Facilitating transformative learning

A report on research into the experiences of tutors on the NUI Maynooth Foundation in Counselling Skills course

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Part One: Introduction to the report

> I recognize the power of change and the subversive nature of these courses. … In all these classes in the courses, there's been a dialogue going on, almost at village level – in communities – which is beginning to talk of a different society. And carrying it forward is a considerable responsibility because the change isn't finished. It's just begun. I see myself as a change agent for equality – I think a counselor must be.
> Joe, Counselling Skills Tutor

> Whatever it is, we're doing it together – and for me it is about doing something together – it's working, because people are going out there with changed lives. It's effecting change in adults.
> Ursula, Counselling Skills Tutor

> I got all the people on the course to write a little book, and twenty-three of them wrote a chapter about themselves. They explored the impact that the course had had on their lives and it was absolutely astounding and astonishing.
> Jack, Counselling Skills Tutor.

> I am passionate about this course. If that was gone, I wouldn't do it.
> Moira, Counselling Skills Tutor.

Introduction

This report is about research carried out with sixty-two tutors who have worked on the Certificate in Counselling Skills at the Department of Adult and Community Education, NUI Maynooth. This course is a foundation-level course, conducted at NUI Maynooth and at outreach centres throughout the Republic of Ireland, and it has attracted over 14,000 students since it began in 1984. It has developed within a context where the profession of counselling has emerged as separate from psychology, and in a social context of a growing awareness of the role of counseling. The course is also unique in the field of counseling education, in that it has adopted from the start an educational stance rather than a therapeutic one. All the course tutors are qualified and, for the most part, practising counsellors. Many who were core to the course in its early days were also heavily involved in establishing the Irish Association for Counselling and Therapy (IACT), now the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP).

Our research purpose

The study is a contribution to the discipline of adult education, insofar as it examines the store of knowledge and understanding of tutoring issues, built up over the years by a group of practitioners who are passionate about and committed to their work in the field. In initiating the research, we wanted to honour their engagement with counselling education, many of them having been involved with the course since its inception almost twenty years ago. Their commitment to the course is striking, and the report is an attempt to examine their understandings in a systematic way, but without losing the sense of passion that they demonstrate.

We see the tutors as working in a complex learning environment, managing curriculum and process in the classroom. We wanted to examine what their understandings and practices of tutoring can add to the body of knowledge concerning adult education pedagogy. Our research examines their experiences by means of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. Sixty-two tutors completed questionnaires, twenty-seven of these participated in focus groups and one, who was unable to attend a focus group, did an in-depth interview. The questionnaire and the guiding questions for the focus groups are in Appendices One and Two, respectively.

Our initial question
We started our research project by wondering what kinds of knowledge the tutors have built up about how about how adults learn and about how to create the conditions for learning. The tutors are skilled, responsive and proactive. We wanted to look more closely at their skills as well as at their meaning repertoires, in order to explore how they facilitate the students' voices and lived experiences to contribute to the creation of knowledge.

This report, then, is a series of insights into creating the conditions in which others can learn. It is not a report on the outcomes of the course for the learners, nor a 'how to' manual for practitioners, nor a digest of what individual tutors do in the classroom. It is reflective reportage, which examines the ways that the tutors theorise and understand their work, the positions they take up and the practices in which they engage in the classroom. We rely on the tutors' own words for evidence of their theories and practices. This evidence also provides a means for us to further theorise and discuss their facilitation and tutoring activities.

A focus on tutors
This research is concerned primarily with the tutors rather than the learners. Of course, the learners are present, in that their relationships with each other, with the curriculum, and with the tutors form the basis for the tutors' reflections. However, academics rarely consider the status of the teacher, focusing only on the students (Preece, 2001: 207). Redressing this imbalance is one reason for concentrating on the tutors in this research. A second is that we are involved in the training of professional adult educators and we want to produce knowledge that will assist us in that project. We want what emerges from the research to be living, and useful for practitioners and theorists in both adult education and in counselling training.

Refining our initial question
Our data collection and analysis proceeded in tandem, in accordance with the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz, 1995). This process allowed us to refine the focus of the research, thereby concentrating on four concepts that occur in the data, namely:
1. Experience
2. Emotional dimensions of teaching and learning
3. The group, group process and group dimensions of learning
4. Relationship as a framework for the learning and teaching on the course.
We decided to
- establish and explain these concepts
- examine the links between them
- search for variation, complexity and multiplicity in the concepts.

We do this by presenting extracts from the focus group and interview transcripts, with points of analysis and commentaries, in order to build up a picture of how the concepts operate in classroom practice. We explore the discourses and meaning repertoires that the tutors draw on, and use these to form the basis of a discussion on the nature of pedagogy in adult education. We do not discuss the tutors as individual practitioners.

As we worked with the concepts in this way, we became convinced that linking all of them were the themes of emotion, and of managing the emotional dynamics of learning. We provide evidence and justification for this emphasis in subsequent sections, and we discuss its implications in Part Three. The emphasis has also given the report its title.

Who we are writing for, and why
This report is written for the tutors who participated in the research, for colleagues and other adult educators. We hope that the ideas and insights presented here can serve as entry points and/or link points for other practitioners and theorists. We believe that both theory and practice, taken alone, are empty. Both must go together and inform each other in that dynamic relationship called praxis. Praxis must also involve action for change (Freire, 1970: 47). The concept draws attention to the living, contingent and revisable dimensions of learning and knowledge, and to the need for critical reflection on one's theory and practice. Lather (1986) says that praxis is 'philosophy viewing itself in the mirror of practice', and its use here is to indicate a commitment to a political position in which knowledge is not simply defined as knowledge *of*, but also as knowledge *for* (Stanley, 1990: 15). As Stanley (ibid) puts it, 'the point is to change the world, not only to study it'.

As practitioners and as theorists we are learning all the time. The concept of praxis is implicitly taken forward in the work of a host of writers and practitioners. Kolb (1984) and Heron (1992, 1996) are probably the best known. 'Heron (1992) presents four ways of knowing as a cycle: the learner *experiences* a felt encounter that is grasped and *presented* intuitively, expressed *propositionally* and extended in to *practical* action. Action creates a new experience of felt encounter and the cycle begins anew' (Kasl and Yorks, 2002: 3, original emphases). This has similarities to Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, which also includes 'four psychological modes (feeling, perceiving, thinking and behaing) and four learning modes (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation)' (Kasl and Yorks, 2002: 3).

Kasl and Yorks (ibid) draw distinctions between the ways that Heron and Kolb theorise the learning cycles, but our reason for drawing attention to them here is simply to indicate that learning and knowledge are not static end points, but active processes that involve all the senses. This approach to learning is as relevant for practitioners and managers as it is for those who come to courses as learners. In short, we are saying here that practitioners and theorists are learners too.

Who are we?
The course was and is managed, administered and academically supervised by the Department of Adult and Community Education (DACE) at NUI Maynooth. The three researchers on this project are based there. The two who commissioned the

research, Mary and David McCormack, are the course managers, and both are qualified therapists as well as educators. The third, Anne B. Ryan, is an adult educator who specializes in discourse-based research within the field.

The concept of discourse

The most important data in this study is qualitative, gathered in the focus group interviews of two hours or two and a half hours length, and an interview of 90 minutes. All participants received transcripts of their focus group discussion or interview and had the opportunity to veto sections of their accounts or to add to them or explain them. (Nobody actually took up this option).

We use discourse analysis as a tool to examine the themes that arise in the data.. Discourses are filters or frames of reference for interpreting or making sense of our experiences in the world around us. Using discourse analysis, we have examined the tutors' words (the data), in order to explore their beliefs, attitudes, values and opinions.

The term discourse refers to ways of seeing or understanding. Discourses are like lenses through which we view the world and interpret it. Some are well recognised, and some less common, but they permeate the ways that people think, act and speak. Multiple discourses exist, all competing for influence and explanatory power. Often, a person will draw on several (possibly contradictory) discourses relating to the same theme, in the course of one conversation. This is not an indication that the person is being untruthful or inauthentic. It is an indication of the many different ways in which humans can interpret their experiences.

Discourse analysis allows us to 'make the familiar strange'. It is a key tool in interpreting culture, especially the aspects that are subtle and difficult to measure by means of quantitative data. Using it in this study, we intend to show how discourse works to both shape and explain the tutors' understandings of their work. Much of the data concerns themes familiar to anybody concerned with adult education, such as experience, group, interpersonal relationships and emotions in learning. Our intent is to shed some new light on these themes, by unpicking the frames of reference and the sense-making repertoires that are operating as people discuss these themes. The discourse analysis should strike a chord or a spark of recognition in the reader, yet at the same time, it should suggest alternative ways of seeing taken-for-granted phenomena.

The discursive approach has its origins in a postmodernist movement in the history of ideas. This movement tends toward suspicion of overarching narratives that are based on hidden assumptions about human nature (Belsey, 2002: 136). Usher et al (1998) see the discursive approach as being about meaning-making and in particular about the necessity of identifying 'the specific cultural location' of activities that heretofore have been regarded 'as universal ways of doing things' (ibid: 2). They suggest that the discursive approach offers an effective way of constructing 'more critical self-understandings' and they exhort practitioners to engage in a kind of reflexivity that allows the experiences of practitioners in the education field to be 'challenged and deconstructed' (ibid: 220).

Discourse analysis is internationally recognised as a valuable tool in critical psychology (see for example Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine, 1998; Walkerdine, 2003). It has not been widely used in published social research in Ireland, but its value has nevertheless been established (see Ryan, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2003; Ryan and Connolly, 2000). In discourse analysis, the central aim is to understand the discourses themselves, how they operate and how people draw on them. The emphasis is not on how many times a discourse appears in the data, but on how important it is in a participant's interpretation of their experience.

Focus on accounts rather than individuals

A person can produce a potentially limitless number of accounts, depending on the situation and relations in which an interview or discussion takes place. The focus in the analysis as a whole is thus on how the specific accounts of the different themes are constructed and what forces are shaping them, rather than on the psychology of individual research participants. This kind of analysis gives us access to the social processes that produce the accounts, and so allows us to draw generalised conclusions, rather than conclusions pertaining to individual tutors.

Structure of the report

The report has three parts:

Part One: This introduction, where our intention is to set out the context for the research, including some of the key contemporary issues in adult education pedagogy. We thereby elaborate on the issues we wish to explore, and outline some of the premises that inform our approach.

Part Two: Reflections on classroom practice. In this section, tutors discuss their classroom practice. Their stories are organised under the headings

- *Experience*
- *Group*
- *The Emotional Impact of Transformative Learning*
- *Structure.*

Extracts from their stories are accompanied by our analyses, commentaries and extended commentaries.

Part Three: Reflections on what we have learned about tutoring. This includes a general discussion and reflections which draw on the research findings and on our personal and professional experiences of facilitation, adult education and counselling training.

Radical adult education

DACE was founded on Freirean principles, and its mission places it in a radical tradition of education, which takes part in 'the historical struggle for more democracy, social justice and equality' (Martin and Merrill, 2002: 210). Radical adult educators believe that education is a vital part of broad processes of social, economic and political change. While not claiming that there is an educational road to social justice, the tradition works towards an informed and politically literate citizenry. It asserts its contribution to social movements, via the facilitation of critical thinking, adult politicisation, and the construction of liberatory knowledge. Liberatory or emancipatory knowledge is characterised by its ability to challenge dominant ways of knowing, and is distinguished from adaptive knowledge, which leaves the status quo

intact. Pedagogy, in this context, is a matter of 'principle and purpose, rather than mere technique' (Crowther, Martin and Shaw, 2000: 174).

A key to liberatory knowledge is seen as transformative learning or the development of transformative awareness. Attempting to define and theorise transformative awareness is not straightforward, but it is a felt and recognised phenomenon in adult education circles, referred to by both students and tutors. It is preferable to attempt to theorise it, than to leave unacknowledged the power of what happens when people experience learning, awareness, movement and insight into their lives and their circumstances. These processes and their outcomes often leave us[1] with a sense of agency, that is, the ability to effect change in our worlds. for example the dangers of this being co-opted?

Key concepts in adult education, which inform methodologies in the classroom, include the needs of mature learners, varieties of learning theories and styles, the significance of transformative learning, the importance of experience in learning, the fact that learning is an emotional as well as an intellectual event, and the importance of collective and group forms of learning (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant and Yates, 2003; Preece, 2001).

Counselling skills training in a context of adult education

The epistemological and methodological principles of adult education are interwoven with generally accepted methods of active, experiential counselling training. Johns (1998:11) sets out three core elements of such training: a student-centred ethos in which acceptance and trust are central; the willingness to be alongside students' unique learning journeys; and the valuing of 'readiness to learn' as the starting point (ibid).

A department of adult and community education would seem then to provide a 'natural' home for a foundation course in counselling skills. Both counselling and adult education have in common an emphasis on praxis and on learning from experience. Both are increasingly interdisciplinary in their sources. Both disciplines also, essentially, have increased human well-being as their aim. We believe therefore, that this hybrid territory of counseling education, sponsored by a department of adult and community education, is a fertile area for the development of pedagogical insights.

Nevertheless, counselling holds a somewhat controversial place in the field of adult education. On the one hand, it is valued and privileged by its presence on the curricula of many international centers devoted to adult learning. However, there is much anecdotal evidence that many 'radical' adult educators view the field of counseling with some suspicion. They believe that social power and its misuse and abuse is at the core of many of the issues that ought to be addressed by the discipline. They also tend to believe that counselling and psychotherapy mistakenly locate the source of many

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[1]The pronoun 'we' is 'the dangerous pronoun', according to Richard Sennett (1999). We use the words 'we' and 'us' in several places in the report, to reinforce our understanding that these ourcomes and proceses apply to all participants in adult education: students, tutors and managers. We are all learners, for whom these ideas have concrete effects, not just an abstract existence.

human problems in individual biography and consciousness, and therefore are not useful in the pursuit of social justice.

A division of labour

Early in the adult education project in Ireland, this suspicion of counseling and psychotherapy was clear. The then-fledgling discipline took for granted a division of labour between psychology and sociology, and relied on sociological critiques of social structures, in order to assist moves towards social change and increased well-being and inequality. The personal and the social or political were seen as separate and different things, an approach characteristic of modernity (Ryan, 2001: 5).

To summarise, in the 1970, 80s and even into the early 90s, the dominant view within the radical adult education community was that curricula should emphasise social issues, community development and the need for structural change. It developed its own orthodoxy about how change took place: namely, that social justice is created by changing unequal social structures. Implicit in this approach was the idea that personal change was either irrelevant, or that it would follow structural change as a matter of course. One consequence of this set of beliefs was the assumption that person- or individual-oriented attempts to create change, such as personal development or counselling processes, could not have effects at a social-justice level (Ryan and Connolly, 2000). This discourse was, however, not uncontested, and the women's movement in particular posed a challenge, with its working out of the insight that the personal and political are inextricably linked.

In the 1980s in Ireland also, interest began to grow in human relations psychology and in counselling. Thus began a more psychologically oriented tradition in adult education. There was a growth in personal development courses, especially among women's community groups. In this context the counselling skills course was started in 1984. It was enormously popular and, clearly, it met some kind of felt need among large sections of the Irish population, especially among women.

For many years, there was a stand-off between these two traditions (see Ryan and Connolly, 2000 for a fuller account). The personal and the structural were seen as mutually exclusive, when it came to the design of curricula for adult education courses. The kind of thinking on which this situation was based is dualistic or binary. That is, it depends on clear-cut distinctions to make sense of the world. These in turn affect the design and content of curricula. Examples of such dualisms are reason/emotion, social/psychological (or personal), male/female, social structures/individual, culture/nature, determinism/voluntarism, political/personal and distortion/truth. In each case, one side of the dualism comes to be understood as superior to the other.

In recent years, however, we have come to understand that these dualisms are inadequate as ways to understand personal and social change. Developments in poststructuralist theory and practice now indicate that the social and the psychological exist together in a dynamic mutual relationship and cannot easily be separated off from each other. Moreover, it is now understood that a radical agenda can inform any subject matter.

As practitioners and researchers with a long-time involvement in adult education, we are aware of the difficult relationship that have existed between the 'individualists' and the 'structuralists'. However, our increasing concern is with the difficult task of facilitating adult learning, in particular with the need that adult educators have to clarify their views of the personal dynamics involved in any attempt to facilitate adult growth and development. As Chappel et al put it (2003: 9):

> All programmes designed to act as catalysts for personal or professional growth and change contain implicit theorizations concerning the nature of the self, its development or capacity for change, and the way the self relates to others or to society more generally. Such theorizations are a necessary part of our conceptions of the possibility of self-change and the associated pedagogies deployed for the purpose of change.

Further, they suggest that 'by engaging with theorizations concerning the self and self-change, practitioners are better able to analyse their own assumptions, make explicit their theoretical position, and tailor their pedagogical practices accordingly' (ibid: 10).

Our view is that a group of experienced adult education tutors who are also skilled and practicing counselors are well placed to begin some of the analysis and relfection that can advance this agenda.

Transformative learning

In this section, we provide an overview of how different adult educators have theorised the concept of transformative learning, which is integral to the notion of emancipatory education. We begin by looking by work that centres on the idea of distortion, accurate information and conscientisation. We move on to examine the idea that women have special feminine ways of knowing, based in relationships of caring and connection. We trace how these two approaches exist in a dualistic relationship with each other, which posits on the one hand reason and on the other hand feeling as the keys to transformative learning. Finally, we look at recent work that draws attention to the inadequacies of these approaches, and which attempts to move beyond dualistic thinking.

Distortion and conscientisation

Education, knowledge and pedagogy were for a long time typically conceptualised as institutional practices associated with schools. This began to change when new agendas concerned with social justice were inspired by the publication of Freire's work in 1969. These agendas sought, in the words of Weiler (1988: 50) to discover 'how the human ability to create meaning and resist an imposed ideology can be turned to praxis and social transformation'. Freire sought to do this with his notion of conscientisation. He questioned the role and authority of the teacher, recognised personal experience as a source of knowledge and took into account the perspectives of people of different races, classes and cultures.

The core goal of adult education practice which strives for social justice in recent decades has been to produce critical thinkers, who will mobilise to resist oppression (Tennant and Pogson, 1995: 199). A key theorist in the field of critical thinking is

Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1991), whose concept of transformative learning is implicit in the idea of critical thinking. Mezirow has been influenced by the work of Freire (1970) and Habermas (1971a,b; 1983a,b) and has in turn influenced many other thinkers in adult education and critical pedagogy.

Mezirow's (1991, 1996) theory of transformative learning has developed over nearly two decades into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experiences. Mezirow sees Freire's (1970) work on conscientization as parallel to his own work on perspective transformation. Perspective transformation is intended for emancipatory purposes: 'The intent of education for emancipatory action -- or ... perspective transformation -- would be seen by Habermas as the providing of the learner with an accurate in-depth understanding of his or her historical situation' (Mezirow, 1981: 6, cited in Cranton, 1992: 24). The core of transformative learning in Mezirow's (1991) view is the uncovering of distorted assumptions -- errors in learning -- in each of the three domains of meaning perspectives: psychological, sociolinguistic and epistemic. A learner can be advanced in the development of reflective judgement or the intellect and still hold distorted assumptions (ibid: 43).

The main problems we see with Mezirow's work, are, first, that of distortion and, second, the assumption that accurate information exists. A reliance on this notion of distortion betrays an assumption that accurate information and rational understanding alone can lead to transformation. The assumption that accurate information exists and that consensus can be reached on the basis of access to such information is a legacy from Habermas. The danger with consensus and trying to achieve it through what Habermas calls the 'ideal speech situation' (1983b) is twofold. First, it does not allow for the investments that people make in certain positions or in certain kinds of knowledge, based on how these investments give access to power or positions of power. Second, the idea of consensus is based on rational talk (Young, 1987: 67 - 73) and too often such talk reflects dominant discourses, because of the power associated with such discourses and the fact that muted discourses have little currency and therefore cannot be made sense of, even by people with the best will in the world. Rational talk and the idea of rationality again betray the dualistic assumption that reason is superior to emotion, and that the human subject is unitary and rational, all other things being equal (ibid). Unfortunately, these characteristics have been traditionally associated with white western masculinity.

Feeling and femininity
Given the social context in which rationality in knowing emerges as superior in Mezirovian thought, it is hardly surprising that a major influence in feminist pedagogy, which in turn has been influential in adult education, has been the idea that women have special 'female' ways of knowing, which coincide with essentially female ways of being. This is also perhaps the most visible and influential face of feminism in the mainstream of everyday life, as well as in the media.

The Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development, from which a great deal of this difference work emanates, is a project which represents one of the most influential strands of feminist social psychology today (Ryan, 2001). Such educational work has been influenced by the work of Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982), Brown and Gilligan (1992, 1993) and Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan (1995).

Much of the research emanating from this project deduces sex differences between women and men on the basis of research carried out with women and girls (Crawford, 1997). Its most popular manifestation with reference to education is in Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*.

