic presentation so helpful for the doctoral student.

8.3 Respect & Learning

In the Literature Review I attempted to present a paradigm of adult educational policy dominated by instrumental neoliberal values. My argument is that the promotion of a policy lacking humanist values has ignored the central role of respect in both the development of the individual, the process of learning and the skills required for democratic participation. My original research questions which motivated this study grew from my experience in the classroom with adult learners. These were used to guide my thoughts and the development of my argument and are as follows:

1. How do adults experience disrespect and respect in education?
2. How do these experiences affect their identity, their relationships and their life choices?
3. Has this return to learning had an impact on confidence, self-esteem or personal worth?
4. What does education mean to them?

These four questions were intended to guide my research and my theoretical investigation of respect and the adult learner. I shall now apply the information from the findings chapters to answer these questions.

How do adults experience disrespect and respect in education?

The data that emerged from these interviews is that both disrespect and respect are experienced through relationships with teachers and other authority figures in school. Childhood memories of adult learners are often negative and throughout these interviews particular incidents were referred to that captured the humiliation and fear often felt by the child during these moments. The incidents remembered were varied but all were equally humiliating for the students involved. Michelle, Patrick and Angie had memories of holding a book in the air or sitting alone at a desk separated from their classmates. Jim, Stephen and Mary remembered incidents of slapping and Jimmy remembered being challenged by a teacher and excluded from sport due to a misunderstanding.

A prime example experienced by these participants was the challenge of low literacy skills and reading out loud. A lack of ability was very often the trigger for the punishment or bad treatment at the hands of the teacher. These incidents inspired dread in these learners and school was associated with '*stomach churning*' and '*terror*'. Each of these incidents was experienced as a judgement of '*not good enough*' by the student. As a result the adult learners in this study believed they were '*stupid*' and could not learn. The experiences of humiliation and degradation in school therefore caused these individuals to disengage from learning and transferred the process of education to the realm of the magical. They did not have these magical abilities and so they had to find another route, one that did not require an education or learning.

The interpersonal context of these experiences receives the most attention from learners when they retell their stories. The rejection felt is internalised and experienced as a personal issue and is translated by the individual to mean that the fault lies with her. As

the teacher or authority figure is seen to treat others very differently, the individual is further isolated and believes that her treatment is due to her lack of ability; she internalises the mistreatment as a reflection of her lack of worth. This underlying tension and sense of anxiety is pervasive in the memories these participants share of their time in school. The dominant characteristics of these experiences are exclusion, humiliation and fear.

How do these experiences affect the identity, relationships and life choices of the adult learner?

These experiences of disrespect and humiliation had far reaching effects on the research participants. The lack of recognition these participants experienced has implications for the formation of their identities and their assumptions about the world and their place in it. In Honneth (1995) recognition by the other allows the individual to see her self as a being of worth and value. The experiences of misrecognition in these interviews distorted this experience and left the interviewees with a reduced sense of self. As such, recognition is about identity. In being recognised by the other as a person of importance and ability I am validated and my identity forms around this understanding of my self as a being of worth. Fleming & Finnegan (2011b, p.3) write that ‘in order for humans to achieve a productive relationship with themselves (an identity) humans require an intersubjective recognition of their abilities and achievements’. In this way the misrecognition present in these life narratives distorts the identity formation of these individuals and robs them of the necessary self esteem and respect essential to their well-being.

Michelle believed that she had something wrong with her that would one day be identified. Angie’s experiences in school confirmed to her she was a ‘*mistake*’ and a

'stray dog' who would never fit in. Patrick decided to withdraw from others and describes himself as a 'loner'. Jimmy and Stephen left school to begin work but soon found that authority did not sit well with them and they encountered problems. Stephen decided to 'go it alone' and Jimmy eventually removed himself from work. The incidents of humiliation and slapping in school left Jim with little confidence and doubting his abilities.

