

Mapping Professionalism: A Tale of Two Journeys

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Abstract

The focus of this research study is occupational therapy students' perceptions of employability and professionalism. Using some key principles of grounded theory, data was collected through the Ideal ***Inventory (Norton 2001), through a focus group and through seven individual interviews with final year students on a part time BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy degree programme.

The thesis maps two journeys, that of the researcher from novice to more experienced and that of the student occupational therapist from recruitment to graduation examining the trajectory of development for both.

The thesis focuses on some pertinent methodological issues around researcher distance and creativity in the study; the term used for this is contamination. The work of Charmaz (2006) on constructivist grounded theory and Clarke (2005) on situational mapping in grounded theory have been used to provide reference points in my research to support the researcher's engagement with data. It is suggested that the research is situated in the borderlands of modernist and postmodern ideas. There is a critique which focuses on theory, its value and purpose in the study and in grounded theory more generally. Analytical tools and the way in which these support understanding of the data are also debated. Relational Situational Maps (Clarke 2005) were used to engage and display data, to show assumptions about relationships between data and to highlight sites of contamination. Mapping the data in this way has assisted in the researcher to see the data differently and to engage with it more interestingly. Consideration is given to the interpretation of meaning in the data analysis, including the labelling of categories and sub-categories and the consequences of this for dissemination.

A greater understanding of professionalism for occupational therapy students has been gained by undertaking the study and the importance of role models, authenticity, a prospective professional identity, personal values and the alignment of these to professional ones are discussed. Individual conceptualisations of professionalism alongside external professional regulation are also considered. Recommendations for curriculum development as a result of this study have also been identified.

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the context of this study both from a personal perspective and a national one, to enable the reader to better understand my rationale for undertaking it and the research decisions I have made. I will discuss occupational therapy and introduce grounded theory. I shall summarise my Phase A studies to show how that learning shaped this thesis and provide an overview of each chapter to guide the reader.

The Context of Health and Social Care

I work in a higher education institution in the North of England teaching on an undergraduate Bachelor of Science Honours degree in occupational therapy. The programme has a three year full time route and a four and a half year part time route. The exit award a BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy also provides graduates with the eligibility to register with the Health and Care Professions Council and use the title occupational therapist. Whilst working at the university I have had many different roles and responsibilities relating to enhancing student experience such as admissions tutor, year manager and programme leader. It is the latter role, alongside a broader role as Personal Development Planning co-ordinator across a range of disciplines, which developed my understanding of the importance of employability and professionalism the focus of this thesis.

The Modernisation of the NHS (The NHS Modern Dependable 1997) led to fewer entry level posts being available and a wider view of where occupational therapists may gain employment has been promoted as part of the programme at the University where I am based. With these tensions with professionalism and the lack of a uniform identity for occupational therapists, alongside economic changes and a strategic objective of enhancing graduates employability skills across the organisation, I began to consider how employable the graduates of the programme felt, how did they define professionalism and whether they had a professional identity? I wanted to evaluate the programme and the student experience to better support graduates manage these tensions and embrace the opportunities this flexibility of identity could bring.

Firstly I shall define occupational therapy and introduce debate around the profession's identity and its professionalisation.

Occupational Therapy

“Occupational therapy is the assessment and treatment of physical and psychiatric conditions using specific, purposeful activity to prevent disability and promote independent function in all aspects of daily life” (www.nhscareers.nhs.uk accessed 20 August 2012).

When discussing occupational therapy in this thesis I am considering therapists who work in the United Kingdom, I have chosen not to take a wider, international perspective and to focus on the context and debates that relate to professionalism and employability for occupational therapists working in the UK as this is where a large percentage of graduates from the programme will work. Occupational therapists in the UK work in the National Health Service (NHS), in hospitals and community rehabilitation, in schools, prisons and third sector organisations, as well as in private practice. They work with a wide range of clients from children to older adults. Occupational therapists often form part of a multidisciplinary team of health professionals consisting of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech and language therapists and social workers. Historically those termed as allied health professionals were deemed ‘supplementary’ to medicine and therefore in the medical model hierarchy may have been considered to have less status than other members of the team, such as doctors or psychologists. Over time the profession has attempted to build a stronger reputation in its own right so as not to be considered as supplementary or subordinate to medicine, but an essential part of an individual’s care / treatment and essential to the overall service delivery. The move from being state regulated by the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine (CPSM) to statutory regulation (that is set up by ‘statue’ or legislation) by the Health Professions Council in 2003 (The Health and Care Professions Council (HPCP) from August 2012) has in some way helped with this shift. This is not indicated solely by a change in the name of the regulatory body, although the removal of the word ‘supplementary’ is a positive step, but is also demonstrated by the required adherence of registrants to explicit standards (the standards of proficiency, conduct and ethics) published by the HPCP and by the audit of continuing professional development each professional group who is regulated has to participate in every four years. The message of accountability and responsibility is reinforced by this explicit regulation and monitoring.