Belenky et al fail address women's knowledge as socially and politically organised, treat it but as something intrinsic to women. What they describe is ideology about women, but they take this as evidence of natural differences between women and men. In doing this, they promote a discourse of male/female dualism. They do not address how an explicit theoretical validation of difference continues to support a dualistic approach to knowledge and the human subject which, far from challenging the gender status quo, functions to reinforce it. The work examines supposedly naturally occurring gender differences, but fails to investigate how different gendered experiences are *produced*, how difference can be celebrated without resorting to essentialism and how human subjects are organised to know.

Including a psychology of women in adult education has historically been seen as radical, in the face of a mainstream psychology that took the male as the norm against which women were to be measured and most often seen as deficient. This explains the enormous popularity of the work of Gilligan and of Belenky et al. It is important to see these ideas in the historical context in which they first became popular, but more recent insights, which we discuss below, mean that this approach is no longer satisfactory, in the same way that the Mezirovian approach is unsatisfactory.

Recent developments in theories of transformative learning
While our approach to Mezirovian thinking and to the idea of 'women's ways of knowing' is critical, we acknowledge nevertheless that that they were significant developments and important historical challenges to the idea that knowledge is disembodied. They have offered important starting points for theorising knowledge and learning in ways more adequate to the complexity of the late modern world of western society.

Ryan (2001) argues that theories of the human subject either explicitly or implicitly influence all approaches to learning. Theories that assume a unitary self, either feeling (feminine) or rational (male) are inadequate for a radical adult education project that promotes transformative learning. Ryan points out how the assumptions about female culture and knowledge, on which W*omen's Ways of Knowing* is based, have been used to invert rather than subvert male/female dualism in many practices of adult education in Ireland. With this inversion of the dualism, women come to be seen as superior rather than deficient, because of their supposedly innate caring and relational attributes.

Using empirical studies of the learning experiences of feminist women who are uncomfortable with the idea that women have essentially female ways of understanding and knowing the world, Ryan proposes a multiple subjectivity (that is, the sense that the human subject has of her/himself, including ideas, beliefs and emotions) that draws on feminist poststructuralism, psychodynamic thought, and critical pedagogy. She puts forward a model of the human subject as existing in a dynamic relationship that involves discourses, psychodynamic processes and relations in the present moment. She uses the concept of multiple and contradictory discourses,

powers and subjectivities that can act as a resource for women and men, in the process of re-interpreting experience and constructing knowledge. She also emphasises the need to always examine psychological investments in and attachments to different roles, beliefs, knowledges and positions.

Ryan applies and illustrates her theory in the practical context of women's personal development education, thus demonstrating a commitment to action, along with theorising, that is, to praxis. Power relations and the deconstruction of dualisms are central to this work, which urges adult educators to develop ever more useful understandings of power, capable of dealing with the complexity and multiplicity of its expressions in contemporary western society. Her work also implies a theory of spirituality in her practice (Thonemann, 2002: 258), which is also part of the work of Boyd (see below).

Boler (1999) explores how emotional responses can be used to analyse the contradictions and emotionally embedded investments that underlie ideologies and ways of knowing the world, and argues that this process can provide a direction for emancipatory education. This approach invites students to leave behind learned beliefs and habits, and enter the risky areas of contradictory and ambiguous ethical and moral differences (Zemblyas and Boler, 2002: 2). Zemblyas and Boler propose the concept of a pedagogy of discomfort, which has the potential to nurture 'the various emotions of (dis)comfort without ending up creating a celebratory or essentialist emotional culture in the classroom' (ibid: 6). Emotional responses to learning and change are seen as crucial, but these writers equally emphasise the need to be careful not to simply invert the old dualisms and not to assume that emotions are 'better' than reason, or that they allow access to some kind of essential self.

Importantly, too, this approach challenges learners to reflect collectively on their experiences, by developing an understanding of power and how learners both collude in, and have to potential to challenge, the way that they behave or see themselves. Zemblyas and Boler argue that this can push the individual to think and feel beyond the personal and can also be used to understand how the individual is situated in a globalised history (ibid: 2). The key issue is that 'this concept of consciousness-raising does not assume a unitary collective form of empowerment but allows the learners to reposition themselves as individuals within their own understanding of their reality' (Preece, 2001: 205). A pedagogy of discomfort also goes beyond individualised self-reflection and emphasises collective experience and witnessing, or a collective engagement in learning to see, feel and act in new ways.

The qualitative and emotional aspects of transformative learning are also considered in a school of thought that sees learning as an 'intuitive, creative, emotional process' (Grabov, 1997: 90, cited in Imel, 1998:1). This approach to transformation is based on the work of Boyd, which draws on analytical (or depth) psychology (ibid), and has been pushed forward in the work of Dirxx (2000, cited in McCormack, 2003). In this school of thought, transformative learning draws on the 'realm of interior experience, one constituent being the rational expressed through insights, judgements, and decision; the other being the extrarational expressed through symbols, images and feelings (Boyd and Myers, 1988: 275, cited in Imel, 1998: 2). The process of discernment allows the exploration of both the rational and the extra-rational. Such

work also opens the way for the inclusion of spirituality in considerations of learning (see, for example, Tisdell, 2003)

All of these recent critical developments in theories of transformative learning develop the notion of a psychosocial subject, that is, one 'whose inner worlds cannot be understood without knowledge of their experiences in the world, and whose experiences of the world cannot be understood without knowledge of the way in which their inner worlds allow them to experience the outer world' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001: 4). In other words, the subject of pedagogy is 'simultaneously psychic and social' (ibid: 14). Implicit in all of these approaches is the need to subvert dualistic thought and action, and to constantly scrutinize notions of the self, subjectivity and identity that inform theory and practice (Chappell et al, 2003).

A focus on pedagogy

The question for the contemporary adult educator then arises: what kind of curricula and methodologies are required, in order to advance this transformative agenda? This is a distinctly pedagogical question, because it demands an understanding of how people in a particular time and place think and act, which also tells us what can be changed politically and personally, and what cannot (Ryan, 2001: 139). The question is relevant both to management and course providers, as well as to the tutors in classroom situations. Radical adult educators want to take theory and academic knowledge into the frontline of classroom practice, and to facilitate the development of such knowledge in an engagement with students. Such insights and practice are a hallmark of pedagogy, and distinguish it from sociology or psychology.

The concept of pedagogy draws attention to the processes and relations through which knowledge is produced. How something is done becomes as important as the content that is on offer in the classroom. The tutor has a responsibility to provide alternative explanations, but also to provide a 'safe' environment in which learners can process and engage with the new. The relationships that form in the learning context are key, none more so than the relationship between the learner and the tutor. Robertson (1996) argues that adult educators are encouraged to promote transformative learning through facilitative relationships, but they are not always adequately prepared or supported to manage the dynamics of such relationships.

> The dynamics of the helping relationship are complex and often involve professional challenges such as transference, countertransference, confidentiality, sexual attraction, supervision and burnout, each with attendant ethical, legal and efficacy considerations. By and large the field of adult education has not embraced the challenge of preparing and supporting adult educators to deal with these issues. (ibid: 44)

Robertson calls for a curriculum for adult educators, which includes 'managing the dynamics of educational helping relationships' (ibid: 48). The tutors who have participated in this study are trained counsellors and therapists and therefore skilled in the dynamics of helping relationships. Our aim is to explore how these skills and experiences can be used to push forward transformative pedagogies.

We take it for granted that transformative pedagogies can use the learners' individual life experiences as integral to the curriculum. This use of experience gives rise to the

notion of 'subjugated knowledge – that is, knowledge that is rarely validated by those with authoritative power, but which nevertheless is useful to those who have direct understanding of it' (Preece, 2001: 205). Nevertheless, we do not claim that subjugated knowledges are any more 'real' than dominant knowledge. We assert the need to adopt a questioning attitude to experience and to avoid assumptions that there is any one true, real self, which can be uncovered by using the 'correct' classroom techniques.

We acknowledge, in our emphasis on experience in this report, that a range of scholars, practitioners and theorists have argued before us for the importance of connecting pedagogy to the histories, lived experiences and meaning frameworks that tutors and learners bring to classrooms. We also recognise that pedagogy is not confined to classrooms, and that learning takes place across a wide spectrum of social settings and practices. Nevertheless, classroom practice is important, and is the context in which we set this research. Part Two of the report, *Reflections on Classroom Practice*, is concerned with reading and interpreting tutors' accounts of their work in the classroom.

Part Two: Reflections on classroom practice

Introduction

We collected data from 62 tutors. All 62 returned questionnaires (see Appendix One), 27 of those participated in focus groups, and one in an in-depth interview (see Appendix Two for the guiding questions). In this part of the report, we present long extracts of the tutors' words, collected during the focus groups and interview. The extracts we present were chosen for their variety and complexity. It is impossible to select one extract that exactly illustrates a particular concept, theme or discourse, so each extract illuminates several different aspects of how the tutors represent, report or account for their beliefs and practices. The tutors are theorizing informally as they give accounts of their practice. They are justifying and explaining what they do in the classroom.

As we have outlined in Part One, We use a discourse approach to research in this study. We use the term discourse to mean frameworks for thought and action that groups and individuals draw on in order to speak and interact with other groups and individuals, in ways that make sense to the people involved. 'Discourses are historically, culturally, politically, and socially generated patterns of thinking, speaking, acting and interacting that are sanctioned by a particular group of people' (Miller Marsh, 2002: 456). Individuals are 'invited' to be and to act in certain ways, by the discourses that are available to them (Burman, 1994; Ryan, 2003).

Each questionnaire response, interview or focus group contains many ideas, internal agreements, disagreements, challenges and internal contradictions, produced in dialogue with the researchers and, in the case of the focus groups, with other participants. We call these accounts. The discursive approach does not focus on individuals, but on the accounts that they produce and the discourses that shape these accounts. We do not treat accounts as if they give a full representation of any one person.

Our procedures for detailed analysis

Many of the extracts we present below are stories – tutors making sense of their experience in the classroom by relating specific events or series of linked events. The narratives of the stories show how the tutors position themselves and are positioned by the students. These stories or narratives are a mirror to the stories that the students often tell in class, as a way of focusing on their life experience and making connections between experience and theory. Our procedures (or methods) for analysis are designed as an effort to make explicit the tacit knowledge of the tutors, which is contained in the stories.

Our method consists of selecting certain long extracts, which we select on the basis of our theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity is the ability to recognise where relevant information is likely to be found. It also refers to the ability to recognise what is important in data and to interpret it. Theoretical sensitivity comes from a number of sources, but primarily from: familiarity with literature relevant to the topic of study, from professional experience and from personal experience (Charmaz, 1995).

We then examine each extract closely, that is, line by line, for the assertions, understandings, suggestions, equations and recognitions that it contains. Each extract is followed by numbered points of analysis and a commentary. The points of analysis refer to the specific part of an account that provide evidence for the point made. These points are confined to the extracts and to the accounts and discourses within them. This procedure includes examining the variations, contradictions and multiple meanings that are contained in any one extract, or concerning any one theme.

The commentaries let us make links to other extracts, and to comment on how themes are developing. Occasionally, we also include an extended commentary, which notes themes that are absent, but which one might expect to be present. We also use these extended commentaries to comment on the power relations and dynamics that exist within extracts, especially where there are contradictions and multiple explanations. In this way, we build up a multi-layered picture of the data.

This process represents a more formal approach to theorizing the tutors' classroom practices, compared to the informal theorizing engaged in during the interviews and focus group discussions. Our procedure follows the text, and also brings readers into the analysis, if they wish to trace the origins of a point we make. It treats readers as active, and allows them to make alternative readings and interpretations of the data. It also allows interaction among the multiple perspectives (cf Schratz and Walker, 1995: 136).

It is commonplace in qualitative research presentations to offer short data extracts as illustrations of certain findings. But we do not like to break up participants' accounts into short chunks or 'bites', because we believe that it is important to get a sense of the whole account, or the *Gestalt* of the discussion and of its internal contradictions and multiplicity, insofar as this is possible. By the *Gestalt* we mean, not the total, but a sense of the wholeness of the context and the account offered by a person (cf Hollway and Jefferson, 2001). We believe that the method can achieve this.

Suggestions for reading Part Two

In order to do justice to the complexity of the stories, the extracts we present in the rest of Part Two are quite long, and there are often long lists of analytical points. While the reader may wish to follow our procedure closely, we are also aware that reading the whole text of the analytical points may be tedious. Below, we suggest some different approaches to reading Part Two.

Option One: Read the text straight through as it is written out, including points of analysis, commentaries and extended commentaries.

Option Two: Read just the extracts, ignoring the points of analysis and commentaries, and form your own conclusions.

Option Three: Read only the commentaries and extended commentaries, taking into account that the assertions in each commentary have a base of evidence in the preceding extract.

Option Four: Dip into the text in any way that seems useful.

Section one: Experience
We begin with extracts that concentrate on the value of experience in adult learning. However, the extracts are not confined to the theme of experience, and also range over themes of group, emotion and relationship.

Extract One
Experience as starting point and throughout the course
Tom[2]: My starting point with adult education is – and community education – is that it's very much their starting point, from within their experience [1][3]. I don't know how explicit that is, now, you know, how – in my mind. But I'm just very aware, when push comes to shove [2] – for example, something goes wrong and we'll say, there's a student who's not very academic, who hasn't – if you were in a psychology department, for example, so you have a student who's not very academic, but you know, somehow, that they're really making this inner journey and you know also that they have an extraordinary capacity to connect, in terms of what counselling is about [3] – the adult education department are really -- as I experience it – are really sensitive to that. They want to drag people through. But they also want to challenge people [4]. It's only last week, I was on – I have one particular student, in fact, I corrected the papers, so I'm very tuned in at the moment – one paper in particular, I felt, you couldn't put this through [5]. When I say you couldn't put it through, you'd have to challenge—this person wasn't academically very – very articulate, but nonetheless had the capacity to do better, or more than he had done –

Anne: Yeah

Tom: And I knew that. And I talked it through with [one of the course managers] and we kind of came up with some kind of a deal – I knew I didn't want to ask him to wait until May [from January]. I wanted to be able to say to him, listen, will you come back with something to me in a month's time. I thought the way they related – they – they dealt with that, it's true to form. But – we used to say, child-centred, it's very person-centred [6].

Anne: yeah

Tom: It's not to say this isn't academic – it's very academic at times [7]– but I'm very aware of that piece. I think that's what adult and community education must be about [8]. … I integrate this personal development piece into ordinary class [9] – for example, if I'm doing something on systemic thinking, I'll always integrate it – maybe that's just the way I would be anyway, but if we're doing something like patterns, for example, patterns of interaction, which is a very basic systemic concept, immediately, I'd be getting them to reflect on patterns in their own lives. Where are you doing the same thing over and over again and getting the same results? … So, immediately, what we're doing is, we're relating notions, theoretical ideas, and we're connecting to – to their personal lives [10]. Both are coming together.

Points of analysis, extract one

1. Emphasis on student life experience as a pedagogical entry point
2. Suggestion that even if a tutor has not formally constructed a theory of experience, it nevertheless can inform practice, as a taken-for-granted discourse, or as tacit knowledge.
3. Implication that there is a distinction between the academic process and the inner journey, and that both are of equal importance, particularly in this course.
4. Recognition and approval of the desire to move beyond what may be narrow experience, or possibly to find new ways to interpret life experience.

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[2] All names are pseudonyms, except for those of the researchers (Anne, David and Mary).
[3] Numbers in square brackets refer to the points of analysis in the box directly below each extract.

5. Assertion that the academic process is important – standards must be reached.
6. Emphasis on the way that the student experiences his 'treatment' by the tutor and the university – this must take account of the person's needs and emotions.
7. Equation of person-centred with experiential. Assertion that the person-centred approach may be unique to adult education, and that this can be the case, without lowering academic standards. A challenge to academic / experience dualism.
8. Assertion that attention to students' experience of how the class is run and managed is an essential element of the identity of adult education.
9. Assertion that personal development arises out of theorising life experience.
10. Assertion that theory and experience can be integrated by viewing theory through the lens of life experience.

Commentary

This extract emphasises experience as crucial to adult education in general, and to the course in particular, and situates the course firmly in the context of adult education. The account in the extract treats the term experience in two ways. First, to refer to life experience accrued by students before they start the course, and how reflection on this, through the lens of counselling theories, can be the starting point, or pedagogical entry point, for further academic and personal development. Second, the term is used to discuss the importance of the student's actual experience of the processes and relations that occur in the learning arena. This account sees it as vital that the relationship between student, tutor and administration/management is such that the student gets every opportunity to reach the standard required by the university. The account emphasises the importance of tutor reflection on the student's needs, in order to motivate the student to complete his assignment, and not be put off (by a long wait to re-submission). The tutors's judgement of the learner's needs appears to be crucial to the tutor's understanding of what person-centred means, in the context of experience. Being person-centered is equated with the relations-in-the present moment aspect of experience.

Extract Two: Theory, experience and emotion

Jane: Skills and theory are part of it as well – you know – if you were to break down the course – if you look at the outline so they do achieve certain academic standards, but they –the hidden advantage is that they also become self-aware along the way [1].

Mary: So that academic focus – I'm just wondering how did you hold it? You're saying, Ursula that it's at the back. It *is* at the back, but it's there –so how do you engage with it?

Moira: Well, I very much work experientially, you see [2]. So I would start with the theory, and then what I do is I get them to learn the theory through the doing, rather than me standing up there telling. So I have a whole range of different experiential exercises, and they learn the theory through the doing and the feeling, rather than the head, and trying to understand [3]. So I combine both. I think that's what you do as well [to Frank].

Frank: Mmn – most people would go for that, as an exercise in itself, that that's the way you do it.

Jane: And I would always start off the evening with some of the information – the first part of the evening, they would be fresher and they would be able to take in something new. So start kind of – a little bit more of the academic side of it [4] and moving then very gradually towards the end of the evening, towards the experiential side. So the points are quite clearly getting across through the experiential [5].

Ursula: I would do it the other way around.

Jane: Right, right

Ursula: I do the experience first and then say, well, what's going on here? What lies underneath this? What is this about really? And they try to build it up together [6].

Moira: yeah – and I would very much do it that way as well, because I find that that – people come in every week with certain resistance and that the experiential just knocks them sideways – that they drop all of that and then they're much more open to fully hearing what I'm saying in the second part [7]. But that's just the way I do it – it doesn't mean it's for everyone.

Ursula: yeah

Moira: It's just how it suits yourself and *that* -- around the flexibility of the course, it's just – the course is wonderful in its flexibility for *that*, because it allows a mixture of tutors to work effectively in their own way.

Jack: I would take an academic sort of approach initially, looking at maybe theories of counselling and then the experiential would probably come in, where people would talk about their own reflections, their own feelings, whatever. But then, when we sort of wind that up in the end, I would always conclude by going back and sort of maybe summing up the academic, you know, the points in relation to that theory. So they come away with both having the experience. But my way of sort of concluding the session would be to actually bring it back into that, so that people – it would allow or ensure that people aren't leaving the room in any sort of – ill at ease – cos obviously, stuff can come up through the process [8]. So it brings it back, and it also leaves room for somebody still to say something, if needs be, before moving back into a more formal sort of focus [9]. So again, it's not for everybody, but it's –

Ursula: Yeah

Moira: But at the end of the day, you see, the magic of the course is that it always works, no matter which way you embrace it.

SEVERAL YESSES [10]

Points of analysis, extract two

> 1. Student self-awareness is equated with a focus on one's own life-experience. Also an implication that the academic and experiential are separate but complementary.
> 2. Assertion that the experiential is a vehicle for focusing on the academic.
> 3. Experiential equated with feeling and action, and set in opposition to reasoning or intellectual understanding (the head).
> 4. Equation of information with the academic.
> 5. Experience treated as a lens through which to view theory
> 6. Theory seen as a lens through which to view experience, and, importantly, this viewing is done in a group setting (together).
> 7. Implication that the use of experience can make students more receptive to theories that they might otherwise dismiss or resist.
> 8. Acknowledgement of the emotional dimensions of experiential learning.
> 9. Assertion of the need to attend to what feelings arise for students as a result of the focus on experience, both during the class and before they leave. Relations in the present moment dimension of experience is again seen as important, in the management, or containment of emotions before class ends.
> 10. Assertion and agreement that it is unimportant whether one starts with theory or experience, as long as both are attended to.

Commentary

This extract again takes up the two understandings of experience: relations in the present moment, and a focus on life experience. The account draws attention to

traditional dualisms that see theory and the academic on one side, and experience and the personal on the other. It also puts forward the idea that it does not matter what side of the dualisms one starts on, in collapsing them, but that it is important to incorporate both sides.

The notion of holistic learning is implied in the assertion that experience and theory can and should be integrated.

The account posits that the unfamiliarity and strangeness of theory recedes when it is applied to or connected with the experience of everyday life (cf Cherryholmes, 1988: 136). The links between theory and experience are thus understood to create ownership of knowledge – that is, they create a personal connection with knowledge, or what one learns. Knowledge is not merely disembodied, intellectual or academic. The notion of the group also takes on importance, in the account's understanding that students develop theory together. This process also adds to the sense of ownership of knowledge.