As such, these incidents are intensely personal moments that are internalised and impact on how the individual perceives herself, forms relationships and makes life choices. Mary doubted her ability and so did not pursue promotions through work. Michelle took jobs that required limited social interaction and did not draw attention to her lack of a college education. Jimmy believed he had no choice but to work in construction and live a life that did not fulfil him. And Patrick tried to find jobs that allowed him to work alone and in the background. Each of the research participants carried the consequences of the humiliation they experienced in school with them as they journeyed through life. The search for recognition and validation had serious consequences for some but in general it limited their engagement with others and left them both unsure and anxious. Engagement with the world can corrode or enhance identity. Our stories define us and as such who am I without my story?

Has this return to learning had an impact on confidence, self-esteem or personal worth?

The overwhelming response to questions concerning the return to education was a positive one. However, the initial decision was not an easy one and the narratives are filled with trepidation, fear and worry. There were a number of key issues identified as challenging for the participants. These are:

- The fear of meeting new people
- The fear that it might be the same as school
- The fear that the learner may not be ‘clever’ enough
- The fear of reading or speaking out in class

Fear as demonstrated here is a major barrier to adults returning to education. Simon felt this fear of not knowing others quite keenly but commented that the ice breakers used during the first few sessions helped him to form relationships and relax. For Patrick the layout of the room and its location were of key importance and he refused to attend a course based in a secondary school. However, both the location in a community centre and the layout of the learning space were comfortable for him and not ‘*schooly*’. Stephen, Simon, Mary and Angie had concerns about reading aloud in the group but once they were assured that this was by choice each relaxed. The issue that was most challenging for these participants was that of ‘*stupidity*’. At the beginning of their learning journeys they doubted that they could learn and more specifically, doubted that they could go to college.

Throughout the two year period of these interviews much has changed for the research participants. These fears are still present in the interviews but as the learners continue to learn and achieve they have reduced and become ‘*manageable*’. Of central importance in this process was the group context of the learning process. The research participants attest to the key role support played in their success and achievements. The support from the tutor was recognised as essential for academic confidence and the knowledge that mistakes were a part of learning contributed to a willingness to try amongst students. However, a key element in the learning process was the support of class mates throughout the year. In each interview the research participants comment on the

importance of the group for the learning experience. The '*respectful*' nature of the conversation and the '*trust*' that if a student spoke she would be heard coupled with assistance from classmates throughout the year all contributed to the learning experience.

The increase in confidence and self-esteem of the research participants has two aspects that inter relate. This is the connection between relationships and successful learning. However, during the course of two years changes occurred in both how they perceived themselves and how they perceived those around them. In Interview 1 the moments identified as memorable were receiving positive feedback on work submitted, helping classmates to complete assignments because theirs was recognised as good and engaging in topics of discussion that were meaningful to the group. The research participants had experienced something new, a pleasure in learning in a group context coupled with the validation of acceptance and success. In Interview 2, these points are still of importance but much has changed. The previously central role of the tutor, the relationship the student enjoyed with both tutor and her peers and the feedback received are no longer the defining elements of the learning journey. These issues which were so important in Interview 1 have retreated into the background. The participants did discuss them and demonstrated delight with new friends and inspiring tutors but the central figure in each story is the learner. Interview 2 did not focus on the past or on others but on the individual's experiences, achievements and aspirations.

If Interview 1 focused on the individual finding her place in her story then Interview 2 is the story of that place. In each interview the learner related as one who has found meaning and purpose and pride in the fact. This journey has restored the confidence, self esteem and personal worth that allow the individuals in this research to speak with

optimism and confidence about their presents and their futures. In Interview 2 it is the individual who now stands in the centre of life's stage. Fears still surface but no longer as chains to keep the individual stuck. The central finding in Interview 2 was the restoration of self esteem and personal worth that has been achieved through the return to education. Personal worth here allows the individual to engage in her life from a position of power and no longer await the permission or validation of others to affirm or deny her worth.