In addition the professional body, The College of Occupational Therapy has developed strategically to increase the profession’s profile by marketing occupational therapy, using the British Journal of Occupational Therapy to showcase research and demonstrate impact

in relation to occupational therapy interventions. The change in this journal, now peer reviewed, accepting more international papers and less opinion pieces and attempting to achieve an impact factor reflects the continuing push by the profession to justify and develop its position as a profession. International occupational therapy professional bodies now have presence in social networks and the increasing use of technology has led to further promotion opportunities.

From my reading I propose that the 'Professionalisation' of the profession has therefore been influenced by changes external to the profession, in the social and economic climate that underpins health and social care delivery. Internal developments within the profession have also impacted. There remains a tension however in responding to change and working across a wide range of health and social care services. The identity and remit of the profession is fluid and hard to define, this is often influenced by medically dictated and organisationally led ideas, the nebulous concept of occupational therapy leads to intersubjective understandings and misunderstandings which, can negatively impact on the profession (Clouston and Whitcombe 2008).

The Dearing Report (1997) made recommendations for the development of strategies in Higher Education, which included providing opportunities for students to develop their intellectual capabilities and to equip them with skills for employment (Dearing, 1997). I developed initial ideas which focused on understanding how graduates defined employability and enrolled on a Doctorate of Education in order to research these ideas further.

Shaping the Thesis – an Overview of Phase A

I need to acknowledge that my Doctorate in Education is divided into two phases, Phase A a taught component with five assignments and Phase B the thesis. In Phase A I was assessed by five assignments, (submitted for reference) which are where this journey begins. I can track back in my assignments the seeds of understanding of my conceptualisation of professionalism, my thinking around intervening as a professional and the development of my ability to engage with ideas from literature in a more confident and critical way.

In assignment one I considered the implementation of a Problem-based learning pedagogy on the identity and professionalism of occupational therapy lecturers. I was able to use literature to support an academic critique of professionalism which complimented my

practice based experiences. It was in this assignment that I began to engage with the debates around professionalism and began to explore how problematic this concept could be. I also considered how cultural and symbolic capital could impact on status and identity and reflected on power relationships between students and the 'expert' educator.

Assignment two offered a critique of positivism and constructionism to contextualise a discussion around research and evidence-based practice in occupational therapy. The generation of evidence and, in particular, action research were considered in relation to professional development and the development of the profession. I proposed that the paradigm debate continued to be useful in intellectual terms but the profession of occupational therapy needed to develop its research activity whilst continuing to engage in this debate. Diversity and complexity in practice need to be reflected utilising varied paradigmatic and methodological stances, in order to develop the profession. Similar themes are present in this thesis through the discussions regarding professionalization and I hope that through my creative use of methods and data analysis tools in this research study I will go some way to reflect diversity and complexity, this was part of the rationale for employing situational and relational mapping techniques.

Assignments three and four were combined into one assignment which, focused on carrying out and writing up an evaluation of the implementation of Personal Development Planning across one school in the higher education institution. Discussions focused on what counts as data, the value of it, the way in which it was generated, processed and reported. Data generation is reliant on my skills as a researcher in devising a tool, a semi structured interview and as interviewer in eliciting data using the tool. Uncertainty in professional intervention and my responsibility and discomfort in relation to the data is evident in this assignment. It is here the seeds that researcher distance and objectivity are problematic for me, are sown. Buchanan (2003:8) discusses that a researcher is faced with a choice of "being either the arbiter of accuracy or accepting the role of exposing tensions and contradictions".

In this thesis I illustrate my personal journey from arbiter to accepting and embracing contamination and liberation by the creativity and confidence that completing this study has fostered.

Assignment five is a research proposal which marks the beginnings of this project. Reviewing that now affirms the mechanistic and rigid adherence to grounded theory

methods I was attempting at the beginning and my writing lacked confidence in terms of research and methodology. I can see how all five assignments have influenced this thesis and it is therefore wholly appropriate to append them.

Summarising the Thesis

I have considered this project a journey and have used situational and relational maps (Clarke 2005) as part of my data analysis, the theme of mapping and orientating myself, research ideas and data runs throughout the chapters.

In this introduction, I aim to contextualise the study, setting the scene in terms of higher education and employability. This frames the research focus and research questions are shared. Notions of professionalism are introduced and this discussion is contextualised in relation to occupational therapy.

In Chapter 2 I introduce the methodology of grounded theory, the principles of which I used in my research and provide an overview of ethical considerations.