The account also draws attention to the emotional dimensions of holistic or whole-person learning, that is, the idea that when learners engage with all their senses, emotions can run high. Learning is understood as intrinsically holistic, and as an emotional practice. That is, it is recognised that it is not solely an emotional practice, but that emotion is an inextricable part of it. 'Emotional practices make people problematic objects to themselves' (Denzin, 1984: 89, cited in Hargreaves 2001: 1056). This is put forward as another reason for attending to relations in the present moment, and ensuring that emotions are processed, contained or managed appropriately before students leave, so that the students feel comfortable.

Attention to learner comfort, as used in this extract, is not indicative of a desire to avoid difficult issues or working through issues that bring up uncomfortable emotions or other forms of knowledge. It is, rather, a recognition of the need to insert some kind of punctuation mark at the end of a class, so that learners can go out into the world in the week between classes. This punctuation mark does not have to be a full stop, which might close off the issue. But attending to comfort in this way is seen as making it more likely that learners will return to the learning arena, where they can continue the learning journey.

Extract Three: Experience, university and schooling

Joe: I think it's that [the university connection] is a quality guarantee for people who perhaps are not familiar with university or the value of university, the word is reassuring. People realise that they leave with something. But then that is combined oddly through the nature of the course and your work in this department – running a person-centred course and how that is linked to the traditional structures and so on – the constraints of a university – are they at odds with the course and particularly with the fact that it comes from being an adult education course [1] which in contrast to say my secondary days –there is an acceptance of people. I say, frequently, if education had been like this when I was at school, or when I was at university [2], I might have done more of it. I might have made more of myself, d'you know? So there's something unique about the course as well, isn't there? Something overarching – despite the university [3].
Michael: You know, the fact that you can – just coming from what you said, Joe – the fact that you can very, very concretely and honestly and tangibly and genuinely say to a

group of people, you know – let's hear your experience, what you've been doing in the past. And then at the end, if you have say fifteen, sixteen, seventeen people in a class, to say, I hope that you all notice the richness and the great complexity in this. Now you have that in an adult group that you can't, of necessity, because of age and so on, because – it doesn't have it in a fifteen-, sixteen-, seventeen-year-old group. But you know, I've no doubt that it's a fantastic advantage, a fantastic enhancement. And that people sort of as well – they're aware that they have a contribution to make – unlike in, say, a second-level educational milieu [4].

…

Sinéad: Another two words [to describe the course] is – validating – you know, our own experience. I've done the course as well as given it, so --- validating is a very big part of it. And empowering. It's the beginning of empowerment for some people [5].

Michael: And I suppose, for a lot of people it's their initial entry into all of those things as adults. For a lot of people -- not for all, but for a lot of people, it is. It really re-introduces them to education. For the first time [6] perhaps in an adult setting – in a real adult setting – it allows them to express their opinions and for them to be cherished and indeed to be responded to positively, and that they have – that they're worthwhile [7].

Points of analysis, extract three

1. Recognition that traditional university knowledge does not sit easily with focus on experience. Also a recognition that the Department of Adult and Community Education recognises this contradiction, in offering a university course that values experience.
2. Schooling and university education both understood as a contrast to adult education approaches.
3. as 1
4. Reassertion of the value of experience, and the introduction of the idea that it allows students to contribute to the learning process. But also an assertion that the focus on experience would not work as well in schooling, because young people lack life experiences that adults have.
5. Assertion of the sense of possibility opened up by a validation of personal experience.
6. Assertion that the emphasis on experience contributes to a re-definition of education.
7. As 5

Commentary

The notion of pedagogical entry points provided by experience arises here again, and is developed by the idea that adults contribute to the learning process, by drawing on their life experience. Drawing on experience in the pedagogical context is associated with empowerment and validation of individual students. Validation is understood here as creating the conditions that enhance learning and personal development. The sense of possibility that accompanies whole-person learning is emphasised.

The account asserts that we are not accustomed in second or third level education, as a rule, to identify or pay attention to the array of emotions involved in learning or in the disruption of taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs. There is an implication that the failure to take experience in to account can impede learning, either in schooling or in university.

The account also introduces the idea that experience as a pedagogical entry point is more suited to adult education than to schooling, since young people do not have as much life experience as mature students. There is nevertheless a strong case against this assumption, although none of the accounts we collected refers to it. Young people do have life experience, and there is no intrinsic reason why it should not be an entry point for schooling.

Radical movements (such as the radical adult education tradition) typically define themselves, initially at least, in opposition to some kind of other, which is usually seen as oppressive. In this case, schooling is seen as the oppressive other. The schooling / adult education dualism, however, has the effect of eliding any radical possibilities that may exist in schooling or the education of young people. Moreover, it also sets up adult education as superior, thus glossing over the need for adult educators to constantly scrutinise their own practice.

The tensions that may arise for a university Department of Adult Education, which values and validates experience in learning, are noted. Such a department occupies a position both within and outside traditional university epistemologies.

Extract Four: Experience understood as enhancing academic learning

Maureen: I have two separate people in two separate groups, both of whom are psychology graduates, and they're sort of looking to see where they'll go from there. And both of them have said, independently, that they came to the course thinking it was going to be very academic and they were going to learn lots of things and they were going to – they already knew lots of things about Rogers, etc, but that it actually changed their whole idea of Rogers – that they now know what Rogers was about, you know, what counselling is about and they're experiencing it in a completely different way, that they'd never have got from a book, and that's literally quoting [1]. Which I thought was very – well, it was a surprise for me, because I thought they would have had a sense of what counselling was about. But it actually ambushed people, to the point where these people who come to the courses from a psychology background, an academic background, find it difficult then to write their experiential essay [2]. They keep wanting to bring in references -- and to have them sort of realise, this is about you, and it actually takes a while, but at this stage in the course, the one-year course, again, this has happened [3]. And the feedback they get from their peers in each group has been enormous. I've spoken to them recently, giving feedback on their work, and what I get from them is that – you know, where people were asked to say what they thought about the other person, first impressions, all that kind of thing, a bit down the line, that it's ambushed some of them, who were very much in their head [4], and sort of felt – gosh, I always thought of myself as very shy and very – but these people think I have something to say. And so there is that aspect to it, yeah. So I mean, on the one hand, you have people coming from a very academic background, expecting a very academic course, and they're quite surprised, and they really get into it, and they get a lot more from it than a purely academic course would have given [5].

Points of analysis, extract four

1. Assertion that a focus on experience enhances prior academic learning and creates ownership of knowledge
2. Assertion that it is difficult to 'tune in' to the value of self and of experience, when one has been trained in an academic way. Psychology is understood as academic.

> 3. Assertion that self-awareness and the kind of learning (applied, or integration of theory and experience) it promotes, through a focus on experience, takes time
> 4. Equation of the head with academic knowledge
> 5. As 1

Commentary
A notion of holism or whole-person learning is present in this extract also, with the assertions that experience and academic knowledge can enhance each other. The account develops the notion that theory and experience can and should be integrated. Counselling education is positioned firmly as whole-person learning (there have been implications that this is the case for adult education too, in other extracts), and psychology is positioned as a one-dimensional academic discipline.

The question of epistemology has emerged as central to the tutors' understandings of facilitattion and of creating the classroom conditions for learning. Epistemology deals with questions such as: what is knowledge, who can be a knower, what kind of things can be known? The accounts understand knowledge as involving all the senses. Epistemology is inextricably linked with classroom methodology, so the processes of the classroom need to involve all the senses also.

Extended commentary: a psychology/counselling dualism
The account above, and other accounts collected but not presented here, treat psychology teaching as predominantly lecturing mode, and thus as engaging in isolating practices: learners take the information they are offered, and go home alone with it. Counselling is seen as different, because of its methodology. Yet there is no absolute reason why psychology should not be taught using different methodologies. Regarding the two topics (counselling and psychology) in dualistic terms leads to a stand-off between the disciplines, which then prevents practitioners from examining common interests, and in this way pushing forward each discipline. It might be more productive to examine this perceived difference from the point of view of the purposes and epistemological stance of the tutor, and of the purpose of the department that provides the course. DACE takes as one of its fundamental values the equal importance of content and process: that is, that how something is taught is of equal importance to *what* is taught. Moreover, it seems that the accounts referring to psychology actually refer to cognitive and behavioural branches of the discipline. Counselling has drawn widely on other branches of the discipline, especially on human relations psychology.

Extract Five: Gender and experience
Mary: And how – I suppose I was thinking of the early years, cos it's you know – quite a span. And I think, very struck by how much it's almost always been 90% women. And that we're almost nearly an all-women's group today. I was thinking of the course in rural areas and in urban areas and places like in Tullamore, where nothing happened, and then, say, in Dún Laoghaire, where things – there's a lot more available. But what's it like to work with nearly – with that kind of group? Do you think it made any difference?

Nóirín: are you saying, working with a women's group?

Mary: Well, almost like – you know

Nóirín: yes. It's the 90% that's the difficulty. I mean, an all-women's group is one thing, and that's – you know – easy [1]. But this year I have *one* man. And I was very reluctant to take one man, because I thought it was too much in the way of projection for him, you know? We made enormous efforts, and we eventually signed up I think it was either three or four. And what do you know? They dropped out, and we're left with this one man.

LAUGHTER

Nóirín: And he's absolutely amazing. He is so open and – that it's hard to distinguish. You know, he's not getting the projections because he is behaving in the same way as the women are, in their openness and their willingness to share, and their expressions of feelings. But he is blown away by it, because it's not his experience of life [2].

LAUGHTER

Nóirín: So that's been really wonderful. But I would think possibly a little bit rare too, that -- it might have been a very different experience. But he just happens to be a really exceptional individual [3].

Rose: But if one man sticks it out, he is probably quite an exceptional man [4], so – but it is very hard when that happens.

Kate: When I was saying about this, this image of this sergeant came into my head, who was in my class. There were, I remember, four men and when we were talking about what would happen in the course, and we talked about the sharing and the self-development and so on, instantly his face changed. I can remember it, it was like the blood drained out of his face [5].

LAUGHTER

 Kate: Because it certainly obviously was not what he had expected. And that was it, he never appeared again.

LAUGHTER

Kate: So he never appeared again. I mean, it was such a shock to him, he obviously couldn't handle it [6]. And I certainly connect with what you're saying [to Nóirín, Rose?], I mean, the men who stick it out are usually quite exceptional to start with. You know, they're quite developed already [7] – I think by and large, yeah, I'd agree with that.

Alison: Yes. You don't get men coming in who know nothing about personal development or counselling or anything like that [8].

Kate: I wonder are we saying something then about women as risk-takers – I mean, emotionally [9]? I just – I mean, does that follow on, I wonder?

Alison: yes, I would tend to agree that women are greater risk-takers emotionally than men [10]. I mean –

Rose [? not entirely sure it's Rose speaking]: Well, your sergeant didn't risk anything

LAUGHTER

Kate: I could see, the moment – I knew – I knew that was it, he was gone.

Rose: I see the analogy with the assertiveness training courses I used to teach, where – of course they were mostly women who'd come to learn how to be assertive. They had to, cos they were very unassertive for the most part. Whereas for men it was a climbdown, form usually having to be quite aggressive and that that didn't seem to be a reasonable payoff – what's the advantage, you know, of becoming less aggressive

LAUGHTER

Rose: and I think it's the same with counselling and – being open – where's the benefit in that? You know, you just make yourself vulnerable [11].

Kate: Yeah

PAUSE

Anne: Deirdre, you were --

Deirdre: I was just thinking about – mostly my classes have been almost exclusively women, maybe one or two men and I had the experience of taking Tony's class in Tallaght, twice recently. He's got quite – maybe about six or seven men in his group. It's interesting, the two groups, on the basis of perhaps the gender difference. And his men are, if you like, typical men who will come to a counselling class, but some of them

definitely aren't [12]. That is very interesting. You know – I almost would like to have that experience, to explore it more, because it hasn't been my experience [13]. There's a vibrancy in the group and there's a lot of banter going – sexual banter –a frisson, going on, that isn't present obviously in an almost exclusively female group. And that's a loss, you know. It's a loss of exploring those kinds of experiences as well, I think. And again, I do feel always a bit concerned about the men in my group, because usually they would have to be, I would have to take a very – big fine able man to task because his mid-year assignment was only about the nuts and bolts of the experience, rather than anything personal. And you, he's a very successful man, and he's doing awfully well, and taking a young offenders group, and he's just super, great charisma, a leader. But it's just – how do I find language – you know, how do I bridge this gap [14] and talk about what he has to offer in terms of emotional experience, but not to undermine him [15]. And I don't think – it'll be interesting to see now, what happens in the last one, because I sort of said, you know, I'm not sure it would come back satisfactory, if it's the same, really. So he's clear, and he's not – he was taking it on board. But it's just the language difference and how to bridge it [16] And I'd like to have more men, so that maybe we could get the men to talk about it together and say, well, maybe this emotional stuff, you know – we've got by without it LAUGHS. Just to explore more. It's a loss, a loss. And I don't like thinking it's a loss for the men, because you know, maybe it isn't [17]. I'd just like to have more debate and more from the horse's mouth about it [18].

PAUSE

David: This particular horse is staying very quiet anyway [19].

LAUGHTER

Deirdre: There's something about emasculating the men if I go on about the fem – you know – and that's how they see it, isn't it [20]?

Mary: It's a loss for the women. D'you know, cos I was thinking earlier, d'you know, for all the women who've been on the courses over the years, that the space for them to be able to hear men – is a loss for the women. And I was thinking, even – can groups of women be sexual? D'you know what I mean? It's like – and of course they can. But it's that notion that – it's loss on both sides.

Bernie : All women

Mary: First time ever. We've never had an all-women's group before in Maynooth.

Valerie: The other one has three men.

Mary: It's just the way it worked out, but there's no men -- what's that group like [to Bernie]?

Bernie: … no, it was funny, because I mentioned that we were going to have two – client – counsellors for their – training for their final –they are going to be men. I just mentioned that yesterday evening. And – one of the women said, oh, I wonder will they have any *real* problems?

LAUGHTER

Bernie: Real problems! What's that about – you know [21]? It's like [unclear] that men don't have the language and – and working with different groups, I mean, I've worked a lot with men in other groups as well, and they say that they, while they do share, and they get on quite well, they still don't feel very comfortable with it – the language of emotional stuff. You know, while they do it, they feel it's kind of a weakening thing, admitting how they feel – it just doesn't feel comfortable for some reason. It's not their usual way of behaving [22]. I mean, whereas we will be probably more emotional with women's groups – regardless of whether we've more men or more women, it doesn't seem to matter. But – when men are among themselves, I'm not sure that they talk the same language that we – understand, you know?

Alison: To go back, if I could, to the group in Tallaght, I think it's interesting that there are six men in the group there, and I'm wondering is that any indication of the fact that there's a men's group in Tallaght. And are they – you know, would they have been in the men's group [23]?

Anne : yeah, interesting

Kate: interesting, isn't it?

Deirdre: maybe

Mary: Or that there's a male tutor [24]

LOTS OF YESES, MURMURS OF AGREEMENT, ETC

Mary: Cos there's always been a mix in Ballyfermot

Kate: yeah, there has

Valerie: Do people know, do people ask you who is the tutor, or do they know?

Mary: you see, in Tallaght, or other places, people traditionally – people would know – you know, there's an awful lot of local knowledge

Valerie: Oh, right

Mary: and in some of the local brochures, they'd put who's the tutor.

Maureen: I have five men in one of my groups in Raheny [25].

Kate: is there a men's group in Raheny?

LAUGHTER

Maureen: they're from different areas, and very divergent people. One guy actually is in Coolmine in the rehabilitation centre, and comes to the group, and one guy actually is a psychology graduate. And what I found was, the men, when we were doing counselling skills role-play, initially, particularly one or two of them were very reluctant to take the part of the client. They'd be anybody – observer, counsellor, but being the client – I've actually seen one particular guy leave the room on a couple of occasions, before he was going to be the client. Eventually he faced it, and – but, you know, he – there was this kind of threat around disclosure and much more so in males – but that's a huge generalisation, cos you do get females on the same thing [26]. But the five in the group – I think it's enriched the group an awful lot. And they are – you know, there's great cross-fertilisation, especially when we're talking in the open group, what's going on for people [27]. So there is a cushion of comfort for the men when there is a group [28]. But the group – it's not the men and the women [29] – it's quite a homogeneous group and there's a lot of cross-fertilisation.

Points of analysis, extract five

1. Implication that there is a difficulty with gender-mixed groups, because of the difference in women's and men's attitudes to experience
2. Assertion that willingness to share experience is not part of male culture
3. Implication that men who are prepared and 'able' for the experiential focus of the course are different from most men and from male culture
4. As 3.
5. Recognition of the emotional impacts, in this case, fear, that an emphasis on experience can have.
6. Student resistance caused by strong emotion of fear.
7. Implication that overcoming fear of disclosing experience represents progress for students (in this case, male students)
8. Assertion that men who participate in the course have had to step out of male culture to some extent
9. Implication that women's culture facilitates a focus on experience
10. Implication that women have a different attitude from men, to working with experience
11. Equation of exploration of experience and related emotions, with vulnerability
12. Challenge to the idea that all men who participate are 'exceptional'
13. Suggestion that as a female tutor, her own experience is limited, because she hasn't had the chance to work with men in experiential ways

14. Assertion that men's experience and approach to experience is different, but needs to be included. (implication that the focus on experience has tended to be drawn from predominantly female understandings of it).
15. Assertion that it is difficult for a tutor (in this case, a woman) to challenge a man in relation to emotional experience and his reflections on it, in ways that do not undermine his confidence. Assertion of the need for students to feel safe and valued, whatever their gender culture (need for micro-context is implied)
16. Suggestion or recognition that gendered experience is constructed via language and discourse?
17. A challenge to the general tone of this discussion, which assumes that a female-culture approach to experience is 'better'.
18. Suggestion / assertion that men's experience of emotion and experience is uncharted territory, and that it is not necessarily safe to assume that they are missing out, because they are not like women in this respect.
19. A reflection of the processes being described by the tutors, coming from the single male in the group, who is one of the research team?
20. Acknowledgement that overcoming the male reluctance to share experience is not as simple as doing it in a feminine way
21. Implication that a certain 'groupthink' among students can reflect dominant assumptions about gender, namely men's supposed lack of emotional literacy
22. Assertion of the influence of dominant male culture and its inhibition of the expression of feelings
23. Suggestion that culture can be changed
24. Suggestion that a male tutor can have an influence on the culture
25. A light-hearted take-up of other participants' assertions of the importance of culture
26. Assertion that disclosure in a group equals vulnerability, which creates fear and other emotions. Recognition that these emotions arise for women as well as men
27. Assertion of the importance of the (gender-mixed) group dimensions of sharing experience as a foundation for learning
28. Emphasis on safety when sharing experience – in this context, the presence of other men makes it safer for one to draw on his experience
29. Attempt to subvert dualistic thinking surrounding gender; promotion of the idea that women and men have more in common than different.

Commentary

Here, gender is linked to the theme of sharing experiences and the linked emotional content of experience. Male culture is seen as creating barriers to the sharing of experiences, and a suggestion is made that women's culture pre-disposes women to experiential learning. The extract demonstrates the complexity of these issues, with muted discourses also appearing: assertions that culture can be changed, that women's understandings of experience and emotion must not be taken as definitive, and with the recognition that women, as well as men, are subject to fear of experiential learning. The dominant discourse of the extract however is that of clear-cut gender difference (whether constructed, via culture, or innate, it is not always clear, but either way it tends to have the same effects of setting up and perpetuating a male/female dualism).

Even though some accounts draw on essentialist discourses of female and male culture, there are important considerations of the influence of different gender

discourses on how topics are understood and filtered. There is a suggestion that experience itself is constructed, via language and discourse. The suggestion that experience is mediated differently in different gender cultures is taken as an indication that men's experiences can be included. However, there is a recognition that the focus on experience has tended to be drawn from predominantly female cultural understandings of it.

There is an implication that self-disclosure and sharing of experience has emotional effects on students, and that this has implications for the risks different gender cultures encourage or allow. In this case, the emotional impact is one of fear. It is made clear too that fear is not confined to men.

Johnson (1996: 255-257) discusses the connections between fear, anger and trust. The fear described in this account implies the need for a trusting environment, where experience can be examined in appropriate ways. The accounts imply that class groups need a context where students can be vulnerable. In this, they are asserting the need for a micro-context, which, to some extent at least, can bracket off the power structures of the outside world. The difficulty for men to do this is expressed in the reports of their fear of sharing and disclosing experience in the group.

A discourse of safety in the learning environment thus emerges, along with the implication of a need to create a micro-context of safety in the classroom. But this is not equated with comfort, nor is it seen as preventing the pushing out of the comfort zones or movement. This takes up an earlier account of the need to contain emotions, so that learners can leave a class in a frame of mind that lets them get on with their life outside the course.

One tutor gives an account that reports on the understanding of two female students in her group, which assumes that men lack the kinds of experience that can be used as a basis for learning. The tutor is critical of this assumption (point 21), but this incident demonstrates the widespread nature of discourses that assume that women are 'better' at relating and learning from their experiences.