What does education mean to the adult learner?

When asked what education means to them the research participants as a whole answered in a language that equates with self esteem and personal worth. All intentions for gaining an education so that a professional career could be an option were similarly framed in the language of esteem. As such, the instrumental focus of adult education policy is only useful to adult learners if it promotes confidence and personal worth. The central point repeated throughout the interviews was the motivation to develop thinking skills. Patrick framed this need in the following words;

To go on and expand the mind... I needed to acquire knowledge to debate and to question what is the...and to have the actual....For some reason people - there has to be an initial after your name before your qualified and Oh, I have to listen to you now. They don't have to listen to you....It's not just the status thing it's...

Stephen made similar comments when he said he was looking for 'a better understanding' of the world around him. Jimmy was searching for something meaningful and a way to create a 'fulfilled life'. Michelle wants to show her son that his Mum is successful and went to college. A professional career is another way to demonstrate this and to escape the boredom of menial jobs. She wants to 'make a difference'. Mary's aim is to 'satisfy the soul' and develop her confidence and Simon wants to 'fit in' and be 'normal'. In this way education represents different things to each research participant however, the central theme of each student's story is the self esteem and personal worth

the learning process offers. The experience of respect is telling someone that they can achieve, that they are intelligent they have value. In these interviews this happens in the classroom and replicates moments these research participants did not experience as children or young adults.

8.4 The Architecture of Education

Sennett speaks of an architecture that undermines and alienates. The participants in this research experienced adult education as an architecture that is constructed to respect people. The adult education space has much in common with Sennett's theory of an architecture for democracy. This involves Sennett's emphasis on collaboration and relationship. His democratic spaces are ones which embrace difference and allow people to meet. Doors are opened and boundaries are temporarily dropped. This allows the creation of a space where individuals who might never meet can come together and share their thoughts. This process promotes the city as a safe place where strangers can meet and engage in the process of learning and the practice of democracy. One of Sennett's (1970) suggestions to create a conscious social experience is to remove traffic lights; no direction is an attempt to wake people up and encourage a conscious engagement with the environment. I consider this to be the role of adult education; a space to challenge the accepted and the unchallenged, a collaborative space for reflection.

According to Sennett (1996, p.365) when confronted with difference people quickly become passive. This is due to the fact that difference is registered as a threat and passivity as a method of preventing harm. The search for the comfortable and the known however, has an effect on the type of community we create and engage in. It is this search for safety that causes individuals and communities to withdraw in unity and sameness.

This disengagement is both a reaction to difference and an attempt at simplifying a complicated existence. It is present throughout these interviews as the research participants withdraw in an attempt to find sanctuary from the daily indignities and hurts of a life lacking respect. Sennett uses the example of gated communities to demonstrate the modern need for both sameness and safety. However, in Sennett it is these forms of sealed boundaries that undermine equality and demonise the other, stranger becomes threat. Through the creation and use of space cities therefore have the potential to both respect and disrespect the individual. If you are the same you are safe and worthy of respect, as values are mirrored and selves validated. Similarly, if you are considered different, as the individuals in this research assert, you are a danger and therefore not worthy of respect. Respect is a value judgement that is intensely personal and intertwined with the individual's perception of herself and her worth. I have attempted to show in this research that education is similarly a space that is not immune from the power of value judgements and is therefore a space that potentially undermines and disrespects people and so contributes to the escalation of inequality. This is evident in the findings chapter in incidents of slapping and humiliation and the legacy of 'not enough' carried by the students. However, I have also attempted to show how a return to education and the subsequent learning experiences can redeem the damage of these situations and become the space where respect and self esteem are achieved.

Sennett's vision of community is similarly not one of uniformity and security but one of diversity and challenge.

We should be pushing community to its edges to meet people we don't know rather than the familiar. It means making people more comfortable with the multiplicity of identities, a sense of comfort that there are many different people at once in a space that is differentiated, open but not neutral. This is a change in our social understanding of community.