In Chapter 3 ‘Embracing Contamination’ I summarise some of the key issues with regard to my existing knowledge and ideas and the relationship of the researcher to the data. The term I adopt to illustrate the influence of the researcher on the research process is ‘contamination’, this undoubtedly has negative connotations and I provide a rationale that as a novice researcher, initially I felt this distance necessary and tried to manage and contain my influence. I had perhaps myself been corrupted by received ideas from grounded theory literature and my lack of experience led me initially to take these as ‘truth’ or rules which must be adhered to. My capacity for reasoning and personal decision making was inhibited by a lack of confidence in a new situation, but this changed over time and I was able to understand the value, or not, of the tools and guidance. My critique of grounded theory focuses on issues of induction, distance, emergence of theory and the definition of theory, this continued into Chapter 4 ‘(De) Sensitization and Notions of Theory’.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the notion of theory, exploring definitions and its use in relation to practice and the ‘theory’ in grounded theory. Eventually I realise it is not useful or purposeful to continue to grapple with the definition in general terms and decide to direct my critique in relation to the value and purpose of knowledge / theory, in whatever way it

is packaged, and how it will serve to better inform me as a researcher and practitioner. As part of my critique of grounded theory and of theory as a concept, I produce a sound rationale for my continued use of the principles of grounded theory for my research project. The outcome of my research will be situated, temporal claims based on co-constructed examples and there is no discovery of substantive or formal theory.

In Chapter 5 ‘Collecting Data and Managing Contamination’ I consider how my critique of grounded theory, struggles with contamination and my questioning the value of usefulness of theory influences my data collection methods and the enactment of the methodology. I discuss the use of a pilot, focus group and interviews providing a rationale for my research decisions. I begin to consider the coding and analysis of data which led me to use Situational and Relational Maps (Clarke 2005).

Chapter 6 ‘Life in the Borderlands’ considers my positioning as a researcher and my engagement with modern and post modern debates. It focuses on data analysis, mapping contamination and embracing it. I illustrate the coding and analysis process to navigate the reader through the more creative aspects of the study and again to attempt to make more overt my research decisions. Articulating how the maps helped me read the transcripts differently by helping me see and explore the data. I produce a rationale for my choice of tools and consider the value of the methods I used to gather data. I consider how meaning is tied into the map and how the reading of the map produces differing perspectives on the data. Depicting my journey as map-maker and discussing the liberation that embracing contamination produces.

Chapter 7 ‘From Text to Map to Text: The Interrelationships of Data Representation’ introduces pertinent literature in relation to the study, appraises this and compares it to the data from my study. The literature is used as an additional data set as part of the comparative principles of grounded theory. I further reflect on my role as a researcher and on my development. Themes are explored using narrative excerpts and similarities between literature and the views and perceptions of the participants are explored. Areas for curriculum development are briefly considered.

A conclusion pulls together the strands of the thesis and summarizes key messages and outlines the original contribution of this thesis.

This introductory chapter has provided context to the study from my perspective as a researcher and a national context in terms of employability and professionalism. Consideration has been given to my development trajectory prior to commencing the thesis by outlining learning in phase A of my Doctorate. A chapter overview has been provided to guide the reader. In the next chapter I will introduce the methodology used and address ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 - Introducing Grounded Theory

In this chapter I aim to introduce my methodology, grounded theory and methods for data collection and give an overview of the ethical principles I have followed in completing the research and writing up this thesis.

Methodology

I had chosen to use the principles of grounded theory to inform the methodological process. Initially using it in a classical way; I was at the early stages in my research journey with only small scale research experience from Masters study and Phase A of my Doctorate in Education and felt this method offered clear procedural guidance. In the initial stages, I felt I needed a framework for clarity and direction and I decided grounded theory offered this. As I progressed and critiqued the methodology further however, the clarity dissipated, to the point of me questioning whether I should proceed using grounded theory principles at all and whether other methodologies should be considered. The journey of my development alongside this critique is documented throughout this thesis; Chapter 5 'Collecting Data and Managing Contamination' and Chapter 6 'Life in the Borderlands' discuss the ways in which I eventually reconciled issues and utilised grounded theory principles in data collection and analysis.

I do not feel that I had chosen grounded theory because of ontological or epistemological views per se, as I concur with the view of Charmaz (2006) that you can use grounded theory processes and principles without subscribing to a particular world view or theory of knowledge. Charmaz (2006:178) states that "researchers construct their respective products from the fabric of interactions, both witnessed and lived". She advocates a constructivist approach to grounded theory where the process is open ended and fluid, where the analysis shapes the conceptual content and direction, abstractions occur through comparative analysis and that the direction of the analysis is influenced by the researcher's interpretations. Grounded theory from this viewpoint values my engagement and acknowledges my 'footprint' on the process and outcomes.