Some muted accounts in this extract assert that men's experience – while it may not be readily accessible in the classroom situation – provides a pedagogical challenge to tutors. Tutors need to learn to connect with it in ways that connect with the individual student, but without forgetting the importance of the group. One account here acknowledges that this is not as simple as accessing experience in traditional or dominant adult-education ways, which have tended to be associated with the feminine, or with female culture.

This extract is rich in varied discourses. The discourse of male/female dualism predominates, but subjugated or more muted discourses, which challenge this dualism, are also present. Subjugated knowledge refers to knowledge that is not formally expressed or recognised in society, by a particular culture (for example by a gender culture) or even by an individual (because of personal repression or denial, lack of opportunity, or exclusion from certain arenas of experience). The muted discourses present in this extract demonstrate that the experience of at least some tutors is that subjugated knowledges can nevertheless emerge and be validated

through a focus on experience. In the case of men's experience, however, an essential starting point has to be the deconstruction of male/female dualism.

Extended commentary: male/female dualisms

Male / female dualisms and associated discourses invite us to discuss what men and women are 'really like', rather than examining the social, cultural, political and power relations that have brought about the state of affairs of clear-cut oppositions between the sexes, asking who benefits from it, and wondering how we might move beyond it.

Because experience was for so long written out of dominant epistemologies in universities and in schools, in favour of rationality (and hence in favour of dominant forms of masculinity), its reinstatement was, historically speaking, a very important move. Moreover, it resonated profoundly with women, and this is manifest in the popularity of the work on 'women's ways of knowing' (Belenky et al, 1986). Unfortunately, this inversion of the experience/rationality dualism does not *subvert* it. Dominant in the extract above is the *inversion* of the dualisms that surround emotion, rationality, experience and learning. The muted discourses are those that try to subvert the dualisms.

Male/female dualism reaches its explanatory limits, however, in the accounts that portray men who *do* participate in the course and use their life experience, as exceptions to the general rule. The idea of 'exceptional individuals' does not begin to acknowledge the multiplicity of male experience and identity. It continues to see male culture as all-of-a piece, and not as multiple and contested. Moreover, it complements the idea that women's experiences are all of a piece, and, in addition, that women are 'better' at emotions than men. It therefore denies the ways that women are fearful, bounded, aggressive, or otherwise different from stereotypes.

This approach is not adequate for exploring the relationship that men as a group have to experience. It might be much more useful to regard these 'exceptional' men as drawing on discourses of experience that are muted within male culture, but that can nevertheless be explored, given facilitative conditions.

All of these issues are contained in this extract. The overall tone of the accounts that draw on male/female dualism is very certain. The accounts that are putting forward more muted discourses have a more uncertain tone, but are potentially more radical, in their capacity to move out of the bind that dominates talk concerning men, women, experience and emotion.

Section Two: Group

The importance of the learning group has been asserted in several accounts so far. This section examines aspects of learning and group in some more detail. Again, though, it is not possible to separate out issues of group form other issues such as experience, emotion, relationships and learning.

Extract Six: Experience and group – integral to each other, and to learning

Aidan: the impact that it had on their lives was quite extraordinary . … I think it was the interaction, first of all: these people sitting together around a table for the first time [1]. Many of them had never been in any kind of organised educational forum before. Many of them had never been in secondary school, some had been at university. And you had this wide range – on one course I have at the moment, I have a DPhil on the course, and at the other end, I have two or three people who are just fairly close to being almost illiterate. But it was the way they relate with one another and the way they support one another during the year, and the understanding that seems to emerge, and the total support from one another from the people on the course, who really need the support – support they've never had before [2]. And I think, if nothing else, it gives so many people a tremendous feeling of confidence, confidence in themselves, confidence in their ability, which is affected very much from, you know, how the course is actually put together from this end. [3]

Anne: And how is that different, say, from the courses that you do in other places?

Aidan: I've thought about that – there didn't seem be any – we'll say, the psychology courses, which I was involved in – nothing seemed to happen there – they were just courses where people came in and did the course and went [4]. Now, I was involved in the counselling course in [another university], the careers guidance course, for twenty years. But that again was directed at education, in the sense that these people were going back into a school situation [5] and were all graduates. But it was the unusual make-up of the people on the course, and the exposure, the contact [6], I think, that makes the impact for some people. … They were both learning counselling and at the same time they were being counselled themselves – they were counselling themselves and counselling others – it was the tremendous integration in the class situation [7].

Helen: I totally agree with that, even though I just did four years of the course … seeing the support they give to one another, at an emotional level as well as at a social level. Very good friendships were formed. I think when you talk about the mix that are in the groups, with those that have a lot of education and those that may have left school at twelve or thirteen – that was where I saw the massive impact. And even people's attitudes – how – challenged would be too strong a word – but how it was explored within the group, and the learning that was in that. … It levels people out [8], no matter where they came from – even the person that left school at twelve or thirteen, you know, the first couple of nights, it's – there's teachers and other professionals and you see them squirming almost in fear of their role – they know more than I, how will I sound?

Kathleen: And they whisper to you about their academics

Helen: they say, I left school at twelve or thirteen. And to see them after a few sessions then, and it's: they're the same as ourselves, they're all human [9], you know. And I had a retired – gentleman in the last group, a teacher, and he said, ask me anything academic, but don't please mention feelings. This man now was in his seventies. And to see how much he came round in the two years. He never really used the language of feelings at all and he found that such a struggle – he could do anything academic, he could write for days, but to get the feelings into it – and really, people would have gone to school to him, in the same group, and they must feel – the balancing that went on, you know, it's – it's lovely to watch it [10].

Kathleen: And I also think that it's something, you know – Anne said there about change [11], and – I don't – I think that – a lot of those people, even if they went for therapy, would never have reached what they reach, with a similar group, in some ways. I do think that being isolated in a one-to-one – they never – they avoid – or maybe people don't even talk about things because they seem irrelevant. But maybe the most relevant thing is a small family thing, or – you know – and because it comes out, because –

Mary: Somebody else sparks something off.

Kathleen: Yeah, it sparks it [12]. And because people are equal [13] – the creation of that dynamic just allows it to move forward, you know.

Points of analysis, extract six

1. Assertion that interaction between students is integral to the learning that takes place on the course – implication that the experience of others is important, as well as one's own.
2. Implication that a sense of group or of collectivity emerges as a result of interaction and sharing of experiences. Association of focus on experience with feelings. Emphasis on group process in the analysis of experience
3. Assertion of the importance of the management/university side of the course, in supporting and facilitating the processes and outcomes of the course.
4. Equation of psychology courses with a lack of group feeling. Implication that they neglect experience.
5. Lack of emphasis on experience associated with schooling
6. Implication that exposure to the experiences of others is important, as well as a focus on student's own experience (similar to point 1)
7. Implication that the group experience enhances the integration of theory, experience, practice and learning
8. Assertion that a focus on experience can have the effect of creating equality within the group, or doing away with inequalities created by conventional educational qualifications, and the lack of confidence experienced by those who are 'unqualified' in the conventional sense. Again, the idea of a micro-context within the group.
9. As 8
10. Equation of feelings with experience, and implication that learning is incomplete or unbalanced, without both feeling and academic work.
11. Equation of learning and change
12. A suggestion that while learning can come about in one-to-one therapy, it can actually be more efficient in a group situation, because of the dialogue between group members
13. Assertion that equality in a group (brought about by the focus on experience) enhances learning.

Commentary

The class is understood in this extract as a collection of individuals, who develop a sense of collectivity and equality by virtue of their sharing of experience. The group is seen in this account as capable of mutual learning, support and knowledge construction. The experience of other people is seen to be important, as well as one's own experience, for learning. It is asserted that what counts is the processing of experience with other people that one can learn from consideration of the experiences

of others, and that it is important to learn that one's own experience is not the only lens through which to view a situation.

Feeling is used here in the sense that Heron (1999: 382) uses it, that is, as a sense of being part of a collective, experiencing 'participative feeling and resonative attunement' to other members of the group (ibid).

Here also, the experiential focus is connected with personal development (confidence), and integration of theory and experience. The experiential and integration elements of the course are once again contrasted with their lack in psychology courses. Whole-person learning is once again implied.

Also present in the accounts is an understanding that the emphasis on experience creates a levelling or equalising effect within a group. Equality is seen to enhance learning. It provides conditions for learning.

The group is understood as having the capacity to bring out or stimulate ideas or to show the importance of experiences that students might not have considered, or whose importance or significance they might not have realised, either through individual reflection, or in a one-to-one relationship with a tutor or counsellor. This is connected to the understanding that knowledge is a process and a dynamic event.

There is also the emergence of the notion that learning involves movement – this could be theorised as the taking up of different positions. It could also be interpreted as reaching or developing a capacity to hold and negotiate differences, and not to insist on working towards consensus.

Extract Seven: The diversity of experience within groups

Maureen: I did have a group before where there was a man who was sixty-four and … he came to me at the end of the course and he said that the course had blown his mind, in that he came in contact with people and that he was amazed about people talking so openly[1]. He came in contact with people that he would normally have no contact with, and he wouldn't seek out or want to have anything to do with them. So it sort of broke down a whole lot of his pre-conceptions at that late stage in his life [2]. He wouldn't have been a great participator, other than to grumble about if people came in late or – I have something to say, people should come to this group on time – LAUGHTER. Now, that would have been his main thing. But – but he did take it in, he absorbed an awful lot – you know. So you just can't say – you think you're putting something out and it's reaching this point – it's reaching other areas in a different way that you can't imagine [3].

Anne: I suppose too, as adult educators, we always say that you never know what people have learned

Maureen: That's right

Anne: you can't assess at the end of a course – learning may emerge later, be that six months or ten years down the road

Maureen: yes. Or what you say – I had a man in a group who's doing a counselling course now, and we were talking about Winnicott, and the child self-parenting, and he said, after that evening – it had such an impact on him, that it went so deep and touched such a deep part of him that he saw his own experience, and that it was a turning point for him [4]. Now I wasn't aware of this till the very end of the course. So that – you just don't know, what's happening in groups.

Points of analysis, extract seven

> 1. Assertion of the impact of group members on each other
> 2. Recognition that one can learn from other people's experiences even if unable to focus on one's own –
> 3. Assertion that learning outcomes are not always readily judged by the tutor – implies need to be careful about assumptions about what students are learning
> 4. Assertion that the re-framing of experience can be central to learning.

Commentary

This extract draws attention to the richness of experience that exists in any group. It also re-emphasises the transformational potential of integrating experience and theory, and of the centrality to the learning journey of re-framing individual experience.

The accounts within the extract also indicate that learning can take place for an individual student through reflection on and contact with other people's experiences, even if the individual does not participate in disclosing and discussing their own experience. But this recognition does not diminish the importance of the group dimensions of learning – the individual who learns from the experiences of others does so because they participate and disclose.

There are dangers here too. Disclosure calls for a level of reciprocity. If one person does not make any disclosures, there is the possibility of voyeurism. Some class members may be viewed by the one in the voyeur position as exotic or 'other'. Additionally, they may be positioned as representative of their group, a position they may not want, and which may not even be possible. This insight is also relevant to men who are in a minority in mixed-sex groups: they too run the risk of being positioned as representative of men in general.

The qualitative nature of learning is again emphasised in this account. It is also implied that the tutor has to be capable of reaching each student or of connecting with them, at the point where they are 'at', and that tutors should not judge or make assumptions about students' capacity for learning, on the basis of gender or of their participation.

Extract Eight: Creating a micro-context for the group

Nóirín: I mean, the first thing we do is have ten minutes or so of quiet time [1] – there's a little music, there's a candle lit, there's a poem or something, and then Bernadine, who's my assistant – she's the one who always says the bit about, let's do a round of sharing – where you're at the moment. And that's it. And that – it just flows from that [2]. And I take part as – how I'm feeling, what's going on in my life, just the same as they do, and so does Bernadine. So it's – there's a norm of – we're all in this together [3] – you know.

Bernie: I believe today that's *so* lacking, everywhere [4]. You know, and I think that's why the experiential part of the Maynooth course –

Nóirín: It's so valuable

Bernie: I mean, I use that module within my – you know – there's always – like you were saying [to Valerie] it comes up as something, and then I just use that, and I run with that [5]. It isn't – like – now when you do it it's – I just wait to see what the mood is like,

and every week it's different, and something going on, but I think it's hugely nurturing. And you're putting into practice what you're trying to say – this is what it's all about [6].

Nóirín: yes

Bernie: you're trying to say to people, you must listen to each other and like you were saying [to Maureen], the divergence of groups, and the huge – across the board --- different kinds of people – they would never, ever experience – I mean, they have all sorts of prejudices about – they wouldn't talk to this or that person, and yet it's the person beside them, you know [7]? So I think that that's – that's what I get the challenge from. It's hugely rewarding to work with groups in that space [8]. I think people grow from that, like, they come in and they say, I was *never* in a group like this before, I'd *no* idea, I thought you were just going to teach me. And they learn it, they just absorb it [9].

Nóirín: Cos, yes, we're also modelling the process [10].

Bernie: Well, that's right – you remind them then that this is – you know – they seem surprised, but when you've done it a few times, you know that it isn't surprising – it happens if you just create the

Nóirín: The space [11]

Bernie: the acceptance, the space, yeah [12].

David: And the time – d'you know – to actually give the time

Bernie: It can't be rushed. I – I think that that comes from – from all of you giving us the freedom to do and use what we need within that group, and picking up what's needed, from these people, early on. And constantly feeding back – you know, is it meeting our expectations, and you know, watching, keeping an eye [13].

Points of analysis, extract eight

> 1. Assertion of the need to 'set the mood' / create the conditions for accessing experience.
> 2. Sharing of experience is seen as a pedagogical entry point
> 3. Assertion that emphasis on experience creates an atmosphere of equality between tutor and students
> 4. Assertion that the emphasis on experience provides a counterpoint to the world outside the classroom
> 5. Entry point / method, similar to 2
> 6. Responsibility of the tutor – to name the attention to experience as something of value in the wider world – macro-context?
> 7. Assertion that new experience is important – reframing own experience and beliefs in the light of contact with the experience of others.
> 8. Introduction of the concept of the classroom as a space apart
> 9. Learning seen as something that happens almost 'naturally' as a result of the focus on experience
> 10. Responsibility of tutor to model and apply the theory – as 6
> 11. as 8
> 12. as 8
> 13. Part of the role of tutor is to attend to relations in the present moment, in order create a safe environment for attention to experience.

Commentary

This account takes forward the idea, already introduced in previous extracts, of the classroom as a space where experience (past and present-moment) is valued, accepted and potentially expanded or challenged. This space could be thought of as a micro-context that facilitates learning. This particular account asserts that the micro-context has to be constructed, it does not happen of its own accord, and that one way to

achieve this is by means of a ritual opening where experience is shared and quietly reflected on. The construction of safety, trust and equality is seen as important in this process.

Extended commentary: Equality and Power

The idea of equality has arisen already in other accounts, in relation to the creation in the micro-context of equality among the learners in the group. In Extract Eight, it is also discussed in terms of equality between the learners and the tutor (see point 3). There is an assumption that it is possible for learners and tutor to be equal. Many commentators disagree with the approach to power implicit here, pointing out that all relationships are power-laden, including tutor-student relations. Attention to these power relations can go some way towards re-adjusting them, but they require constant scrutiny and cannot entirely escape the social relations constructed and cemented in the wider social context or macro-context.

Extract Nine: Group diversity and curriculum flexibility

Valerie: I would think that one of the questions here about the freedom that Maynooth gave the group – or us as tutors, to do it whatever way we felt was best – contributed an awful lot to – I suppose the –the development of this course, in that, you know, you felt, or I felt that – what do I do here with this group, which may be different to the one I had last year – well, I can decide myself, as opposed to kind of checking in and saying, what am I supposed to be doing here? Which was great. Now, I think that that has its ups and its downs – it requires of you a certain amount of courage [1], I suppose. And when you're starting out, it's much easier to refer back to base, and say – you know, what are we doing here, and what is it supposed to be, and follow that line. But as it progressed, that wasn't the case, and you might have groups who wanted to read a lot, and groups who wanted to participate a lot, and groups who wanted a lot of practice, and groups who wanted to use it as a stepping stone to something else. And you could facilHelente that as a tutor as you became more – I suppose, more experienced [2]. And that couldn't have been done, if there was a sort of a dogma emanating from Maynooth, that said, oh no, you can't do it that way [3]. And I suppose, the reason why I'm still here as a tutor, is because that freedom was there [4].

David: And has that changed a lot, Mary? Because now – is there a sense of it being a bit more schematised now, or formalised, or -- ?

Valerie: it is more formalised, but still, the execution of it is left to your own discretion. And that still allows you ample freedom to give the groups, or to develop the groups as they appear. You know, it's not about the – it is more formalised now, but there's still the aspect of the group dynamic and the group personality [5] that you can run with and I have – this is my second year on to the one-year group, and this second year is so different to the last, and we're still doing the same – following the same curriculum. But it's very different. And you still have the freedom – they want a lot of skills, they like the skills, they come alive when I'm doing skills, they talk about themselves. While, when we sit, when I sit and say, you know – what's going on? – there's absolute silence. But you get it somewhere else [6]. But then, if it was a case of, oh my God, we have to have this half an hour now of group dynamic stuff, it's not working – Mary, what am I going to do? It doesn't happen like that – it happens elsewhere [7].

David: So – there's a structure within which you have flexibility to – to

Valerie: yes. Absolutely

David: To work with the group, as you experience their needs.

Valerie: yeah, that's it, yeah.

Points of analysis, extract nine

1. Assertion that flexibility, while it adds to the quality of the course, is not an easy option for a tutor. It requires courage, the capacity to take responsibility and to be self-reflective.
2. Assertion that tutor confidence in own ability to respond to group needs develops with experience and over time
3. Assertion of the importance of management facilHelenting and supporting tutor flexibility
4. Assertion that tutor freedom to be flexible is one of the factors that keeps tutors working on the course from year to year
5. Assertion that group dynamics and group personality exist, and that they differ from group to group
6. Assertion that one works differently with different groups, as one reads the group and the individuals within it
7. as 6.

Commentary

Flexibility and freedom are built into the course structure. This requires the tutor to make on-the-spot judgements about what will enhance learning. The knowledge base on which the tutors draw shifts significantly depending on the group, or the context, or the topic. The tutor can adopt different identities, depending on the context. These can include expert, guide, mentor, counsellor, or leader (see Apps, 1988). The account discusses these issues in a tone that indicates confidence in one's tutoring abilities, but which also indicates the demands of this kind of tutoring, and the uncertainties associated with it.

These characteristics of the course indicate the need for course managers to provide appropriate tutor support, which will further enhance the capacity of tutors to take responsibility, work flexibly with groups, and to reflect on their practice.

Extract Ten: Attending to individuals within a group

Maureen: You try to kind of include everybody in the process. At times, you can get the frustration from people, who say, oh, I though we would be doing much more on this or that, or, I like it when you write on the blackboard, or – so – you manage it by giving handouts and things, which people who aren't very academic, or even literate, in some cases, can then take it home and digest it in their own time, and that [1]. And you try to have the thing stimulating enough. But you have to be conscious all the time [2], when you're losing somebody, and you catch somebody's eye and you say, Mary, are you – you know –with this? – or something like that. Not quite maybe that way: is this okay with you, Mary? And she'll say, well, I don't know what you mean by – and it might even be a word you're using, which you don't think is jargon, but you know – and then you'll explain it. So to try and – and then, it's always a very good idea, if you have a very bossy, academic person in the group [3], to kind of take them aside, and say, well, Deirdre, I hope you're enjoying the course, and – I'm trying to cater to a group, a very divergent group, here. I know you've probably done a lot of this, but just bear with us – you know, and you will find the course -- . and let them sort of come alongside with you, rather than kind of – I think you need to do that fairly early on in the course [4]. And then, other people, like – who are having difficulties – you know, they come up and tell you – I mean, literally, people who've left school at fourteen and are in doing the course. It may only be that it's in their head, you know – and you have to kind of

explain to them, no, we want what you feel, it doesn't matter what it says in the books [5]. And to sort of say, if you need any help – I mean, I've given out books to students on how to write an essay, and – you know. But I wouldn't do that in the general group, but just if there was a difficulty -- that you'd try to be there to pick up on that and balance the thing in some way. But it can be difficult, because you can lose people at either end, when you try to go to the middle, but how to keep them – it's something that you have to kind of –work at [6]. I don't know does that explain it [7].

Anne: Would anyone else experience those – those tensions?

Nóirín: Well, it's not so much tensions, but I think one of the problems for us is that there's a huge variety [8], certainly in the course I teach, in the literacy of – and some, as you say, are barely, barely literate. But they're marvelous. You know, they just really have done a lot of work, a lot of them, previously, and are really good as counsellors. And they can barely get it out. And others are actually very competent and can express their ideas. But in the group it has become perfectly okay [9] to – I've said to them, you know, if you don't understand any word I say, ask me what it means, because it will help everybody [10]. And – and we do that. You know, because – you know, I put it out that – you need to learn the professional language, but it's no use if you don't understand the words, so please do ask, and they do. You know, they'll say, what's ground rules, what do you mean? But it's that it's up front, that it's – there's no shame involved [11] in not knowing what it means, you know, but that it's taken head-on and it's – it's fine.