(Sennett, 2012b)

This collaborative context of adult education is essential in order to cultivate and practice the democratic values it espouses. According to Honneth (2007) it is through relationships of mutual recognition that the individual develops personal worth and the ability to participate in a democratic society. Honneth's democratic ideal is one of reflexive cooperation strongly influenced by Dewey who locates self-realisation within the social context. Recognition in Honneth therefore underpins both self realisation and democratic participation. In Sennett the recognition achieved through craft allows the individual to experience both of these ideals. He writes;

But there are craft reasons to credit pragmatism's faith in democracy; these lie in the capacities on which human beings draw to develop skills: the universality of play, the basic capabilities to specify, question and open up.
(2009, p.291)

In Mezirow (2000) transformative learning involves the awareness and challenging of the constructs within which we interpret our world, our values, thoughts and feelings. It involves an archaeology (2000; 2007) of how we came to be who we are. In short it is a process of being critical of our frames of references and taking steps to find new, more inclusive constructs. I interpret learning with this sensitizing concept; it is either transformative or it is not. Mezirow writes that transformation theory 'advances the argument that the nature of adult learning itself mandates participatory democracy as both the means and social goal' (1995, p.66). In this study I have attempted to place respect as central to an architecture of education that has as its goal active citizenship and democratic practice. It is my argument that transformative learning and reflection are both collaborative investigations that require respect in order to be achieved. In essence both of these processes require respect and without respect there is no transformative learning or reflection (Fleming, 2011b). Collaboration in Sennett necessitates respect. Similarly, reflection is grounded in respect.

Sennett's exploration of self esteem and respect in society focuses on the fundamental importance of self respect for identity formation, relationship, community and democracy. These concerns echo those of adult educators and focus on the development and well being of the individual and her involvement in a democratic and participative democracy. In adult education theory the conditions for democracy are realised in the conditions necessary for adult learning (Fleming, 2006). In this research study I have attempted to demonstrate the value of Sennett's work for the promotion of equality and emancipation in adult education and for an increased understanding of the experiences of adult learners both inside and outside of the classroom. In Sennett (1998) people need places of assembly that will encourage interaction, spaces that can be used for political confrontation, a meeting place that will draw the outside inside. The polity requires 'a place for discipline, focus and duration. Decentralised polities, particularly need such places where people can concentrate' (Sennett, 1998, p.44). This is the role of adult education in the modern community, one that is increasingly characterised by withdrawal and diversity.

8.5 Key Findings

The findings in this research project have both confirmed my thoughts regarding respect and learning while also yielding surprises along the way. Time and again I was surprised by the moments that students remembered or considered as having impacted their learning. I have also been consistently in awe at the human spirit's capacity to heal and overcome the most difficult situations. Respect has come to mean far more than I thought possible at the beginning of this research and it is now something which colours each and

every interaction I have, both inside and outside of the classroom. I would now like to briefly outline what I have learned from this research study:

- Narrative Research as methodology is appropriate as a way of researching, particularly in community groups. I hope this research has demonstrated the importance for adult educators to hear the stories of those they are interviewing in order to access experiences of respect and disrespect.
- Sennett, Honneth & Freire place relationship at the centre of their theory. The mantra of student centred learning has therefore become a little cliché. In this thesis I argue that it is the relationship between the teacher and the student that is central to the creation of knowledge and the process of meaning-making. The interpersonal space must now replace student centred learning in education. In Freire the dualism of teacher centred and student centred debate is a repetition of an old argument. It is in the relationship between the two that knowledge is created. This is also representative of Honneth's theory. Learning is not an individual process, we learn together and what we know we know together. It is therefore 'we' who know something.
- The things that I consider important within the classroom are not necessarily important for the student. I have realised through this process the learning that motivated my practice is not always a priority for the learner. Student memories in this study revolve around relationship, both with peers and tutors. Of central importance to the student in this study has been the ongoing support after the initial course has ended.
- The success of a particular course is difficult to quantify at the end of term. The quantifiable methods of measurement such as accreditation and progress often

have little relevance for students who place far greater emphasis on the relationships that were created throughout the course.