In my original research proposal undergraduate occupational therapy students were given the opportunity to offer their own perspectives and understanding of employability and I hoped to gain some understanding into how these characteristics or skills were identified or developed. The contribution, or not of the programme and the teaching and learning opportunities provided were also be considered. My original research title was 'Student's

Perceptions of Employability’ but as the research progressed I amended this to include ‘and notions of professionalism’, this was because in the focus groups and interviews participants talked in an integrated way about employability, competence, confidence and professionalism. When asked general questions about employability in initial interviews participants all discussed professionalism, therefore, using grounded theory principles subsequent interviews included direct questions about professionalism. It therefore felt appropriate to include professionalism in the title of the research. Initially the research questions were broad, they were developed from a pilot where the Ideal *** Inventory (Norton 2001) was used as a method of collecting student views. I had seen this tool used in the context of personal development planning and liked the idea that users could define their own characteristics on a particular topic. I thought this could be a useful method for managing my influence on the data collection process as it enabled user generated taxonomies on a particular area of focus. Going into a focus group after the pilot I realised the limitations of the inventory, I had a narrow list of characteristics which related to employability, using these as prompts restricted discussions and only gave a superficial and limited view. I abandoned this list in the focus group in order to better and more broadly understand the student’s perceptions. The thesis will document the data collection process and the research decisions taken and more detail is provided in the subsequent chapters. At the point of beginning the focus group my broad research questions were:-

- Do students feel prepared to go out into the workplace at graduation?
- What have been the formative experiences that contribute to or detract from a sense of preparedness?

I followed up the focus group with individual interviews, using principles of theoretical sampling to select interviewees, where an interviewee is chosen based on what you think they can offer in terms of data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In depth semi structured interviews were carried out with 7 individuals. I utilised grounded theory as a methodology. The structure of this methodology appealed, the opportunities to look at gaps and reoccurring topics from interviews in more depth looked to be a useful strategy to employ in gaining student perceptions. Interview questions evolved following analysis of each interview transcript, examples included:-

- Do you have a professional identify? How has this formed?

- Is there a relationship between your feelings of preparedness and professional identity?
- What does professionalism look like / feel like?
- Is occupational therapy a vocation?
- Did personal values and beliefs guide your career choice and how do these fit with notions of professionalism?

My research was concerned with trying to gain knowledge in an area where there was little knowledge. It is said that an area with little research undertaken is suitable for a grounded theory study, there was little established thought or concepts in relation to occupational therapy and employability, which could influence the study. I felt this type of research would allow me to fully explore the research problem. It also would enable me to explore values and beliefs and to build a picture of a participant's sense of professionalism and how they felt that evolved and their conceptualisation of employability. I soon began to realise that my research was not simply about employability but about feelings of competence, professionalism and the formation of a professional identity and their "shedding of the student skin" (Interview 7); I was attempting to understand student's feelings, levels of confidence and how their professional identity formed and the contributing factors to this. Grounded theory supported me in this process, analysis of each interview transcript prior to the next interview allowed me to delve into particular areas to gain more detail from the next participant, to pursue emerging or initial themes. The interviewee was able to direct the interview as it was semi structured; I was able to clarify and better understand their views and then explore contrasting experiences and perceptions in subsequent interviews to gather a more holistic understanding of the topic.

I used relational maps as developed by Adele Clarke (2005) to help with data analysis and a rationale for their use and my research decisions are documented in Chapter 6 'Life in the Borderlands'. However I would like to use a map here to begin to illustrate how grounded theory helped me to develop categories and sub-categories. From the initial interview with participant 2 the following statement was made:-

“I think we all have a common goal and that is to enable people, to make a difference, it is down to a vocation itself, it’s the path that you choose”

(Interview 2)

Through analysis of this statement from the transcript and similar statements in the interview I developed an initial category ‘Values’ and then recorded in my field notes to focus on questions about values in subsequent interviews. The constant comparative method of grounded theory and theoretical sampling meant that I could select participants who talked about having a vocation in the focus group, I felt individuals who did feel it was a vocation may be best suited to discussing how values influenced their career choice.

I asked in interview 3 “So is it anything to do with your own values or philosophy, the things that you think are important in life?” in relation to choosing occupational therapy as a profession.

“I just think that treating people with respect, with that philosophy it doesn’t matter about what you’ve got..... I think it is just because I want to make a difference” (Interview 3)

I recorded the following in my field notes produced during analysis of participant 3’s transcript

- **Personal values align with professional values – making a difference, treating people with respect.**

I felt that this participant was discussing personal values and attitudes about individuals that are fundamental to occupational therapy philosophy, where individuals should be treated with empathy, respect and unconditional regard. I then placed these keywords and phrases on to the relational map for the category ‘Values’ and I tried to show the interconnectedness of personal and professional values by drawing the circles of the map as interlinked (see map Figure 1). Vocation is also on the map as a sub-category of values, showing my assumptions and the link I made from that term to the category values. The connotations of the word, that it is a calling, something a person feels is a worthy occupation aligns I felt with values. The worthiness or not of a particular career must be judged by an individual against their values. Some participants did not use the term vocation but felt they were ‘predisposed’ to the profession. All terms used by participants that I felt linked to the category ‘Values’ were placed on the map to try to reveal and share

as much of the data set as I could in an accessible way. This I felt helped me to understand the categories better and the relationships between categories and sub-categories. It also helped me to share the data with a reader in a way that I felt was accessible. I would also be sharing data in narrative form, using direct quotes and using literature as additional data, however I felt these maps were fundamental to my understanding of the categories. The grounded theory process of interview, analysis, category development and question development for future interview in a cyclical way enabled me to both develop categories and sub-categories to populate the maps and to create new categories and sub-categories as appropriate.