Points of analysis, extract ten

1. Assertion of the need to attend to different learning styles and abilities, as well as attention to learners' prior educational experience. Also an indication of the discourses about teaching which shape students' expectations of the tutor.
2. Assertion of the need for constant awareness of each individual in the group
3. Assertion that those with prior academic experience or qualifications can be bossy within a group, because this is a socially recognized signifer of learning.
4. Assertion of the need to be proactive with difficult individuals – see extract 16 also
5. Assertion of the need to demystify learning and its process for each individual – again, as 2, awareness of each one's needs
6. Assertion of the need to balance the attention to both group and individuals within it, and to keep the process moving for the group
7. Assertion that it is difficult to quantifying the learning process
8. As 2, attention to prior educational experience and standards attained, awareness of individual needs
9. The safety of the micro-context is asserted
10. Equation of what is good for the individual with what is good for the group – can further group learning – relates individual need to the good of the group
11. Implication that it can be shameful to be uncertain or not to know, in the macro-context of wider society, but that an effort is being made here to challenge that discourse, and to associated uncertainty and not knowing with development and learning, and to challenge the taboos against not knowing.

Commentary

This extract's main account proceeds on the premise that the individual's needs exist in a group context. It refers to a need for the tutor to be pro-active, possibly hierarchichal (cf Heron, 1999), at times, in order to pre-empt any bossiness that might arise as a result of one student's social advantage (conferred by virtue of having academic experience or qualifications) over another. The account also emphasizes the

need to create a micro-context where neither shame nor 'academic advantage' predominate. This could be read as an effort to suspend some of the social constraints and / or assumptions about what learning should be like. Both of these principles again rely on the idea of a micro-context, which challenges or at least suspends social norms either implicitly or explicitly. Experience is implicated again here, because previous experience of the students allows them to construct things as shameful or as giving an advantage. Not knowing is one of those things that is generally read as shameful in the wider social context. However, accounts contained in this extract recognise not knowing or uncertainty as tools in learning.

Exract Eleven: Individuals, groups and support for tutors

Kathleen: I remember having an incident out in [names area], and there was a guy who joined. And he actually didn't want to be on our course at all. He really wanted to be on the Guidance and Counselling course, cos that was where he was heading, in FÁ S [1]. He didn't really – he was just so frustrated with all the women on the course, you know, telling their stories [2]. And one night when it was over he just pushed by me and said, I'm leaving here, you're no teacher [3]. And, I mean, it was just awful [4]. But really, d'you know, the next week he came back – I didn't do anything, I just decided there's nothing I can do here [5] – and he came back like a little sheep the next week. And I thought all the week, am I awful [6]? And then, in a way, the women looked after him [7]–

LAUGHTER

Kathleen: You know, not –there were older women, they were probably ten years older than me at that stage, if not twenty, and they – they didn't give in to him, and they didn't PAUSE

Mary: throw him out

Kathleen: No – no [8]. and they really – cos he really needed to get – now I see him sometimes and it's quite nice, cos we're quite friendly [9]. I don't think – he never finished. He finished the first year. But it was good for him that he came back, as well [10]. In some way, they all dealt with it [11]

…

Erica: you have very positive experiences in terms of tolerance and caring, and just a willingness to make things safe for people. And then, there's the other kind of group, which is also part of the Maynooth group, which can eat you alive, you know? I mean, I've had both experiences [12]. Anne: Now, one individual in a group can cause havoc, and unless you kind of – deal with it immediately [13] – I left it too late – I left it too late, it was near the end of the year, and brought it to a head in an indirect sort of way. But that can be – that can be very difficult.

Kathleen: Yeah, yeah

Erica: And I find it difficult to account for why. I guess it may have something to do with the strength of one individual in the group, who can have a huge influence on the others [14]. And unless that's recognised early on, [15] this is where, really, you know, support for the tutors on an ongoing basis will be needed – it's really important, d'you know [16]? And if that's not there, it can be quite dangerous. I mean, I've had both, and I've been more or less the same myself [17], d'you know. So I do feel that this is really important for tutors – to feel that they're supported, you know [18].

David: It's almost like the story you just told, Kathleen, a story where you actually needed to be able to tolerate a lot of discomfort in yourself and not act out of this demand that you be different. And also, that you didn't act and require him to be different – that, in some way, that if you are held by a wider discourse, or whatever, that you're able to tolerate that –

Kathleen: Well, a part of me will – a part of me wanted it to be different.

LAUGHTER

David: Well, that's almost what I'm saying, that you're able to tolerate that level of antipathy to somebody [19], d'you know?

Kathleen: But in a way, it's because, I'm thinking now, one name that comes to me is Mark, or – the people [other tutors] that I was with – you know that they're struggling with the same things [20]. So it does help you. And you know that at the next in-service somebody's going to mention – or even if you're doing something all day, at coffee break, somebody will say, how are your groups this year and you say, I have this difficult woman, or – d'you know? So it's – in a way, that helps you there in that moment. Because if you didn't know it was the same for others, there is no way you could tolerate it [21], because – then I'd be thinking, God, he'll be on to Maynooth, and I'm not doing the right thing, and the judgement, d'you know?

Erica: yeah, you have to have some sense of certainty, as well.

Kathleen: yeah. You have to know that, in other places, it's a similar struggle [22].

Helen: the amount of energy that kind of thing takes – I won't go into detail about the particular situation – but I remember coming out then and reading the assignments and I had to laugh at what was in it. You know, the problematic person, if you like, their perspective on some other issues that I had raised – they were totally taken, well, I felt, out of context, anyway. But I remember at the same time saying, well, I'll face *anything* again, once I got through this. You learn – there's so much personal learning for yourself – as to how to deal with difficult issues and – people who are maybe manipulative or whatever. You know, it's – and how you're able to deal with it within the group and turn it round, and make it a learning experience for us all. It was one of my first years that this happened, so – the learning in that for myself – and even for the – the – pupils – it was great – but the amount of energy it takes [23]. … And I think that it's what you were saying earlier, Stephen – actually -- work from the counselling area – and it did stand to you, at times like that. That knowledge and your own skills [24], when you would come up against the thorny subjects, the thorny individuals – you know, that it was – it's not all plain sailing, you know.

Points of analysis, extract eleven

1. Implication that a discourse of credentialism and /or professionalism (that is, the student wanting a career-oriented course and participating in this one as second-best) can cloud recognition of the value of experience and group in learning. Also an implication that the student resisted because of his maleness (single male in a group of women).
2. Experience understood as story-telling or narrative
3. Student anger is understood as resistance towards the tutor, as is the unfavourable comparison of her style with 'proper teaching'. Attention is drawn to the emotional impact of working with experience – here, it is expressed as defensive anger.
4. Assertion that student's defensive anger resistance have emotional effects on the tutor – indicating that tutoring is a two-way process, and a whole person experience, in the same way that learning involves the whole person
5. Assertion of tutor's lack of agency in the face of student resistance
6. Assertion that student resistance can cause self-doubt in the tutor, regarding own ability to teach and to relate
7. Assertion that a group 'knew' what needed to happen to support a member experiencing anger/resistance. Suggestion of knowledge residing within a group
8. Suggestion that relationships within the group can be simultaneously challenging and supportive to an individual

9. Assertion of the value to future relations (post-course) between student and tutor of some kind of mutually satisfactory resolution to resistance
10. Assertion of the benefit to student of dealing in the class with emotions that arise, rather than leaving the class
11. Assertion that 'dealing with' one member's resistance-based anger benefits both individual and group
12. Assertion that groups are unpredictable
13. Assertion of need for tutor to be proactive, directive and possibly hierarchical, based on their reading of the individual and the situation
14. Recognition of the importance of individuals within groups
15. Assertion of need for tutor to be alert to effects of individuals within the group, from the start
16. Assertion of the need for support from course management for tutors
17. As 12
18. As 16
19. Implication that tutor needs a high degree of self-awareness and what Heron calls 'distress-free authority' (1999: 339), in order to manage the class effectively
20. Assertion of the importance to tutors of being part of a collective of tutors
21. Indication of the strong effects a group or an individual can have on a tutor, and the need to be part of a group of tutors who experience similar effects
22. Reassertion of the value of being part of a group of supportive tutors
23. Assertion that being proactive, dealing with a 'difficult' student is rewarding for the tutor, in terms of own learning and development of competency to manage a group, but also extremely demanding of tutor's energy
24. Tutor's counselling skills seen as a resource for tutor proactivity in managing the group and promoting learning.

Commentary

This extract centers on the resistance of one student, and the tutor's account of it. The account implies that the student's resistance was at least partly because he was a man and disliked an experiential approach, whereas the women in the group were more comfortable with it.

The tutor has to be able to cope with the macro-context of a dominant male culture and credentialist discourses, both of which are seen to position experiential learning as of little value. The emotional impact on both tutor and student of this kind of work is highlighted. Defensive anger expressed by a student leads to self-doubt and anxiety for the tutor, in this case.

Student experience is important but must be managed, if it is not to dominate the group process for others, and the tutor's own counselling skills (experience) are a resource for this work

Both tutor hierarchy and group autonomy (cf Heron, 1999) arise here as important processes. At times, the tutor has to be proactive in deciding the direction the group should take. At other times, it is appropriate to trust the group to contain a difficult student, suggesting that relationships within the group can be simultaneously challenging and supportive. The tutor has to understand and use both approaches, and to make on-the-spot judgements about their appropriate use.

For a tutor, it is difficult to be 'not liked' by a student, or to be accused of being 'not a proper teacher'. Uncertainty and self-scrutiny are seen as valuable processes for aiding tutor development. The notion of whole-person tutoring is once again suggested, this time including less positive emotions such as frustration and self-doubt. To live with these emotions requires self-knowledge and a certain wisdom. Courage as a requirement re-appears, because it can be difficult to avoid reacting to a student, and instead to be proactive, even hierarchical, in directing the activities of the class group. The accounts also emphasise the need for knowledge of theory and the application of practical counselling skills.

The support of other tutors is again emphasized, in promoting self-reflection and living with uncertainty. Relationships between tutors are crucial. It is also asserted that the conditions for whole-person tutoring can be significantly enhanced by management (NUIM).

This extract shows that when tutors make choices for action, each choice stands alone, but is also connected to a *Gestalt* that includes quality, intention, intuition and commitment to the course. The sense of responsibility and commitment is evident, in that the whole self of the tutor is engaged. But this commitment is nevertheless distinct from certainty.

Section Three: The emotional impact of transformative learning

The accounts in the preceding sections have linked experience with emotion in the classroom, and have drawn attention to the need to contain emotion and set boundaries, in order to create a learning environment for the group. The extracts below provide further accounts of these issues.

Extract Twelve: Containing emotion

David: You mentioned boundaries earlier, Robert, and the absolute necessity of boundaries on a course like this. D'you know – how do you know when there's a boundary issue – ah – you know -- that this is not a therapeutic course, so I can't do that here, d'you know? And what do you do about it?

Robert: Indeed – first knowing – the how do you know question – when you ask people to introduce themselves you find their boundaries are hugely close and tight. When you bring them back then, you know, talking to each other, to introduce each other in the group, the second move, they start to loosen the boundary. And then they actually begin to self-disclose in order to support a point they make. That's further boundary loosening. So there's a gradual loosening of the boundaries, so that they go out now to the point where – now they have to stop. And it's finding that point – when are you going to stop disclosing yourself – you know – to beyond what's necessary for a learning group [1]– some people would go on into the therapeutic disclosure where they have no boundaries at all, they wouldn't be able to find any, you know. And so people began to actually – if it was gradually managed – and I think it's in the management of the group that's the how of that [2].

Anne: That's the skill that you bring to it [3].

Joe: The group has the boundaries [4]

Robert: yes, it has its own boundaries [5]

Joe: You learn to know what it is that's said, what the disclosure – what will be talked about and not talked about -– and in that context then I think you can then immediately pick up something which is – ah – out of – out of the usual [6]

Robert: There's something about this that's important too

Sinéad: There's something about being able to control the emotion too [7] you know – if I tell you a story – I can control it in myself and I'm not overwhelmed by the feeling, so that the group doesn't have to take it on board. We had one woman that was sexually abused and three nights running we got it and she was overwhelmed, she nearly collapsed, you know – it was we that had to take – she started using the group for her therapy. It wasn't the abuse, but she kind of lost consciousness of it, you know – she wasn't in control of it any more.

David: So what do you do?

Sinéad: Well, we met her [8].

Joe: Yeah, sometimes you have to do that. [9]

Robert: the quick answer I suppose, David, is – for me – is to shift people from the heart to the head [10]. Whenever I see the danger –you are so close to people in groups and you know them so well that you're in sync with them, you know where they're at – after a few weeks you reach that kind of understanding [11] – when you know immediately if they're going too much into the heart and you can encourage them to bring it up into the head: ask them, -- and as you feel that terrible feeling, what is happening in your mind? It's manipulation [12]

David: But it's an important movement in this field – d'you know –there is that kind of sense of – I think in the early days of counselling – that it was great, because it allowed us

into the world of feelings. But there is also, now, I think, a very important movement as well to rehabilitate thinking – think about it.

Sinéad: that's right

OTHER MURMURS AND VOICES OF AGREEMENT

David: think about what you're saying

Anne: And that you have some choice about how far you want to go

Michael: The whole sort of adage that feelings are okay, neither right nor wrong, neither good nor bad, but it's what we *do* with them. And I think from my small experience, I would say many times throughout the course, that they should not – by all means we share – but that they should not share something that they're going to feel bad about. So think before you say. And it's connected also with the confidence and the confidentiality in the group. But nonetheless, to deal with what you are saying. I totally concur with what – to go from the feeling into the head [13].

Anne: What were you going to say?

Joe: I was going to say that this is about counselling. I think it's why your tutors need to be counsellors, this is the flavour of the course. Many years ago, one of my first counselling sessions, we did a recording and I had seen a guy who was just out of prison and I had pages of stuff that he told me. And I went to see my supervisor down the corridor and she looked at it and she said, it's wonderful, but he won't be back.

LAUGHTER

Joe: You need to – to

Anne: Start small

Joe: You've got to strike that balance [14].

David: people have to go out into the world.

Joe: You keep the end of the session in view. This person has to go out on the street and feel okay, and come back. And I think you have to use that counselling skill with your group [15].

Robert: One of the great questions that Mark Corey [spelling?] asks – are you able for the feeling that takes you over? And that actually gets you to retreat, not so much into the mind, as to your awareness [16].

Anne: So it's even getting away from that dualism of the heart and the head, into something else that you're calling awareness [17].

Robert: that's absolutely central, in a way, but very hard to get them to stop it.

Seamus: the heart has reasons the head knows nothing about. Pascal.

Sinéad: and yet, when we create awareness, people can take responsibility [18]– you know, close it down for the time being. … I think it's about being in good form, ourselves, going in, too [19]. And to see their difficulty, you know, as a symptom of something else, and to try and see what's going on for them – there's generally something else at home, that they're projecting onto this group, or – so I – you know, again, from my own experience, having somebody to talk to after that [20], is important. D'you know? And see – well, was I getting defensive, how much of this is my stuff as well [21]?

David: I guess, I'm thinking of one student who comes in after – it was the two-year course – and said, this course has ruined my life. D'you know – she was very angry. As far as she was concerned, this course had ruined her life. And really, what you're saying is, that you need to be in a space, as a tutor, where you don't receive that defensively, even though you may actually receive it defensively, but just you have other supports around you that enable you to see it more clearly [22] as, this is part of her journey.

MURMURS OF YES, ETC

Points of analysis, extract twelve

1. Assertion that too much student self-disclosure hinders learning
2. Referring to the methods and techniques used for putting boundaries on emotion in a learning group
3. Assertion that boundaries are created by the tutor's skill

4. Assertion that the group has the capacity to create and manage boundaries
5. Acknowledgement that both tutor and group can create and manage boundaries
6. Assertion that tutor's attention to the group is a very important part of the skill of boundary construction – draws on own intuition, knowledge and skills
7. Assertion of need for students to be able to control their emotions so that they do not interfere with own learning or with learning of the group (as 1)
8. Hesitancy in tone of respondent indicates that he considers that meeting student individually is not always the best response
9. Agreement with 8, but acknowledgement that attention to the issue within the group is not always possible – (similarities to distress facilitation, but see also Nóirín's extract below)
10. Reason and choice put forward as ways to control or manage emotions – heart/head dualism is used here
11. Assertion of the importance of knowing the group, getting to know them as the time goes on, understanding their processes, in order to manage emotion within the group.
12. Assertion that the tutor ultimately controls the direction of the emotional expression, by taking the focus off it, reminding the learner of the educational setting, and introducing the element of reason
13. As 10
14. Assertion of the need for balance between containment and disclosure, if students are to stay the course
15. Implication that controlling disclosure and emotions adds to the comfort of the individual and the group, and that a trained counsellor has the ability to do this in the classroom.
16. Distinction between rationality (the mind) and awareness
17. Attempt to define awareness as something that subverts the head/heart dualism (researcher interprets directly into the discussion)
18. Equation of agency with being able to take responsibility for the management of one's emotions. Assertion that awareness facilHelentes this agency
19. Assertion of the need for tutor to be self-aware and emotionally balanced in own approach to the group
20, 21, 22. Assertion of the value to tutor of sharing / discussing group issues with another person, and the value of a 'distanced' view of the process

Commentary
While disclosure of experience is (in common with other extracts) considered important in this extract, the dominant theme is that, in order to maintain a learning environment, disclosure should have boundaries. Early in the extract, accounts emerge that see both tutor and group as capable of creating boundaries. But the discussion concentrates on the tutor's responsibility to manage the process of containment. The group does feature later in the discussion, but only through the accounts that assert each individual's ability to take responsibility for how much to disclose. It is also asserted that tutors can help students learn to take responsibility, by fostering awareness.

The account of awareness appears to go some way to collapsing the dualism of emotion/reason or heart/head. It suggests evidence of a different way of knowing, which transcends dualism – that is, is capable of taking all the senses into account, but

not placing them in a hierarchy, or in opposition to each other. However, we don't get a picture of how awareness operates. For example, questions such as: How does this discourse of awareness function? What are its central premises? How different is it from reason. How far does it really go to collapsing the heart/head dualism?

The need for tutor self-awareness is emphasised in the extract also, so that s/he may be in what Heron (1999) calls 'peak condition' for distress-free authority in working with the group. The accounts also refer to the value of peer support for the tutor in reflecting on issues of containment and emotion in the group, and in planning how to manage them.

The overall tone of the accounts contained in this extract is one of certainty, especially in the treatment of awareness as a tool for containing emotion in the classroom. This certainty mostly centers on the actions of the tutor. There is at one point (point 4) the suggestion that the group also has the capacity to contain emotions, but this discourse is muted, and not pursued.

The certainty of this extract contrasts with the uncertainty of several accounts in the following extract.

Extract Thirteen: Treading a fine line

Mary: What you're saying strikes me to think about the years where – do you know the boundary between therapy and – and education [1] – the struggles about – I mean, I'm presuming we've all been there. How did you manage – how was it that you realised it and then how did you bring it back out of that? Because I think that is a struggle [2] with the course.

Valerie: you mean, going with it [3] when it presents itself [4]?

Mary: or even – knowing we've gone somewhere, and what's that like? And then, how to get it back? I mean, I'm using the word back, but it could be anything [5] – it could be – d'you know?

Alison: It's like the recognition [6] of the struggle going on inside you, with this person in the group [7], or with what's happening, and to be able to say, well, you know this is actually going over the line.

Mary: yeah

Alison: yes

David: you need to do something about this – either I need to go with it or I need to pull it back, whatever

Alison: yes, and if you don't go with it, how not to go with it, but also taking care of the person [8]

Mary: yeah

David: That's right

Alison: and it's like that fine line [9]. For me, I always felt it was a case of listening to the person and allowing people to respond to a certain extent [10], but then holding it there [11], and then saying, well, you know, maybe we'll come back to that, and then getting the person during the break or something like that, and saying, lookit, you know, this is a painful issue for you and I wonder what would it be like for you to maybe talk to somebody at an individual level [12]? You know – or – or maybe it might be something that's just happening that moment, and to maybe spend ten or fifteen minutes during the tea break, to actually just stay with the person and allow them to talk and allow them to cry, whatever's happening. I've had instances where people ran out of the room. And you know, what do you do? Do you run after them, do you leave the group? That's always been difficult.

David: So what did you used to do? Or, d'you know -- ?

Alison: Well gosh, ahm – I tended – I remember one time actually – years ago, somebody in the group actually went after them. Now, I realised afterwards, that's not the correct thing either, cos – somebody being a mammy, and somebody taking over and – you know LAUGHS SLIGHTLY – I – you know – didn't allow people to do that, after that happened the first time. But I would just excuse myself from the group, go after the person, maybe put them somewhere where they could have a cup of tea or something, and maybe have an early break or something like that, and come back then to the group later on while it was kind of – in some way dealt with. But – it's something I always struggled with.