- The learning journey presents adults with the opportunity to reclaim lost dignity and personal worth. The students in this research experienced a growth in confidence and self esteem as they progressed on their learning journeys and as such their needs changed. The initial reliance on tutors and peers gradually transformed into self reliance as they learned through experience that they could achieve and succeed. This new found worth has increased the independence of these research participants and encouraged them to do their own thinking, set their own standards and goals and to trust themselves. The initial validation by tutors that was so crucial at the early stages of learning is not a consistent requirement. Support is appreciated, but the needs of students change and grow as their learning journeys progress. As such, it is incumbent that educators and policy reflect the changing needs of adult learners at different stages of their journey and do not presume that mature student equates with extra supports or poor confidence.

8.6 Implications for Theory and Practice:

This research study was based on the assumption that respect and recognition are central to the creation of the self esteem of the adult learner and the learning process. This assumption was echoed throughout the interviews with the research participants as their experiences of respect and disrespect were discussed. The language used to describe learning and its process is consistently wrapped in the language of relationship and self esteem. I believe this research study has implications for the central role of respect in the learning process and for how this is achieved within the classroom.

The findings in this thesis clearly emphasise the practical interpersonal interface between student and teacher as a space weighted with respect. It is this respect which defines the relationship between teacher and student as one of learning, where the teacher focuses her attention on the learner as opposed to issues of Quality Assurance, quotas or financial limitations. In this Fleming (2006, p.109) refers to an 'epistemology of intersubjectivity' and it is this epistemological stance which is vital if the voices and needs of adult learners are to gain eminence over the intentions of a neoliberal system. As such, this thesis is part of a re-defining of the concept of curriculum, inclusive of and originating from the adult learner. In this the role of both teacher and students is informed and underpinned by relationship. Respect in education is generated through the relationship between teacher and student and the intersubjective nature of this process emphasises the mutuality of the learning experience.

The stories of these adult learners and their intentions and motivations for learning stand in stark contrast to education policy as discussed in the Literature Review. A policy which is centred round employment and a return to active work serves only to silence the voice of the adult learner and imposes an expectation upon her which may not reflect her intentions. The participants in this research had a very different idea of education and it was rarely attached to work. This is not to deny the possibility of a future career but to emphasise that it was separate to the purpose of learning. As such, work and career is a possibility not a motivation.

In contrast the philosophical orientation of an instrumentalist policy of education turns knowledge into facts and students into objects or employees. Sennett writes that the

knowledge of the craftsperson is perceived as ‘giving a man the tools for achieving freedom – by permitting him to control situations, and by furnishing him with access to a greater set of roles in life’ (1972, p.30). I believe this study raises awareness of the process of mutual respect as far more than a veneer of equality. Disrespect is inherent to an instrumental oriented policy that denies the adult learner the right to develop and grow through education. The reduction of the educational process to that of human resource management for the employment needs of the economy (OECD, 1966; ESF, 2012) is one which denies the individual the opportunity to find her own path. In these interviews lifelong learning is not a servant to the economy but is an essential element of being well and well being. It is also an essential provider of the type of learning and collaboration that promotes community and democratic practice and can therefore be considered as central to the promotion of democracy.

The findings in this thesis raise interesting questions for both educators and policy makers. How do we convey respect within the classroom? What is considered learning if the student and tutor have different priorities and agendas? How do we move from a student focused paradigm to a paradigm embracing the mutuality of learning? And where does this fit within instrumental policy making that focuses on job creation and accreditation?