The Genre of Representation

My methodology and methods were chosen because of my desire to capture the views and voices of the participants. Being people rather than research objects I wanted to ensure that the study was humanized, fertile and genuine. Initially I was attempting to write a realist tale (Van Maanen 1998) and absent myself. The nature of realist tales is that the author, the 'I', is not always present. The 'I' may appear in an autobiographical sense at some point while the author explains methodology and methods to increase the credibility of the study. The author's credentials, experience and interests may be declared to convince the reader of their authority (Sparkes 2002). Using grounded theory and adhering to classical, modernist notions, ideas of researcher distance resonated and I looked at absencing myself to create researcher distance. This was not an overt strategy for authority or credibility but more a strategy for attempting to manage my preconceived ideas and experience from the data collection and analysis process in line with the original tenets of the methodology chosen.

Often in realist tales the quotes and narratives of participants are the focus of much of the writing. Indeed in this thesis I use narrative excerpts to enhance my mapping, a data analysis tool and to maintain a link to participant's voices. My interpretations and reconstructions of the data sets (the data collected and the literature), are intertwined and compared in the text to serve as examples through which I can convince or persuade a reader of the credibility of the study and the ethical integrity of myself as a researcher.

My struggles with researcher role, distance and contamination permeate the text; I tell a tale of becoming a researcher. The confessional nature of aspects of this thesis disrupt the realist tale and foreground my voice as author / researcher. I believe that my attempts to be

open and convince the reader to trust the research decisions made, have blurred the boundaries of a realist tale. I discuss later in chapter 6, my struggles in the borderlands, between modernist ideas of truth and grand narratives to postmodern ideas of fluidity, change, localised narratives and anti-foundationalism. It is in these borderlands that the genre of representation is disrupted and where struggles and confessions are played out and explored.

The narratives are deconstructed and reconstructed to serve as examples and are therefore in no way sequential or reflective of the actual sequence of the interviews. I felt my role in this deconstructive / reconstructive process had to be accounted for and declared throughout the thesis and I believe this increases credibility, authenticity and ethical rigour. This approach is intentional, a way of managing contamination and managing ideas of discovery and theory. I propose that my textual strategy of declaring my presence in the research through reflection (Smyth and Shacklock 1998) and through the use of examples that serve to represent views of participants enabled me to narrate the voices of participants that would otherwise have become too stifled by the confessional nature of the thesis.

My understanding of the student's experiences on the occupational therapy programme is framed by my own experiences and beliefs about education. My personal philosophy, knowledge and experience filter my view of reality like a pair of glasses through which I see and understand things in a way that is unique to me. My understandings and perceptions are fluid and are influenced by my actions and interactions. This forms my theoretical sensitivity and supports me in the gathering and analysis of data. It is this theoretical sensitivity that created this interconnectedness between personal and professional values on Figure 1, my experience and understanding of occupational therapy philosophy lead me to make those connections. The idea that I could be creative in this way with the data, that I had a role in seeing, selecting and interpreting data based on my own experiences and that I could use those experiences to make sense of the data and their relationships is one of the reasons I continued with grounded theory despite my grapplings with it. The tensions I felt around the role of the researcher, of literature, of 'theory' and of discovery are documented in the subsequent chapters so I will not go into detail here.

My knowledge and understanding was further shaped and developed by the interactions I had with participants and with the data and literature in this research. The initial focus of the study was employability; my preconceived ideas and initial data collection led me to