Valerie: Yeah, I think it is a struggle. It was one of the questions, when I looked down – it jumped out at me, this thing about – the boundary. And I began to think, where does it happen? It has happened quite a lot, it has happened quite a lot in the groups [13]. And I suppose what I do is, I go with it. If – if somebody starts to talk, or starts to move into stuff that – say, for instance, they get caught up – they're surprised themselves [14], how upset they're getting, or whatever it is, I don't stop. I just pay attention to them [15]. And I let them, I let them go [16]. And usually what – if there's going to be a fallout from it, it's usually somebody else afterwards [17], saying, I don't think we should – I don't think people should be asked to do that in – in the class, I think they should be – you know, it's not fair on the person. I always come back and I say to the person, what was it like, crying – what was it like – it might have taken half an hour, it might have been more than that. I would give it whatever time it needed 18], basically, because – ahm – and I would always bring it back to the person who had spoken and who was, I suppose, getting therapy rather than being part of the group [19]. And I would say, what was it like and invariably, nobody has yet ever said, I was hurt by it or I was wounded by it or I'm sorry I did it. They would always say, I'm glad I did it, I feel I was understood, and I'm okay with it [20]. But it didn't mean that other people in the group were okay with it. They were the ones who would say, I don't think – you know, I feel sorry for so and so. I would always say, ask so and so – you know, you don't know how they felt.

Kate: projecting their own stuff on it

Mary: yeah

Alison: and then, if you get into that, are you going into group therapy?

LOTS OF YEAHS FROM AROUND THE TABLE

Kate: I suppose one of the issues that -- over the years of it happening, is that, sometimes you'd have what I'd call a circular client– you know – and the group would groan, here we go again.

MURMURS OF MMN, SOME QUIET LAUGHTER

Kate: And I suppose that would, in a way – is a person that can be dealt with gently – you know – outside the class and so on [21]. But the spontaneity, as you've said [to Valerie]

Valerie: Mmn

Kate: -- of something hitting somebody [22] – I've found huge sensitivity in a group. They will go with that and they'll give that person the space and they will listen to that person [23]. But there's an intermediate stage as well, where sometimes a person finds themselves going into it and I might stop them and say, you know – are you happy to go into this now? You now – are you happy, or – are you sure you want to do this now? Just as a safety –

David: like a reminder that they have a choice [24] –

Kate: Yeah – so, not to feel compelled that I must get into this, you know? And so I think that's been a sort of useful – sort of safety thing for a client – or, I shouldn't say a client, for a – you know – a class member. Also, in a way, I suppose for other people who felt a bit threatened by that, it gave them the sense that, you know, I can stop, I don't have to get into this now [25].

Alison: but it's the person actually who's just sitting there quietly – and then runs – that's the difficulty [26].

Kate: yeah

OTHER MURMURS – MMN, ETC

Mary: But it's like – it's like when you said [to Alison] the line, everybody nodded. And I was thinking, but how do you make the line explicit? Or is it something that's individual to each tutor and each group?

Deirdre: Well, when I read that question, I kind of thought, for me, it's when I begin to feel a kind of physical – concern, like, physical in the body [27], I begin to feel worried about the person and the degree of exposure. And when I'm uncomfortable and then I would take measures to say, well, we'll come back to that later on, at the tea break or whatever. But I've fallen down on that, because I've had an experience in a group in the past where – the group very -- indirectly –counselled -- it was allowed to go on far too long. And I felt uncomfortable with it, but the group wasn't and I didn't pick it up, because obviously when the focus is on the person, you lose the – that's when you need your co –[co- facilitator?]

Rose: I suppose there were two things: One is the contract [28], where it's made explicit at the beginning that this is not a therapy group, but that it's quite personal in the material that people will be looking at, and that there is always the possibility that people will hit into difficult or painful issues. And if it does happen spontaneously [29], I found that most of the group knew, really, that it wasn't appropriate – and get upset, and something would need to be done. I wouldn't mind a classmate sometimes going out, and saying, would you just be with them for a few minutes until I'm free to follow it up and see how they are. But people would make quite a stout effort to get themselves back together again, and realise that, you know, they needed to do something about this, and that the group wasn't the place to do it [30]. And the other piece was to use [31] it up to a point, as modelling – to model counselling in the group, in not panicking, being calm, just accepting it, just doing enough with the person to stabilise them or check in with them – you know, what do you need around this [32]? Or – and that – that the group itself would mobilise around that person in the coffee break, or after the course – they'd all go off to lunch together and process it [33]. So – modelling a lack of panic around it, that – you know – this happens and – it's not the worst thing in the world – you have a lot of support and you can manage it. So – but to try and respect the contract, you know – not get sucked in.

David: there's the other side of it as well, if I'm not mistaken, which is that people can come on a course like this – d'you know, as an alternative to therapy and really put an agenda to a group. D'you know – has that – has that been your experience?

Alison: yeah, I do feel, very often, you do get people there at an unconscious level because they're fearful around therapy, but if they go into this counselling course, it's a counselling course, so it's okay, it's safe. And they would tend to use it, yes. And as regards the line, Mary, I suppose what occurred to me when you asked that question, was – you do get a sense [34] of the dynamic changing in the group, when somebody is getting into painful stuff that's nearly going into therapy. You know, you can see actually the changes in people occurring in the group. They're all – it's like – the dead – kind of silence comes over the group and everybody is focused on that person.

MURMURS OF AGREEMENT

Alison: That's my sense of where the line is.

Maureen: One of the useful things is you know, to sort of remind the group – which I do every now an then – that it's *not* a therapy group, but that it is thera – it *can* be therapeutic [35] and that they actually put this back to me now. And that to me was really – I think it was Jarlath Benson kind of distinguished in one of his seminars between that and I found that very useful, that it's not a therapy group and that when I'm checking in with them, we are not doing group therapy [36]. We may be engaging in group processes, but not group therapy, and that it may be therapeutic for people to

speak in the group, but that we are not at group therapy, nor is the group aimed at therapy. And they now quote this back and say, I realise this is not a therapy group

LAUGHTER

Maureen: But it does somehow – it kind of puts a shape on what's expected from them [37]. And then if it does then spill into therapy, then the amount of support from people is enormous [38]. But I think the distinction between a therapy group and the group being therapeutic is useful, even for myself.

Deirdre: Because of my own personal experience of the one-year group versus the two-year group, it seems to me less likely – those issues haven't emerged as much in the single year [39]. I suppose in a way it's common sense.

Valerie: My experience doing the – the first time I did the one-year, it's not as obvious – I'm sharing the group with somebody this year in Maynooth – but last year, taking it for the first time, there was a lot of expression and a lot of that kind of development [40], and I suppose, when I read this [the question referring to therapy/education boundary], I thought, am I aware of – I am aware of it in my own physical being [41], but also the word, what makes it challenging, almost seems to be around this area of how much – how comfortable are you with letting this go [42]. There was only one, I suppose – the famous [names a student, directs comment to Mary] – there was only one situation really where I felt I had to set down definite boundaries around how much time are we going to give to this person and the kind of chaos that this person created. Which worked, in the sense that – you know – a night was given over to sorting out an issue and everybody was given then a proportionate amount of time. But apart from that, I suppose I don't actually put down markers about, this is therapy and this is group process. What – it – it doesn't turn into therapy. Maybe if it had done, I would have – I'd be saying something different. But what I would always do is, say, make use of an experience like that, where somebody was talking at depth [43]. And I'd always say to them, do you mind if we use this, to talk about it as an example of what you were doing here in the class, or what I was doing with you, or what you were experiencing – of listening, responding, letting you talk, letting you express your feelings, not putting a stop to it. I suppose I would be very concerned about introducing some notion into the group that we have to close off – you know, close off what's about to happen, because I might be afraid. So – I think a lot of it will depend on how – how strong I feel about letting the thing run [44] – and when I feel comfortable with letting something run, there's always a lot to be learned that way [45]– in terms of explaining that this is what it's like, this is actually what it's like, and this is what therapy involves. And that is really valuable.

David: So you're able to use your own intuition to kind of have a sense of what's okay and what's not okay, but

Valerie: Yeah

David: But there's also another level – there's a teaching level to it, if you like.

Valerie: yes

David: So that you can say, well, this is actually what we're – what we're here to learn

Valerie: But I would always ask the person at that point – d'you know – is it okay to use what happened here as an example [46]– you know, as a teaching example. I also say to people, you may say yes at the outset, and then if people are saying, things like critical things, which they sometimes do – I say, you can always say stop – you can always say, stop [47], I don't want to hear any more of this.

Points of analysis, extract thirteen

1. Implication that one can distinguish between education and therapy (emanating from the research team)
2. Metaphor of struggle
3. 'Going with it' used in contrast to containment
4. Unpredictability of student responses asserted

5. Implication of the need for tutor to maintain a level of control (see 7 below also). Indication of tutor responsibility to contain individual emotion and to 'watch out' for the group
6. Tutor self-awareness asserted as essential to the ed/therapy line recognition and management
7. Recognition that the control referred to in 5 is required because it's a group context
8. Relations in the present moment asserted – how the learner experiences the present (being cared for, etc) as well as how her/his past experience is dealt with
9. Qualitative nature of the process asserted
10. Relations in the present moment emphasised
11. Containment as a theme emphasised
12. Implication that being person-centred and /or concentrating on relations in the present moment do not have to involve crossing the education/therapy line – nevertheless there is an acceptance of the existence of a line or distinction
13. Frequency of reaching 'the line' asserted
14. Unpredictability of reaching the line asserted
15. Importance of present moment suggested
16. Theme of 'following student' introduced
17. Suggestion that other students in the group may conflate distress with harm to the student who 'crosses the line'
18. Reassertion of importance of present moment
19. Distinction implied between individual learning *in* the group, and individual learning *as part of* a group
20. Importance of group dynamics asserted
21. Assertion of tutor's need to be proactive with certain individuals in the group, based on one's judgement of them
22. Assertion of unpredictability
23. Assertion of trust in capacity of groups to work with an individual's need
24. Implication that students have a choice – a discourse of responsibility complements that of containment and awareness
25. Assertion of the need to create safety for rest of group – simultaneous awareness of group and individual needs
26. Difficulty presented by the unpredictability
27. as 25
28. Contract represents rational knowledge, and is employed at the start of the course
29. Implication that contract cannot always deal with the unpredictability of 'the line' or the disclosures a student may make
30. Discourse of responsibility and choice again
31. Assertion that anything that happens in the group can provide opportunities for learning for everyone in the group
32. Implication that modelling (that is, being a certain way) by the tutor provides learning opportunities and opportunities for reflection
33. Assertion of trust in group's capacity
34. Assertion of trust in own knowledge, intuition and awareness (tutor's), especially in regard t group dynamics and processes
35. Implication that learning itself can be therapeutic – challenge to learning/therapy dualism

36. Process/therapy distinction; value to tutors of in-service seminars noted
37. Distinction between therapeutic outcomes of learning and the very rational contract entered into by students at the start
38. Assertion of the capacity of groups to respond
39. Suggestion that emotional issues will emerge more if there is the time for them to do so
40. Assertion of tutor's trust in own awareness, knowledge and intuition
41. as 40
42. Personal decision /comfort of tutor put forward as a key factor in whether to cross 'the line' or not
43. Assertion about using whatever arises as material for learning—cf point 31
44. Assertion of reliance on tutor's own judgement and comfort (as 40, 41)
45. Learning put forward as the justification for how one proceeds – rather than having fixed rules about how to proceed
46. Attention drawn to relations in the present moment, in the form of checking for the student's comfort; distinction between student's distress and harm to the student.
47. Positioning of students in a discourse of choice; also an assertion of the acceptability of changing one's mind, based on current circumstances, feelings and information available.

Commentary

Learners often enter a contract at the start of a course, not to let the group become therapy. But this is a rationally based contract, and therefore not always adequate to the situation that may develop in the class. There is no adequate way of conveying to group members in advance that they might unexpectedly disclose material that may be distressing. How the tutor handles this is central to the accounts in this extract, as in the previous one, but the striking difference is in the acceptance here of multiple possibilities for managing an individual's distress. One possibility put forward is that dealing with an individual's distress in the class situation can provide learning opportunities for the whole group. There arises also an important distinction between distress and harm to a student.

It is also an issue of the individual within the group and the need for individual learning, maybe supported by the group, but not necessarily 'part' of the group. While there is a common core of learning within the group, there is also unique individual learning. Sometimes this individual learning process is not visible to others, but sometimes it can happen with the group as 'audience'. This position can be a dangerous one to occupy, even if actively taken up by a learner.

The group requires the development of a sense of the collective, but it also needs independent and self-aware members. Diversity and individuality or individuation can be developed by reflecting on the unique nature of everyone's experiences, even when there are also common elements.

In order to deal adequately with emotional responses, tutors need to have the resource of self, self-awareness, awareness of own emotional responses to the individuals and the group (defensiveness, etc). MARY'S COMMENT: TRANSFERENCE –DO YOU WANT TO WRITE MORE ON THIS?

Metaphors of lines, containment and boundaries are common in his extract. The personal comfort of the tutor is put forward as one guide in deciding how far to extend them or make them permeable. There is an implicit understanding here that for a course in counselling skills, the boundaries may be more permeable, or may extend further than they would in other subjects, where distress facilitation outside class might be more appropriate, and where the tutor would proceed in the class situation by modelling calmness and other appropriate behaviour. So there is a related suggestion that the way the boundaries and lines are treated depends on the subject being taught.

The accounts imply that recognition of 'the line' is more important than having fixed rules about what to do. This could be read as indicating that the line between education and therapy is also about relations in the present moment and how they are handled and managed, in order to advance learning. Again, the lack of certainty is striking. This is however in no way an indication of lack of preparedness or competence on the part of the tutor.

The idea of the tutor's trust in self is present, as an antidote to the possible fear of student emotions getting out of control. Also the tutor has to have the trust of the group, if s/he is going to 'go' with somebody's distress in the class situation – group members' fear of other people' emotions may be strong. Implicit too is a sense of trust in the capacity of groups to contain knowledge and solutions that assist other group members in their distress, and the ability to manage distress.

The underlying principle in some accounts of the extract is that learning is the guiding light – if the tutor judges that learning can take place, then s/he follows the issue, or crosses the line, to whatever extent she is comfortable with. And this judgement is made on the spot. This lends a new dimension to the concept of *relations in the present moment*. It is akin to developing strategy 'on the hoof' and implies that the tutor needs to have deep knowledge and other resources to call on in unpredictable situations. The qualitative nature of these issues is clear from these accounts, but they are seen as part of the job of tutoring, tasks that can be done well, given the right conditions, such as support for the tutor, and faith in the capacity of individuals and groups to learn.

Again, the sense of Gestalt is present, in the sense that each action taken, even though it stands alone and cannot be predicted in advance, is nevertheless embedded in a whole that includes the tutor's intuition, judgement and commitment to the group and the individual learners in it.

The accounts draw attention implicitly to the dualism inherent in an over-relaiance on the education/therapy distinction. This might be called into question or subverted somewhat, when learning becomes the guide for action, rather than a blanket rational decision never to 'cross the line'.

Extract Fourteen: Listening put forward as a means to manage emotion in the group

Nóirín: … We give over the first hour to sharing, and – you know, that just goes around the group and what emerges, emerges. I don't use it as therapy, in the sense that I don't take on what they say. I simply sit and listen to it. And other people in the group will sometimes come and work – not work with it, but offer their experience, or whatever. And that has engendered a really supportive atmosphere, where feelings are normal and are just accepted, and that's all that's to it [1]. And then we all go down to coffee, and when we come back, we do the teaching. And it's completely separate and different [2], and we never have any therapy as such, or anything that – and people do cry in their threesomes from time to time, and that's fine too, because that atmosphere of an acceptance [3]-- that people have problems, they're many and varied and god knows, their life histories sometimes are absolutely shattering. I mean, for me to sit there and listen to it, is just incredible at times. And it's also the norm, and that's the way it is – and we move on, you know? So I think the structure is quite – it seems to me that it may be different. Also, [name of centre where she tutors] offers a counselling service for people who have a real problem, *and* I have an assistant, which is an incredible luxury [4]. She – well, you know – keeps in touch with people and you know, if people drop out, she'll ring them, and you know – is everything okay and you know? So I mean, as I said, I think we're taking the Maynooth – what's the word – openness – to doing it your own way, to an extreme, which the people who are doing it value enormously. And certainly I do.

Points of analysis, extract fourteen

1. Listening construed as an alternative to a therapeutic engagement in the classroom
2. Assertion that the teaching/learning is separate from the relating of personal experience, in the structure and management of the class
3. Acceptance nevertheless of the emotional dimensions of learning
4. Acknowledgement that larger structures in her outreach centre (ie, counselling service and classroom assistant) make 2 above possible.

Commentary

Listening and acknowledging are processes put forward as ways of containing emotions, without making emotions the focus of the class. Teaching and learning are seen as distinct from the relating of experience, and experience is the part connected with emotion. Certainty characterizes the dualistic distinctions drawn between experience and emotion on the one hand, and learning/teaching on the other. Nevertheless, the account also contains a suggestion that this clear distinction is possible, because counselling is freely available to the students, outside the classroom situation, to address any emotional issues that arise in the classroom and that may cause distress.

Extended commentary: The emotional dimensions of learning

When adults engage holistically, emotions can run high. An event that is of no significance gives rise to no emotion. This is taken for granted in all three extracts selected for analysis in this section, and has been a minor theme, flagging the connections between drawing on experience, and the surfacing of possibly heretofore unacknowledged emotions, in earlier sections.

One of these accounts (and several questionnaire responses on the same theme) refers to the contract made at the start, alerting students to the fact that the class is a learning group, not a therapeutic group. This issue has similarities with issues of 'informed consent' that people make at the start of being involved in many qualitative research projects. It is an attempt to predict and control the responses. The accounts indicate that it doesn't always work. Of course, for ethical reasons, some kind of preliminary information and consent must be given and sought, but the outcomes of the class processes are unpredictable.

The tutor is required to maintain a continuing emotional awareness in every interaction in the group. Implicit in this is the idea that learning is not just a conscious, cognitive process whereby people process information, but that it is also an emotional event. Emotion can lead to distress, and the processing of this distress needs to be done in a safe context. Sometimes, the classroom is appropriate for this process. It is important here not to conflate the ideas of distress and harm (cf Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 93), and to acknowledge that distress can be made a class subject in a way that is a positive experience for the individual experiencing the distress, as well as the other group members.

Common to all three extracts analysed in this section is the idea that that acknowledging emotional responses to learning and to the disclosure of experience doesn't have to mean following them through or 'going with them', every time they surface in the classroom situation. There is a degree of agreement on the need to contain emotions, in the interests of learning, and depending on the immediate situation. However if they are continually set aside, then whole-person learning cannot take place. Nevertheless, there are considerable variations in the levels of certainty in the different accounts of how to attend to emotions in learning. Those accounts that engage concepts of awareness and listening as means to contain emotions in the classroom are quite firm in their acceptance of the dualism between education and therapy – these are seen as quite different things, in fact could almost be seen in opposition to each other.

Even where there is a clear distinction between learning and therapy, it is accepted that, nevertheless, because it is whole-person learning, there may be a need to provide for 'distress facilitation' (Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason, 2001). Distress facilitation, like therapy, helps learners to 'process emotions and ideally, to transform in the process. Unlike therapy, however, the distress facilitation methods are not the focus of the inquiry; instead, these methods are tools to facilitate learning during action/reflection cycles' (Rosenwasser (forthcoming), cited in Kasl and Yorks, 2002: 19).

Proceeding uncertainly, yet knowing that one has a deep well of personal knowledge, and that groups have their own 'stores' of knowledge, is the alternative that suggests itself from the accounts. Learning – for group and individual – is a criterion here, in deciding how to respond in the present moment. In responding, tutors are influenced by their own emotional dynamics. These can work as a resource (through identification) or as a barrier (through mobilization of the tutor's defences) (cf Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 93). The issue of a tutor's own emotional competence is key here also. The criterion of guarding against harm to the student is implied also, as a guide to making decisions on these issues (cf ibid: 88).

Section Four: Structure

The importance of being flexible and of responding to immediate needs and situations is set in the context of also having structures that give a shape to the course and that contain it.

Extract Fifteen: Course structure and standards

Maureen: I just want to say, I wouldn't like to kind of – you know -- go totally with the idea that it's very free-flowing. I mean, we do have a commitment to -- to getting through the course and towards having the students produce their assignments and that's a huge thing [1]. But on the plus side of that, I just think there should be something about the group projects that the students do. I find now – I don't know what it is about this year, but they are just wonderful. They are – have just presented the group projects, and the amount of effort and thought that they put into presenting these projects and the amount of research that they have done and the amount – that the feedback from the students is, the amount of learning and relationship enhancement and everything that they've got from the group project, is huge. And I think that that's something that's such a good part of the course. It's not mentioned here, but I think it should be – it should be acknowledged. And for me, I mean, looking at these people producing this from the first time when I suggested – we put all the topics in the hat, drew them out, and everybody was freaking – to actually see them producing this really professional stuff – I mean, bringing in equipment of their own and you know – really fantastic stuff and I'm just sort of – that's really rewarding for me. And it's themselves – I'm just facilitating that, they're doing their own research. And that to me is what adult learning is about, that co-operative thing [2] and – it's a huge part of the course now, it takes up time, but it's very good. I don't know would people agree with that or not.