8.7 Conclusion:

This journey has led me deep into the realm of respect, the space of relationships where the individual is acknowledged or denied. It has both confirmed my experiences with my students in the classroom as grounded in respect while also challenging my interpretation of respect itself. This is now what I know. In Chapter III of the Methodology I explored

the meaning of epistemology and demonstrated my awareness that until my beliefs proved sustainable they could not be named truths. However, upon completion of this study the above points will contribute to the development of my epistemological position. When I do a further piece of research my epistemological stance will be informed by this research and the importance of the in between space, not what I teach and not what students know. This is the teaching learning process; It is not I or thou but the I Thou (Buber, 2004).

It interests me that students often lament their struggles on their learning journeys and comments such as 'If I knew then what I know now' are very common. However, it is this comment of hindsight which lingers with me at the end of my own four year learning journey. I am aware that now at the final stage of a doctoral thesis I have learned how to be a doctoral student. I somewhat naively set out on this journey and was forced to learn things as I went, not unlike the learners I meet. As in Sennett (2009), I had the ideas but I gained the 'know how' through time spent developing my craft. I am left to wonder at the dilemma of this knowing when the work is done and can only think that although hindsight can not alter the route, it can offer its own riches to the student at all stages of the learning journey. I find I am not so different after all from the students I meet.

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Appendix A.1

Research Participant Interview Consent Form

I agree that all information I offer during both sessions of these two interviews may be used for doctoral research purposes. I further give my consent to the use of a recording device during this process.

In addition I agree that this procedure and the purpose of this research have been explained to me. I am aware that at any time during the interview and the focus group I can stop the recording or I can stop the interview.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix A.2

Interview 1: Sample Questions

School

1. Can you describe the picture you drew of your learning journey?....
2. What do you remember most about school? Tell me.....
3. What is your best memory?
4. What other memories in particular stand out in your mind about school?
5. What are your memories of your teachers?
6. What do remember about your favourite teacher?
7. Can you tell me about the decision to leave school?
8. What was your parents' attitude towards education

Work

1. What has your experience of work been so far?
2. What was your favourite position? Tell me....
3. What was your least favourite part of your working life?
4. What did leaving school early mean to you in your job?
5. What did you value the most in your work?
6. What do you believe other people value the most, is it the same as you?

Adult Education

1. What brought you back to education? Tell me.....
2. What do you think of your experiences so far as an adult learner?
3. What incidents over the past year stand out for you, if any?
4. How would you describe this experience as compared to school?
5. What do you hope to gain from this new learning journey you have begun?
6. How do you feel when you think about going to university?
7. What does this experience mean to you?

To Clarify:

You said “_____”;

Do you remember anything more about:

- that period of time?
- that particular incident?
- that event?
- that experience?

To Sum up:

- When you look back on your life, are there any moments which you would identify as turning points? What are they?
- When you think about the future what are your thoughts and feelings?
- What are your hopes? How might these be achieved?
- What are some of your fears or worries concerning the future?

Appendix A.3

Interview 2: Sample Questions

Adult Education

1. What has the return to education been like for you? Tell me.....
2. What do you think of your experiences so far as an adult learner?
3. What incidents over the past two years stand out for you, if any?
4. How would you describe this experience as compared to pre-access?
5. What do you hope to gain from this new learning journey you have begun?
6. has anything changed for you during this period?
7. How do you feel when you think about what you are doing now at university or...?
8. What does this experience mean to you?

To Clarify:

You said “ _____ ”,

Do you remember anything more about:

- that period of time?
- that particular incident?
- that event?
- that experience?

To Sum up:

- Since returning to adult education are there any moments which you would identify as turning points? What are they?
- When you think about the future what are your thoughts and feelings?
- What are your hopes? Have they changed since you began this journey? How might these be achieved?
- What are some of your fears or worries concerning the future?
- What would you say to yourself at the start of this journey? Have you any advice?

Appendix A.4

Research Participants' Artwork