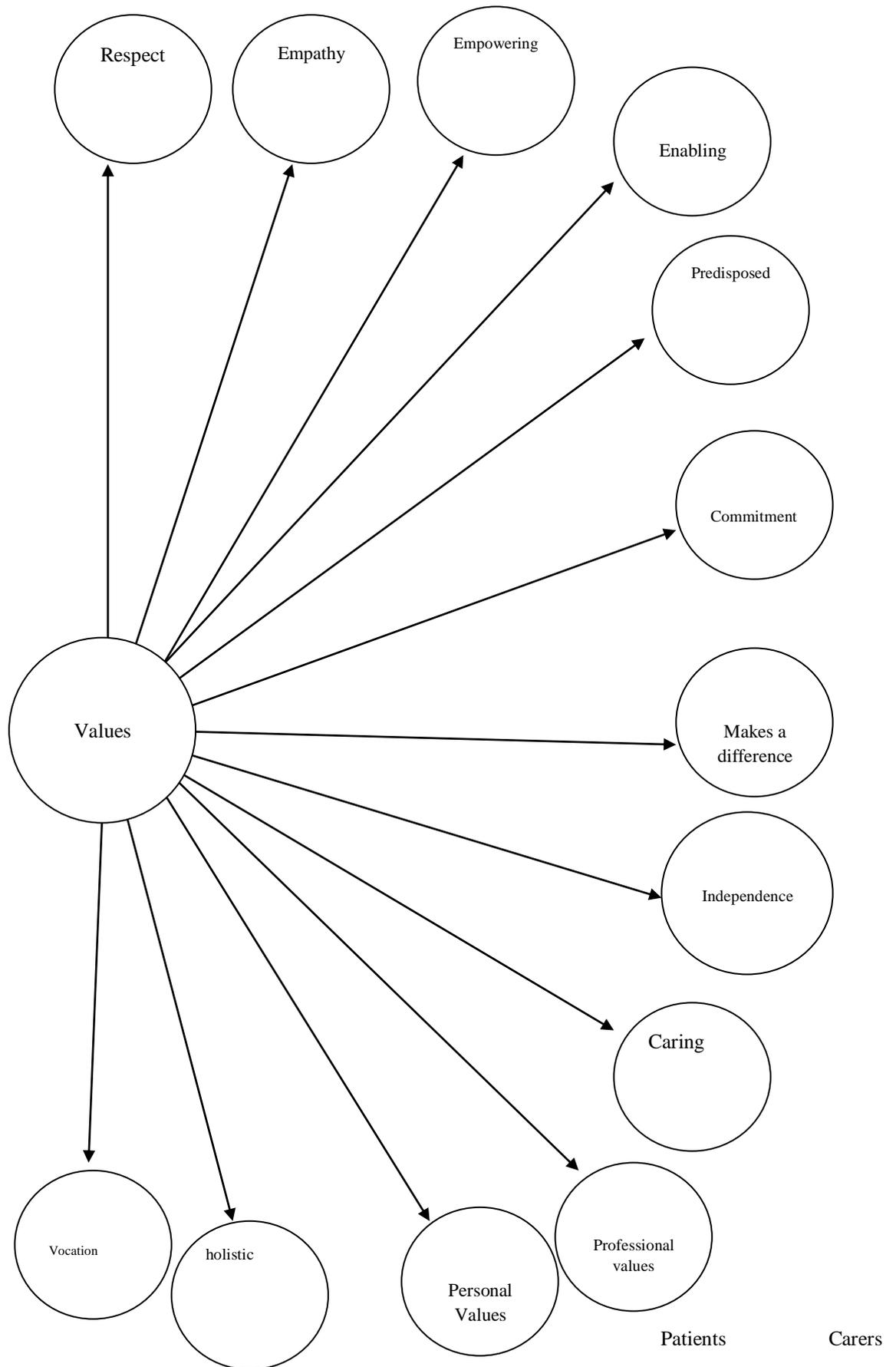
believe that that was about gaining or having a particular set of skills that made students feel employable. After engaging in the focus group and in interviews my understanding of employability, in an occupational therapy context has evolved and shifted. My interactions, carrying out interviews and actions, analysing the data and formulating new questions based on emergent themes, has given me a much broader and richer view, which is far more about professional identity and confidence than it is about specific skill attainment.

Ethics

Approval was gained for the study via the Head of School and via my line manager at the higher education institution where I work. Ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee at the Higher Education establishment was deemed as unnecessary given that the work was evaluative, related to curriculum development and that research supervision was being provided as part of the Doctor of Education programme. The research was designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency. I provided all participants at each stage of the data collection, with information regarding the purpose and scope of the study. Each participant completed a consent form indicating they agreed to participate in the study (Information Sheet and Consent Form Appendix 2).

Burns (2000) states that informed consent is the most fundamental ethical principle when conducting research. There were no perceived risks to the participants or the researcher in relation to the study but I was mindful to continually assess risk and to minimise any potential risk. The pilot and focus group were held on site at lunch time at the higher education establishment. The interviews were arranged at mutually convenient times and locations to suit participants, whilst being mindful of risk in relation to isolation / lone working. Participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained at all times and anonymity would be maintained in the transcription of data, storage of the data, the writing of the thesis and in any potential publications. Each participant is referred to only by interview number i.e. interview 1 / 2 etc. There was conflict of interest in that the participants were on a programme on which, I taught and therefore there may be some power dynamics and concerns regarding positive or negative consequences of participation. Governed by professional codes of conduct by the College of Occupational Therapists (2010) and the Health and Care Professions Council (2008) I continually reflected on my own professional behaviour and reassured participants they were free to withdraw at anytime without consequence. Equally participation would have no positive consequences that might advantage them over other students on the programme.