Rose: absolutely. I think we're talking a lot about the touchy-feely aspects of this.

Maureen: yes [3]

Rose: But the challenging aspect of the course work, even though they're terrified by it at times, the mere fact that they can get it out and manage to produce it by the end of the course -- and that group project particularly -- I think just boosts people's confidence to the roof

Maureen: yes

Rose: So yeah – I think that we haven't really pandered to the differences or the inadequacies in the group – we've set a marker and this is what you need to achieve, and if you achieve it, you'll feel immeasurably good about yourself for having done that [4]. And I think that's a big part of the power of this course, is that it proves to people who have very little confidence or -- not in all cases, but in most cases -- that they can actually measure up, that they can actually complete the work and do it. And that gives them the confidence in many cases to go on.

Mary: So it's something about, in all of the difference and the difference of background or whatever, somehow we've been still able to set some standards, something about, you need to get to here, and people have been quite free to how they got there. But you're saying something about having that – some – line – has been important as well.

Kate: I think that setting the line actually in some ways is crucial to their development, because no more than anybody else, like – deadlines for me – I won't do things unless I have a deadline – you know? [5] And -- and I think the most telling learning aspect of it is that group project, whereby you see people not able to come to meetings, or you will hear that they're not able to come to meetings, they're not able to produce the work, they don't do this, that or the other. And they really fall on that in some ways, because they are faced with those sort of deadlines, and cause huge frustrations in a group, sometimes. And it doesn't actually appear then in the written group project, because they're hidden behind that, you know. And I suppose that isn't teased out, except in their reflection on what it was like in the group. Sometimes people skate by – you know – and are not able to meet these challenges.

Valerie: I know this isn't probably the place for it, but there's something about, you know, last year is the first year I've used the sheet, to assess the

Mary: the group project

Valerie: the project. And I had an experience – is it --?

Mary: yeah – no, go ahead

Valerie: Well, there were two excellent projects – like that, excellent projects – you know, a lot of stuff brought in and presented very, very well. And then there was a third one. on suicide, and it literally was a throw-up affair – you know? And what I usually do is, I make a comment on the – about the various aspects of the – and then we leave it open. And I just commented on that – I said, you know, that – you didn't make best use of what you – a lot of – a lot of effort – and it's a pity you didn't. And she – the group became very defensive and you know, they weren't prepared at all to look at things that weren't done well and they became – I think it is a job not very well done by me, because it was left – I think they went away feeling, oh, she praised everybody else, but she didn't praise us and we put an awful lot of work into it [6], and –

Mary: But it wasn't good enough

Valerie: exactly.

Mary: Well, I suppose I was thinking about the – the – I suppose about the thing about NUI Maynooth, the academic bit -- about being the hard bit – which is you know – the male bit, or the bit about saying it wasn't good enough.

Valerie: Mmn

Mary: Or – d'you know? And I think as tutors, you've had to occupy that space loads of times, which is about – giving hard feedback to people [7], or – that people hear something about themselves they don't particularly like, or something's reflected back – d'you know? But in a way – we now ask people to correct the material, it's a change – you know – that we've put a lot back onto the tutors, about having to hold something about that hard place – saying it wasn't good enough, or – and what's that been like? Cos I think you have to hold the two –

Rose: Very painful sometimes – to give people that you really are fond of, or whose potential you can see, who haven't produced adequate work, to say that. And again, it speaks to how motherly we become, how parental we become in the group and maybe – getting too involved, or too fond of the participants, and what happens to that boundary. There's a lot of potential stuff to look at in there [8].

Points of analysis, extract fifteen

1. Emphasis on the importance of structure, discipline and 'head work', as well the flexibility and unpredictability of the personal development, experiential and emotional work
2. Assertion that group co-operation facilitates students to work together to overcome fears about assessment and 'head' work, and thus enhances learning. Suggestion that the group moves from hierarchical facilitation, where the tutor tells them what needs to be done, and they learn *in* a group, to a state of working together independently, and learning *as* a group.
3. As 1 – emphasis of the need to not lose sight of the structure and standards that a university course should reach
4. Assertion that setting standards is part of the role of tutor and university, and is also an issue of personal development and the building of confidence as well as learning.
5. Importance attributed to structure, boundary, line – regarding standards
6. Implication of the need for tutor to challenge students. This is set in opposition to uncritical acceptance of life experience, which is an equally important part of the course
7. As 6

> 8. Implication of the need for the tutor to maintain separateness from learners, particularly because standards have to be reached.

Commentary

A focus on the end – reaching a standard by a certain time – creates boundaries for the course. The idea of having a definite end point to aim for is understood as good for fostering a commitment to work, and for containing the course, maybe also for containing the emotions. Structure in this sense has the capacity to act as a necessary foil to too much uncertainty.

The management and university requirement to deliver a certain content, to a certain standard raises the emotional response of anxiety in the students (and in the tutors also)

The sharing of experience and the building of emotional understanding and good relationships in the learning group means that tutors become close to their students (and students to each other). The paradoxes of this kind of tutoring are many. The institutional authority to assess and grade student work does not sit easily with the parental aspects of the relationship between tutors and students. The tutor needs to contain her/himself, and not accept work that is below standard.

The need to achieve standards draws attention to power differentials between tutor and student, and demands that tutor positions self in ways that are sometimes critical, and challenging, as in the need to be able to give hard feedback to students, and in the requirement to judge them, a requirement imposed by the university. The tutor has the power to pass, fail, confirm or destroy chances and choices. This is reminiscent of the first extract (although it is an accident of selection, not a conscious choice of placement on the part of the writers/researchers), where there is an account of asking a student to improve the standard of his written assignment, but in a way that offers flexibility and choice, and attends to the learner's need for the assessment process to be affirming and an opportunity for learning. Doing all of this – that is, holding all of these positions – takes a great deal of thought and energy.

Part Three
Being a tutor: What have we learned about facilitating transformative learning?

Introduction

In this part of the report, we discuss the insights concerning the facilitation of transformative learning, which have arisen from this study. As we make choices to discuss some issues and not others, or to take a particular approach to them, we are continuing the process of sampling within the material available, drawing on our theoretical sensitivity. Where, earlier, we selected extracts from the interview and focus group data in order to examine different themes and discourses, here, we are selecting in order to examine some issues of theory and practice that can push forward the development of adult education pedagogy. This part of the report, then, is an indication of where the study leads our conceptual and theoretical thinking.

Our theorising is largely concerned with finding productive ways to move beyond dualistic thinking, that is, ways that facilitate praxis. Below, we discuss concepts relevant to that concern, which also have arisen in the tutors' data, and which we consider integral to tutoring for transformative learning. They include:

- making the familiar strange
- making links or holding a sense of the *Gestalt* of tutoring
- creating the conditions for learning
- individual and group learning
- relationships with and among learners
- emotion in learning
- experience
- power
- gender
- uncertainty or not knowing
- supporting a pedagogy of uncertainty.

Making the familiar strange

Transformative learning is an exercise in making the familiar strange, and in constructing alternative meanings, in the process drawing on the whole self, and using all of the senses. Often, the most familiar ways of knowing, which feel 'normal' or 'natural', are those that need to be most urgently defamiliarised, in order to construct emancipatory knowledge (Preece, 2001; Ryan, 2001). The familiar discourses are too often based on unequal power relations. Discourses have meaning only in relation to one another (Gee, 1996, cited in Miller Marsh, 2002). To understand how we are positioned in one discourse, we need to see how the relations or institutions under scrutiny could be differently configured in another discourse. We need points of comparison and contrast, in order to start moving out of familiar and 'normal' discourses.

One way to do this is to examine contradictions in people's accounts or experience. For example, Liz Kiely (see Kiely, 2000) describes the experiences of a group of lone mothers who were visited by a public health nurse who lectured them in a way that

was clearly based on a notion of them as deficient, both as people and as mothers. This contradicted their experience of themselves as competent. Kiely encouraged the women to draw on other discourses of themselves, which challenged the dominant one. In this way, they were able to come to an understanding of how their experiences as women were also mediated by class and age discourses.

The responsibility of the tutor is to 'articulate or collude' (Ryan, 2001: 110) with all the different positionings that every student brings to a course, so that they can 'move' or push forward their relationship with their experience, and use new discourses to interpret that experience. This requires of tutors the ability to connect with individuals and group. Transformative learning is seen as creating a new relationship between past experience and present experience. Experience is transformed in the process of learning, so that learners view the world in new ways.

The tutor interprets adult experience, as the learners bring it to the class. As tutors, we are constantly drawing on our own experience, identity and sense of ourselves, in making decisions in the classroom. At the same time, we are guarding against imposing our own point of view on students. The student's development and learning are the criteria by which decisions are made. The kinds of learning that we foster are a dynamic production – they flow discursively between the group, the individuals within the group and the tutor. They depend on:
- the current situation and how each tutor (as well as each learner) reads it and experiences it
- the tutor's knowledge of theory, content, information and alternative discourses
- the tutor's capacity for radical self-reflection
- the tutor's capacity to connect with the positioning of each learner in the group, in order to provide opportunities and information that facilitate movement for that learner.

Making the familiar strange, however, can often result in a sense of loss – loss of certainties and traditions. This is a risky business for both tutors and learners – one might find out something one does not wish to know (cf Elliott, 2002). There is an emotional impact and a need to negotiate loss in a safe context. The relationships that can support this kind of negotiation are very different from traditional teacher-learner relationships, which were rooted in closure and relieved both learner and teacher of the need to make choices.

The tutor draws on her/his personal identity in the relationship that exist with students. This helps to develop empathy and trust, and also challenges and contrasts with the students' experiences, as another means to develop knowledge. Getting students to see things from other perspectives is an important part of the responsibilities of adult educators. But a caveat needs to be introduced here: seeing things from different perspectives should not be regarded as gradually moving towards some universal 'truth'. Such work can be facilitated by asking difficult questions, such as: Why do we traditionally feel or react in a certain way and not differently, why do others feel differently, and what might it be like to position oneself differently? The challenging task for both course designers and tutors is to think of classroom activities, projects or assignments where learners are encouraged to engage in the discomforting process of re-defining identities, emotions, knowledges

and practices (Zemblyas and Boler, 2002: 15), while avoiding the idea that there is an incremental process of discovering the truth by means of exploring as many perspectives as possible.

The *Gestalt* of tutoring and learning

When acting in the classroom, tutors work with a sense of the *Gestalt* of the course, the students, the group, and the knowledge that exists within the group. When making a decision to act, tutors operate out of a knowledge of all the links that exist between all the aspects of the course. It is both complex and simple being a tutor. Awareness of the importance of relations in the present moment and making on-the-spot judgements is simplicity itself. But myriad factors are at work in each moment of presence, each mode of being, each position taken up, and in each choice that is made. There is no question of reducing tutoring for whole-person learning to a simple checklist of competencies (although competencies are an absolute requirement). The course, the class group, the individual learners, counselling theories, discursive understandings of the world and of the individual, along with the tutor's subjectivity or self are part of a whole picture, which informs each action that the tutor takes in the classroom. The concept of *Gestalt* indicates the webs and networks of competencies and awarenesses that inform the process.

'The principle of *Gestalt* is based on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Wertheimer, the founder of *Gestalt* psychology, objected to the ways that modernist science proceeded from below to above' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001: 68). He believed that it was impossible to 'achieve an understanding of structured totals by starting with the ingredient parts which enter into them. On the contrary we shall need to understand the structure; we shall need to have insight into it. There is then some possibility that the components themselves will be understood' (Wertheimer, cited in Murphy and Kovach, 1972: 258-9).

Learning is understood as something that involves all the senses. There is no simple checklist of essential knowledge and skills for the facilitation of whole-person learning. Its qualitative nature is stressed by tutors' accounts throughout the extracts. It is not always amenable to measurement, although it has to be assessed, for the purposes of the Counselling Skills course.

Individual tutoring actions can thus be understood only in the context of and in relation to a larger whole. This whole is present in the tutor's mind, even as s/he appears to attend to a single aspect of the class, what we have called relations in the present. Whole-person tutoring and learning involve balancing multiple ways of knowing: emotional, experiential, cognitive, theoretical, spiritual, action-oriented, skills-based, imaginal, creative, intuitive and so on. Each element of knowing must be in balance with the others. 'A significant implication of an epistemology of balance is that unchecked dominance of any one way of knowing leads to truncated, even dysfunctional learning experiences' (Kasl and Yorks, 2002: 6). Qualitative aspects as big a part as practical, measurable competencies, in this *Gestalt* view.

The conditions for transformative learning are fluid, yet value-based

The accounts, analyses and commentaries we have presented reveal interconnected sets of classroom behaviours and beliefs, which vary from context to context. Each tutor has a unique relationship to discourses surrounding learning, including discourses of experience, gender, relationship, group, participation, theory, information and emotion. They share common understandings of these aspects of learning, but at the same time have their individual readings of them, due to each tutor's individual history. It is possible to identify some of these understandings, and behaviours, which we prefer to think of as insights into tutoring. But it would be a mistake to attempt to generalize from them so as to produce a definitive list of tutor knowledge and actions.

The facilitation of learning is treated as a commitment to the development of each individual group member (whatever might represent development or movement for that person). There is also a general belief that valuing and promoting certain conditions in the classroom will promote learning. These conditions include:
- equality
- safety
- trust
- openness
- acceptance
- collectivity/solidarity
- co-operation
- challenge
- empathy
- structure
- support
- confidence in the process of drawing on experience and its value and validity as a tool for learning.

Learning can involve discomfort for the learner, even distress, although it should not involve harm to the student. The safety of the learner is an important concern. Safety is not the same as a pedagogy of comfort. Trust may be the bridge between comfort and discomfort, and trust is created in relationship. This takes time, it cannot be rushed or assumed to exist. The tutor has to construct it, or attempt to construct it, and has to maintain it.

Learners in class groups have relationships with each other, as well as with the tutor. The tutors' accounts in many cases assert that the group members, in relationship with each other, have the capacity to generate the meanings and knowledge that they require. They are also creating new frames for understanding how knowledge is created. Learning is understood as expanding one's points of reference, and acquiring new or alternative frameworks for making sense of experience. This does not happen in isolation, but in relationship with others.

Learners in groups can develop a sense of interconnectedness. Individual students who come together for the course are seen as having the potential to form a learning group. The learners will learn as individuals *within* a group. It is possible that they may also learn *as* a group, but this is not taken for granted. For learning within a

group, students need to be open to each others' experiences, and somehow the tutor has to facilitate this openness. The diversity of the group is also a factor – we often learn more in the company of people who have different experiences from us, than those who are the same. This kind of learning is closer to learning as a group, when all are prepared to draw on and share aspects of their experience.

A sense of care for learners, and an ethic of care in the classroom are central to classroom practice. Goodfellow (1998) has identified relational qualities that promote learning, and which resonate with our findings. She cites these qualities as:
- Reciprocity, or an exchange within which there are shared understandings
- Responsiveness, or concern for and commitment to the other, and a shift in focus from self to the other
- Respectfulness, or high regard for the other
- Empathy or conscious effort to convey to the other an understanding of what the other is thinking and feeling
- Attunedness, or an awareness of the climate within the context, and an ability to act in harmony within that context; a consciousness of self and of self in relation to others. (Goodfellow and Sumison, 2000: 254)

Individual learning journeys
The emphasis on group, however, is not a denial of aspects of learning unique to each individual within the group. Learning in a group context, via relationship, supports the value of experience and the possibilities for individual transformation. The supportive context of relationship can allow learners to acknowledge aspects of themselves and interpretations of their experience that had previously been unacknowledged, and thereby reproduced unchanged. This process facilitates the construction of new self-understandings and new identities or dimensions of their subjectivities. Learners have the possibility of trying out these identities in the safety of the group context, before taking them into the wider social arena.

The emphasis on group, rather, draws attention to the individuation that is possible for learners within a supportive group context. They can attend to their own unique experiences, but also see that there are elements in common with others. This experience of both commonality and uniqueness in their stories story can allow learners to understand themselves as historically and culturally situated, but nevertheless as active agents in their own lives. Sometimes individuals need concentrated attention from the tutor, as they reframe their experience, but this is not always the case. Nevertheless the tutor needs to develop awareness of the multiple stories that are unfolding, both in the group and individual contexts.

The relational aspects of learning are linked with tutors' commitment and responsibility to the group and to the individuals within it. The relational dimension engages the tutor's whole self in the present moment in the classroom, and often occupies the mind, time and emotions of tutors beyond the classroom.

Tutoring is a call to full presence with a group

One of the insights that we concentrate on in this section is that of multiplicity in tutoring. It arises out of the idea of whole-person learning: that is, the tutors take for granted the need for the learners to learn with all the senses. The learning subject is not simply rational, nor simply feeling. The learning process draws on experience of both the inner and outer worlds: it is not simply psychological, nor simply social. It follows, then, that tutors too need to bring all of their senses to tutoring and facilitating.

This is reminiscent of Ancilla (1995: 159), who asserts that the best tutoring 'comes out of an understood self, as distinct from a mastered professional self'. This is not to undermine the importance of professionalism, in the sense of being well prepared, understanding one's topics and curriculum very deeply, doing a good job even when feeling under the weather, engaging in professional development, and otherwise appropriate behaviour for someone in a position of trust (cf Blacker, 2002). But it is to draw attention to the inadequacy of any professional/amateur dualism or hierarchy. The tutors' commitment and passion are evident in their accounts, indicating a love for the work that they do.

The tutor's presence in the learning group is about awareness of group, individuals and self. It is about being relaxed at the same time as being aware. It draws on the tutor's own sense of empowerment and 'distress-free authority', which facilitates the validation and empowerment of other people. It is in this sense a deeply personal endeavour.

The tutor could also be likened to the therapist, in that she is interpreting what is going on in the group and responding accordingly. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 77) point out, the therapist interprets *into* the encounter, and the researcher interprets *outside* the encounter (usually, also, the therapist is working with an individual, although sometimes with small groups, and sometimes, too, the researcher uses probing questions and tentative interpretations in the research interview or focus group, in order to move the discussion on). Both of these positions offer insight into the position of tutor.

The tutor's subjectivity is central to the facilitation of whole-person learning. The accounts of tutoring reflect as much about *being* a tutor, as they do about *doing* things that make one a tutor. In the concept of *being* is reflected the idea of relations in the present moment in the classroom, and how theory and practice come together on a class-by-class basis in the practice of the tutors. Often faced with uncertainty, the tutors are required to make judgements about how to act, and in doing so to draw on all of their knowledge (personal-professional, theoretical and practical). Frequently, and especially when dealing with emotions of the learners, there is no ready solution or template to hand. They are required to exercise wisdom, which is concerned with 'the manner in which knowledge is held' and 'how that knowledge is put to use' (Meacham, 1990: 187, cited in Goodfellow and Sumsion, 2000: 248). Wisdom has reflective, affective and experiential qualities, as well a moral-ethical dimension and as such, it is a way of feeling, thinking, knowing and being (ibid). It is related to 'the plane of experience Aristotle called *phronesis* (often translated as 'practical wisdom'), a form of understanding better described as a kind of moral perception than by what we usually mean by the term knowledge' (Blacker, 2002: 9).

Emotion in learning

Learning is an emotional event. It is not solely emotional, but emotion is central to learning. Claxton (1999:11) offers a view of the emotional dynamics of learning, asserting that 'learning … is what you do when you don't know what to do' and that it is 'getting better at knowing when, how and what to do when you don't know what to do'. Thus, learning in adulthood involves discomfort and frustration, which necessitates a degree of 'resilience' (ibid: 15) on the part of the learner and a sensitivity to the emotional dynamics of learning on the part of the educator. He views learning as a 'gamble' that poses risks to the learner.

In accepting and embracing the emotional dimensions of earning, we need to be careful to subvert the old dualisms and not to assume that emotions are 'better' than rationality, or that they allow access to some kind of essential self. Emotions are socially and discursively constructed and we need to beware universalism (Ryan, 2001: 66,7). The ways that we experience emotion are cultural – there is no universal experience of emotion that could be called 'normal' or 'natural'. Our study is situated in early 21st century Ireland, but even within this context cultural differences exist in how people experience and express different aspects of emotionality (cf Hargreaves, 2001: 1062). Gender cultures are the most striking example from this study (see next section for a discussion).

Acknowledging that learning has emotional resonances, as well as tapping into emotions via experience, can enhance learning. But emotions can also act as substantial barriers to learning. Fear of tapping into experience or of disclosing experience can lead to anger (Johnson, 1996). Boler (1999: 191) refines the idea of anger into that of defensive anger, and puts it forward as a significant barrier. Defensive anger can be interpreted as a protection of beliefs, a protection of one's precarious sense of identity. It can be seen as a defence of investments in one's dominant sense of identity. This will manifest itself differently in different cultures. We have seen in this research how it manifests itself in a dominant male culture, although this culture is by no means monolithic. We also need to take into account how it can have repercussions in other cultures, especially as Ireland becomes a more multi-cultural society.