Figure 1 Values Map: Relational Analysis using Situational Map (Clarke 2005) – Interviews



This chapter has provided a brief overview of methodology, methods and some of the issues I engaged with in the research process. An overview of ethical considerations has also been provided. The following chapter will focus on providing further detail on grounded theory whilst critiquing aspects of it.

Chapter 3 - Embracing Contamination

In this chapter I will briefly outline the origins of grounded theory whilst critiquing some key issues in grounded theory methodology that are problematic in relation to my study. These issues relate to a delayed, post collection literature review and researcher distance. The idea that my knowledge and experience may ‘contaminate’ the research process will be explored.

The Origins of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was developed from symbolic interactionism (whose demise resulted from statistical methods and structural functionalism on one hand and ethnomethodology on the other) and positivism (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000) in the 1960’s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. They published ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory’ in 1967. Grounded theory originally represented a resolution of different epistemological positions and a solution to a broader problem about perceptions of the status of qualitative based knowledge in social sciences (Thomas and James 2006). The defining components of grounded theory were simultaneous involvement in collection and analysis of data, construction of codes from data not preconceived hypotheses, utilising constant comparative methods and linking theory development at each stage. Memo writing to explore concepts, understand their properties and the relationships between them is also advocated (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Sampling is driven by theory rather than attempting to be representative of a population and a literature review is conducted after the analysis of data (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978). The aim of a grounded theory study was to produce abstract theoretical frameworks rather than simply offering description. Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) approach played a significant role in developing the credibility of qualitative research at that time (Charmaz 2006).

I originally chose grounded theory as a methodology as it offered structured methods and had been considered to be the most widely used interpretive framework (Denzin 1992). The structure and literature around grounded theory I felt gave me a good theoretical basis on which to begin my study. It also allowed a range of data to be considered, this flexibility in terms of data also appealed as I considered focus groups, interviews, literature review and observations as possible ways of collecting data for my study. Grounded theory was proposed as the “paradigm of choice” in health and educational research when qualitative methods are used (Miller and Fredricks

1999:538). It is an interpretive framework from which, Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed theory emerges.

Grounded theory studies can be particularly helpful when current theories about a phenomenon are nonexistent or inadequate (Creswell 2002). I had completed a literature review as part of my research proposal and had work roles that meant I was immersed in legislation and literature relating to professional requirements and employability. I therefore knew there was little specific literature or research around employability in occupational therapy. The paucity of literature in relation to employability and occupational therapy graduates, the structured methods of grounded theory and its significant use in health and education, offered me reassurance as a novice researcher and so my project proposal was completed incorporating the use of grounded theory.

However I worried initially that I had already 'broken the rules' with regards to grounded theory studies as I had reviewed some literature as a requirement of my proposal. At this stage my understanding was superficial and my confidence was low, I glorified the key authors of the texts around the methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978, Corbin and Strauss 2008) and attempted to follow their guidance rigidly. On reflection this was driven by a wish to do the best I could and the canonising of grounded theory did not last long into the study.

Since their initial co-authoring of 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory' (1967), Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss have moved in different directions with the methodology. Glaser remained consistent with the method as defined in the original text. Strauss developed the method towards verification and co-wrote with Juliette Corbin (Corbin and Strauss 1990, Strauss and Corbin 1998) introducing new technical procedures which form part of the constant comparative process. Other authors such as Bryant (2002), Charmaz (2000, 2002, 2006) and Clarke (2003, 2005) have further developed the methodology, moving away from the more positivist connections that Glaser and Strauss and Corbin's versions foster. The changes to grounded theory and the differences in the perspectives that these authors offer can be confusing for an inexperienced author. I did not at this stage feel able to take my own position amongst these views, however later and with more confidence I was able to use the literature as resources and move towards making my own research decisions, the work of Kathy

Charmaz and Adele Clarke are significant in this thesis and supported my engagement with modernist and postmodern debates which I will explore in later chapters.

The Use of Literature

The time to complete a literature review varies depending on the type of research undertaken. In more traditional approaches to research a literature review will be completed as part of a proposal and then later, in the early stages of the research, a more comprehensive review is undertaken to consider the research field (Punch, 2005) developing a dialogue between the researcher and their reading (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The purpose is to critically consider what research has gone before, to set the context for the study being developed making links to other research if appropriate, it allows the researcher to demonstrate their understanding of the key issues and ensures they are not simply replicating previous work.

In grounded theory however, the literature review happens alongside analysis, literature is used as data; it is proposed that literature influences the researcher when working with the data, so a review is therefore delayed until the “conceptual directions within the data have become clear” (Punch 2005:159).