The acceptance of emotion as part of the learning process leads the tutor as well as the students into uncharted waters. Indications of agreement and support from students reinforce tutors' sense of purpose and can be a source of postitive and energising emotion for them (cf ibid:1067), helping to sustain their passion for the work. But when student emotions such as anger, fear and mistrust are to the fore, the tutors's purpose, wisdom, judgement, expertise and professionalism are called into question. This can be a source of strong emotions such as self-doubt and anger for the tutor. Likewise, along with the 'honourable' (ibid:1059) emotions that the tutors feel, which include care, trust and affection for one's students, tutors also experience irritation, frustration, guilt and anxiety. These emotions are mediated by discourses of what it is to be a 'good' or 'professional' tutor. Claxton's (1999) concept of resilience is as important for the tutor as for the learner, in that we need the ability to tolerate these emotions. 'Even when learning is going smoothly, there is always the possibility of surprise, confusion, frustration, disappointment or apprehension – as well, of course, as fascination, absorption, exhilaration, awe or relief' (ibid: 15). Such resilience requires the development of significant resources of insight and self-awareness.

Experience, learning, meaning and gender

If experience is seen as the sum of all the different ways in which humans make sense of the world around them (Boud and Miller, 1996: 8), then different cultures and individuals will be differently positioned with regard to experience. It is a way of knowing; Heron (1999: 3) characterises it as a foundation for other forms of knowing, but it does not take the same form in everybody.

It is important too to acknowledge that experience can be constraining or limiting. The sharing of experiences, in itself, is not emancipatory or radical. It can be very comforting for students to find that they have experience in common with others, but this of itself does not lead to a transformed relationship with experience. The process becomes radical if it is facilitated to move on beyond the status quo (Ryan, 2001; Preece, 2001:210). It may be interpreted as radical, transformative or liberating, when it is engaged in for the first time. But it is not a given, that it goes hand in hand with changing the social structures that maintain oppressive social relations. The task for the tutor is to use experience as a base for learning, but at the same time to avoid letting it be used to fix learners in normative identities.

Experience needs to be deconstructed, its internal contradictions, inconsistencies and variations noted and used to move us on from interpreting it repeatedly in the same ways. Following our deconstructions, we need to construct complex and subtle understandings of human experience, as a starting point for challenging and refusing to 'normalise' people into the status quo. This involves learning to understand the ways that people experience and express different aspects of emotionality and identity in their lives. It also involves the understanding that these differences are culture-bound, not context-free (Hargreaves, 2001: 1062).

Gender is a case in point. In order to move beyond the status quo, instead of asking questions about what the 'real' differences between women and men are, or what people are 'really' like, we need to ask questions about how people construct men and women as different, and what effects these discourses of difference have. For instance, if we see men as essentially dominant, aggressive, bounded and defensive, then the dualism inherent in these discourses leads to a position for women that is always passive and vulnerable. This does nothing to advance the cause of equality between women and men. Indeed, Oakley (1998) points out that the continuation of patriarchal structures relies on the existence of clear gender dichotomies and oppositions.

The construction of gender differences is most often accomplished socially and psychologically by repeated assertions about what 'men' and 'women' are 'really' like. Historically, male/middle class psychologists have made these pronouncements. Today, women (and even some schools of feminism) are just as likely to do so. They may say, for example, that women are more caring then men, or that women have less self-esteem, or that women are just as mathematically competent as men. It is also frequently assumed that counselling and related activities are an activity more naturally suited to women than to men. The effects are the same, whoever is making the pronouncements, and whatever the content of those pronouncements (whether they claim that women are inferior, or superior, or that there is no difference between the sexes). There is no room for contradictory experience in these explanations. They

assume that socialisation is the same for all women and all men, and are unable to theorise the cases where socialisation fails, except to describe them as 'exceptions to the rule'. Thus, men's story in the world of counselling is largely untold, except in terms of this discourse of exceptionalism.

It is important to connect being and knowing through a model of education that draws on the everyday experiences of women and men, but it will not challenge the gender status quo if it bases itself on a gender-difference mode. As Weedon (1997: 8) puts it:

> It is not enough to refer unproblematically to experience ... we need a theory of the relationship between experience, social power and resistance. ... Theory must be able to address women's experience by showing where it comes from and how it relates to material social practices and the power relations which structure them.

A pedagogy of uncertainty

Ideas of fluidity, multiple discourses and the defamiliarisation of the familiar do not lead to certainties in the classroom. Each class is an exercise in risk – the tutor can be very well prepared and resourced for taking on the risk of leading learners into uncharted waters, but the outcomes are not assured. However, we believe that transformative learning can be adequately facilitated only by accepting the value of uncertainty.

A lack of ambivalence was traditionally considered the hallmark of a 'good teacher', who provided information, along with structures in which learners could process new information (cf Apps, 1988). But a pedagogy of uncertainty is about learning to embrace knowledge that challenges our identities. It includes seeing what we have been taught not to see, for example, women's aggression and men's emotionality. Such pedagogy enables tutors and learners to explore what it might be like to move out of comfortable and familiar thinking, but without disrespecting or ignoring their prior experiences, which are part of their identity. It is, rather, about becoming aware of the conditions of one's own production, insofar as this is possible. This applies to the tutor as much as it applies to the learner. And as part of this process, tutors have to manage their own not-knowing, along with the group's not-knowing. Moreover, there is no final end point to this, it is an ongoing journey. In this way, a pedagogy of uncertainty can create a critical effect, by encouraging both learner and tutor to interrogate the discourses that influence how they interpret their own experiences. Thus, we can subvert normative discourses, identities and knowledges and go on to create new knowledge regarding transformation, emotion, agency, liberation, resistance, and creativity (cf Henriques et al, 1998: ix).

Uncertainty does not however mean that structures are jettisoned – they can provide stepping stones to the area where learners are comfortable with complexity and ambiguity. They provide familiar ground to keep one foot on, while other identities and meanings are tried out and tested. Thus, structures can be regarded as enabling rather than constraining, as contingent and revisable, rather than fixed. They are always under scrutiny, however. The NUIM course and curriculum provide structures within which learners and tutors can construct knowledge. The structure of the tutor support and in-service groups operate in a similar way for tutors.

Passion

A pedagogy of uncertainty involves a great deal of emotional and intellectual labour. Passion and commitment sustain this demanding work and enable tutors to continue to invest a great deal of themselves in their work. As such, their tutoring activities could be described as part of their life work, and a space that emphasises the interconnectedness of professional and personal identities (Ryan, 2002b). Passion helps them manage the frustrations and difficult emotions they experience and provides the impetus to continue to develop as tutors.

Passion also probably helps the development of relationship with the learners. Hargreaves (1997) suggests that passion resonates with others. This helps to create a climate of trust, where learners can respond with all their senses to the course content and processes.

Power

A pedagogy of uncertainty must involve the scrutiny of power relations. Challenging dualistic thinking and making the familiar strange are opportunities for examining how power operates, as is the scrutiny of the relationships that the learners are embedded in, in the wider social world or the macro-context, outside the classroom.

Equally important are the relationships of power that operate in the classroom. Opposition to schooling is strong in many tutors' accounts, and many learners have indeed had very troubled and troubling relationships with school (see Quinn, 1999). Moreover, schooling tends to be seen in adult education circles as a place where learners are socialized into the status quo. Relationships in schooling are seen as hierarchical, and as overt manifestations of differences in power between learners and teachers. Hargreaves (2001: 1070, citing Lasky, 2000) points out that secondary school teaching is a place where teachers and students are not engaged in relationships but in strings of disconnected interactions. Relationships in secondary schooling (teacher-pupil and teacher-parent) are often clearly or overtly ones of power and powerlessness.

The discourses of experience, group, relationship and emotion that are accepted in the Counselling Skills course, and in adult education in general, are in contrast to the discourses that predominate in schooling, which operates around 'professional' notions of teacher autonomy and distance (Hargreaves, 2001). For many adult learners, the contrast between their positioning in schooling and their positioning as adult learners with valuable life experience is an extremely emotional event. They contrast the egalitarian processes of adult education with the hierarchical ones that they experienced in the school system.

But power plays are always at work, even in the most egalitarian-oriented classrooms. The adult education tutor needs to constantly watch out for and acknowledge the workings of power. Seeing learning in terms of relationship means that tutors need to be about how they are positioned by the students, and indeed how they position themselves. The tutors embody power, by virtue of 'representing' the university and their status as counsellors. Tutors have to negotiate this position, no matter how much they may want to operate as equals with the learners.

Drawing on experience may not be sufficient to overcome power differentials. For example, those who share life experience may be seen as exotic or 'other' and the observer may fail to scrutinise her/his own situation. Introducing new perspectives should not be understood as initiating learners into new knowledge: the aim is to take new perspectives into the 'front line' of classroom practice and to develop them in an engagement with learners. The status of the tutor that comes from her/his association with the university also confers considerable power. Learners whose previous experiences of education were in hierarchical systems may also want to engage in 'pleasing the teacher', or engaging the teacher's attention. The adult education tutor has to negotiate all of these situations with extreme care, and with sensitivity to the power relations involved.

A pedagogy of uncertainty cannot flourish in isolation

A pedagogy of uncertainty invites tutors to adopt an emotional and intellectual stance of openness – the form of such openness clearly requires ongoing negotiation and attention, analysis and reflection. It is not an invitation to take a particular path. It invites scepticism and scrutiny of any orthodoxies. It demands a dynamic engagement with diversity, power and multiple knowledges, in ways that challenge dominant and normative knowledges. This kind of depth work is lonely, as is anything we do deeply, and the tutor is often alone in the decisions taken during the class situation and in her/his reflections on it afterwards. At the same time the work is enhanced by reflection on it in the presence of other tutors, in supportive yet challenging groups.

The need for individual success and feedback has been characterised as part of Western individualised culture (Kitayama and Marcus, 1994, cited in Hargreaves, 2001: 1067). But there is a need for a forum on which to reflect on and develop one's sense of purpose, and in which to develop a sense of being part of a collective of tutors, connected to the university and to course management. There is a need for support and challenge together. People in groups can gain a sense of interconnectedness. That has been seen to be the tutors' understanding of how the learners in their groups experience the course. These processes can be mirrored in tutors' collective reflections on their work, so that a community of practice can emerge.

The university has a role to play here too, in its management of the course and in the provision of opportunities for these communities of practice to operate. University management could see itself in relation to the tutors, as the tutors are in relation to the learners in their classrooms; facilitators of emancipatory learning, which is often transformative in nature. The structures set up to manage the course and to support the tutors need to create a container within which doubt can be explored, uncertainty is valued, dualisms are unpicked, power is scrutinised, and both theory and practice are valued. The management structures need to mirror the fluid yet value-based conditions that transformative learning requires. Any university department that promotes a pedagogy of uncertainty, along with validating a third-level course and maintaining third-level standards, will experience tensions, since an approach like this is very different from traditional university epistemologies.

Being, doing and becoming: choosing to act in the classroom

Who does the tutor take her/himself to be? Questions of identity permeate tutoring as well as learning. The tutor can be the stereotypical nurturing mother or compassionate father, the change agent, the model, the wise one, the director of proceedings, the expert, the counsellor, the information provider, the consultant, the representative of the university, the representative of the counselling profession, and more. Moreover, we also have to ask what discourses are patterning or shaping the ways that they take up the different positions outlined. These positions don't have to be fixed or entrenched, but they are lived out in the classroom relations, each one in its present-moment form, and thus subject to change and variation. Whatever the positions adopted, the tutor who operates within a pedagogy of uncertainty is going to experience contradictions and doubts.

One result of concentrating on uncertainty can be a paralysis of analysis. One could ask how tutors make choices for action, given that the possibilities are endless and so potentially significant. Once again, we draw on the idea of the present moment, as do the tutors in their classroom practice. The construction of knowledge is as much about closure, as it is about fluidity and multiplicity (Ryan, 2001: 136). It is about choosing one possible version, for a time, from among the many possible versions available. So knowledge and action are often formed 'at these points where we place a full stop' (ibid, citing Wetherell, 1995: 136). But we act in the knowledge that each action is contingent and revisable, and not a signifier of universal truths about learning or tutoring. We keep in mind one of the insights about praxis, that is, the necessity of action, even if, sometimes, that actually involves doing nothing for a time. We accept that each choice we make for action closes off other possibilities, and may even be flawed. But we also accept our limitations, and the fact that the perfect tutor does not exist. As tutors, we cannot do everything, nor, indeed should we 'do everything' for the learners with whom we work. We have to accept that our actions may be flawed, but if we do not act, then there is nothing on which to base our theorizing. Similarly, if all we do is theorise, then we never take practical steps to test our theories.

Limitations and sustainability

Working with a concept of limits also reminds us that, just as there is no educational road to social change, neither is there a tutoring path to transformative learning. Learning is a qualitative phenomenon; the tutor may never know what the outcomes for learners are; what we see in the classroom is only a tiny facet of students' learning journeys. Learning takes place everywhere and can occur beyond that which is articulated, observable or conventionally organised. One tutor pointed out to us that the learners she has met would have found what they were looking for because they were ready for it, even if they never came to the course. The tutor should not and cannot do it all. We have to recognise the limits of classroom-based learning, and of any one individual tutor or course to assist change journeys. It is necessary for tutors to recognise these limits and to be open about them to the groups they tutor also.

Sometimes, recognising limits can be comforting. A tutor can say, 'I've done all I can here'. Part of this process can include encouraging learners to join different groups, both for learning and action. Recognising limits is a central concept in theories of sustainability. Passion, as already noted, sustains commitment and high standards. But

alone, that is, without a parallel recognition of limits, it can too easily lead to disillusionment and burnout for both tutors and management.

Concluding remarks

The insights we have written about here are linked and interconnected in multiple ways. Their whole, or *Gestalt*, is much more than the sum of their parts. We have already distinguished wholeness from totality. It is also important to distinguish the sense of wholeness from an imposed coherence or unitariness. Internal contradictions in this report must not be ignored. Indeed, they need to be actively pursued. This study is but one link in the chain of praxis surrounding adult education pedagogy.

Tutors and tutor educators need the means to theorise practice without losing sight of the practical contexts in which such theorising ought to be grounded. There is a need for practitioners to be aware of the discourses they use, and the conditions of their own production. We need to know why we adopt certain positions and refuse others. We need a constant interplay between theory, ideas and the actions that derive from them. Adult education, as a discipline based both in the community and in the university, has to provide opportunities for rigorously disciplined and critical examinations of all kinds of ways of knowing (cf Ryan and Connolly, 2000). If we do not take up this challenge, there is a danger that our methodologies will be co-opted in the service of normative identities and instrumental ends (cf Chappell et al, 2003), and our theorizing ignored.

Individual practitioners have a responsibility to provide new forms of knowledge in the classroom and to facilitate students' engagement with them. The university has a responsibility to work with its tutors in ways that are both intellectual and facilitative, in order to clear the 'roadblocks' that exist as barriers to the take-up of new discourses. These endeavours are not just attempts to initiate people into different kinds of knowledge, but to work in appropriate ways with the groups with whom one wants to *produce* knowledge. The outcomes or types of knowledge are never guaranteed, predictable or controllable.

Facilitating transformative learning exists in the imagination, creativity and responsiveness of tutors, in the responses of learners, in the vision of researchers, in the visions of the department and the university course-providers, as well as in the responses of reader of this report. Most importantly, we hope that readers who hope to glean something for their own praxis will use our insights in creative and imaginative ways.

This study indicates that transformative learning involves the construction of different kinds of relationships between concepts that have been traditionally set up as mutually exclusive. Reconfiguring these very often means reconfiguring our interpretations of our own experiences. This process demands that we examine how dualistic thought traps us in ways of knowing that do not challenge the status quo, and therefore are not adequate if we are committed to increased human well being.

This kind of work involves both deconstruction and construction, for both learner and tutor. If we want to be involved in transformative learning, we have to develop a capacity to constantly work with growing edges, and not just in an intellectual

manner, but in a practical one, so that we are always extending the boundaries of what we know about human nature and the learning subject.

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Appendix One

Centre[4] for Adult and Community Education
Foundation in Counselling Skills Research Project
Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It should take you 60-90 minutes. Most of the questions are open-ended, so if you need more space than we have given for your answer, use a separate sheet, giving the question number. If you would like an electronic version of the questionnaire, please contact Mary Corbally, at Mary.E.Corbally@may.ie*.*

<u>Section One</u>
<u>Some information about you</u>
1.1 Sex   female [   ]   male [   ]

1.2 Please select your age bracket   25-35 [   ]   35-45[   ]   45-55[   ]
                55-65 [   ]   65+ [   ]

1.3 Number of years as a course tutor _____   from _____to_____

1.4 Location/s where you worked
<u>Name of centre</u>
_____   From _____to_____
_____   From _____to_____
_____   From _____to_____
_____   From _____to_____
_____   From _____to_____

1.5 Your professional qualifications /affiliations _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Section Two
Your background in adult education
2.1 How did you come to be a tutor on the course? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.2 Prior to your involvement with the course, what was your experience in adult education, either as a participant or as a tutor/facilitator?

---

[4] The Department for Adult and Communication was known as The Centre for Adult and Community Education, when the questionnaire was issued.

a) As a participant: _____

_____

b) As a tutor/facilitator: _____

_____

_____

2.3 How did any previous experiences influence how you worked with your groups on the course? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section Three
Your theoretical orientation
3.1 How would you describe your theoretical orientation? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.2 How did your theoretical orientation influence your work on the course? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.3 How would you describe the part played by the course and your work on it, in your own professional development? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.4 How did you maintain the boundaries between education and therapy, during your work with the course's learning groups? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section Four: Books, materials, group activities, and other resources
We wish to draw together samples of books, materials and other resources consistently used by the tutors. We hope to use the information you provide here as the basis for a more comprehensive compilation.

4.1. Details of up to three books or other texts that you have consistently used. The name alone is fine, but if you have details of author, publisher and date of publication, that would also be useful.

Name of book or text	Author	Publisher	Date	Any remarks

4.2 Information on up to three structured group activities that you use/d consistently.

Brief description of activity	Possible reason/s for using it	Timing	Source
Survivors in a boat	*To explore prejudice*	*Around middle of course*	*Heard about it from another tutor*

4.3 If you use/d other resources, please give some information about them also.

Name of resource	Type	Reason for using it	Timing	Source
Gloria Tapes	*video*	*To provide an example of skills*	*Towards middle of course*	*Maynooth*

Section Five
Supports available to you in your role as a tutor
5.1 What supports did you find necessary in your role as a tutor? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5.2 Where did you find these supports? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.3 How did you experience your relationship with Maynooth? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.4 How did Maynooth support you (or not)? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.5 How would you describe your relationship with other course tutors? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.6 If you discontinued as a tutor, why did you decide to do so? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5.7 If you stayed, what motivated you? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

Section 6
The wider context: participants, Irish counselling and Irish society

6.1 What changes did you notice in the participant profile over your years as a tutor?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6.2 What other changes would you like to comment on?_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

6.3 What do think you were the reasons for the changes you have described? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6.4 What connections do you see between the changes in the course and changes in
Irish culture and economy? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6.5 What do you see as the achievements of the course over the years? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6.6 What do you see as the limitations of the course? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6.7 What spin-offs have you noticed from the course over the years, in the locations
where you taught? _____

_____
_____
_____

6.8 How do you see the relationship between the course and the development of Irish counselling in general? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

A final question

Are there issues relating to the course that we haven't covered in this questionnaire? If yes, please write a bit about them here. Continue overleaf or on a separate sheet if need be. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

The second phase of the research will consist of group interviews. We will facilitate interviewees as much as possible with regard to location of the interviews, and participants will be reimbursed for the interview time. If you would like to participate in one of these interviews, please write your contact details below.

Name: _____
Address for communication about the interview_____

_____

Email: _____
Telephone: _____

Please return this questionnaire by Friday, July 5, 2002, to:
Counselling Research Project,
C/o Mary Corbally
Centre for Adult and Community Education,
NUI Maynooth,
Maynooth,
Co. Kildare   A pre-paid envelope is provided.

Appendix Two

Focus group for tutors, sample guiding questions

Welcome and thanks for attending.

In the focus groups, we want to capture some of the knowledge built up by the tutors over the years.

We are hoping to explore questions similar to the following, in the focus group:

1. How did it matter/make a difference that the course was situated in a centre for adult and community education?
2. Did the centre for adult and community education bring any particular flavour to the course, as distinct from any other organisations you have worked for?
3. How do you define and /or identify change and development in your students? What did / do you consider evidence of those things?
4. What kind of relationships developed – between students, between tutors, between Maynooth and the tutor group? Other relationships?
5. When the work in the group became therapy, how did you know? What did you do?
6. Wht was it like to have more gender-mixed groups, as time went on?
7. How did the flexibility offered by Maynooth translate into practice – when/how/why did you depart from the 'official' curriculum?
8. How did you make the course challenging, without alienating the students from you and the course?
9. What kind of personal aims did you have for the course?
10. How did you create an effective learning space in the group?

You will also have the opportunity to introduce related questions of your own.