Glaser (1978) considers that a comprehensive pre-study review ‘derails’ a grounded theory study. He proposes the first step towards theoretical sensitivity (a term that will be discussed later) is entering the field with “as few predetermined ideas as possible” (Glaser 1978:2) therefore a literature review, he proposes, should be delayed until after the collection and analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978,). Nathaniel (2006) discusses that a grounded theory should be grounded in data and should not be “contaminated” (Nathaniel 2006:37) or corrupted (Glaser 1978 in Nathaniel 2004:44) by non grounded data, preconceived ideas, theories or the beliefs of others. This strong language of corruption and contamination led me initially, to believe that I would be wrong to use my experience or knowledge in the process of collection or analysis. These words had negative connotations, which clearly impacted on my approach to the research. Again this was me taking a very literal view of the grounded theory guidance due to a lack of research experience and confidence. I began grappling with this concept of contamination, how to manage it and how to create and maintain researcher distance. The term contamination is one I have chosen to use during this thesis to represent the tensions I felt with regards to distance and influence, I understand the term has negative

connotations but for the early stages of the study I held the view that I had the potential to spoil the data and spent a great deal of time looking at managing these tensions. I feel the term encapsulates for me the concerns I had at that time. Contamination is a concept I return to throughout this thesis.

Glaser (1978) advocates that literature should be woven into emergent theory in order to illustrate and support it and should be used as a constant comparative to the theory that is emerging from the data (Nathaniel 2004). Delaying the review encourages the researcher to articulate their own ideas rather than imposing others ideas upon the study (Charmaz 2006). I could use my experience it seemed, but not yet and it would contribute to my ability to be theoretically sensitive, whatever that meant. Part of the argument by Glaser and Strauss (1967) regarding literature use relates to their opinion that researchers are daunted by the literature and constrained by existing theories and that time is wasted considering areas which, may later prove to be irrelevant. It is interesting looking back that it was in fact the grounded theory literature that daunted me, with different views and methods proposed by different authors, albeit guided the same general principles. A great deal of time was spent grappling with the grounded theory literature, although a laborious period of effort, I would argue that the time was not wasted as it enabled me to emerge from this period with a greater understanding of research issues and supported me to question and articulate where possible in my study the rationale for my decisions and choices.

In order to develop and support strategies for managing contamination I read Strauss and Corbin's book 'The Basics of Qualitative Research' (1998), they considered the role of the literature review and developed ideas regarding its use further. They state that it is impossible to predict what all the salient points or problems will be and therefore a literature review cannot fully consider all concepts that develop through data gathering, therefore all literature or evidence could not fully influence or 'contaminate'. A broad review of literature is not problematic and personal and professional familiarity with the topic is not necessarily an issue (Strauss and Corbin 1998). It is suggested that understanding the subtleties of the data comes from a sensitivity to it, because of the understanding a researcher has of certain literature, although one should be cautious that familiarity could block creativity. I began to feel more confused and unsure; some authors advocated no review prior to collection, whilst some considered a general review of the research area acceptable. I was also unsure as to the depth of literature

searching that would be appropriate. Strauss and Corbin (1998) also considered that literature could be used as secondary data, and consequential data gathering can be driven by concepts emerging from theory (continuous involvement in data gathering and analysis). It seemed I could also use literature as data, as part of the constant comparative process, but was unclear as to how much data analysis I should do before I could begin to consider literature in this way. I understood that my experience and knowledge could contribute to what grounded theorists called theoretical sensitivity, but was not sure *how* this would happen.

Areas for theoretical sampling could also emerge from the literature, guiding the researcher in the preliminary parts of the investigation / study, thus supporting a pre-study review. Later in the study literature could also be used to confirm findings or not, but Strauss and Corbin (1998) warn that a researcher should have faith in their own findings and not constantly look to literature to validate. This approach favours new technical procedures, which have guided many in terms of method (Strauss and Corbin 1998), however Glaser (1992) contends that these new methods force data into preconceived categories which contradicts the original principles in relation to emergent theory (Charmaz 2006). It was becoming clear that there was a difference in opinions here, as a consequence of the Glaser and Strauss split and the critique and developments others offered to the grounded theory literature.

Charmaz (2006) considered the importing of these preconceived ideas, but suggests this is still workable in Grounded theory. She proposed that Henwood and Pidgeon's (2003:138) 'theoretical agnosticism', was an apt term implying the researcher takes a critical, objective stance on earlier theories and ideas. Charmaz (2006) suggests a researcher should read for a proposal, and then let that reading and knowledge 'lie' until they have developed codes and relationships between data. At that point she proposes that literature can be used again to locate the research and its findings or theories. Literature, which has been read before, should be neutralised or integrated when the second literature review is carried out to cover gaps and support emergent theory from the grounded theory process. This view of literature aligned with views advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and I began to lean more heavily on this text to increase understanding and confidence. The proposal of taking a critical view was not a position I found could just be taken, I did not find this stance unproblematic, initially I did not have the experience or confidence to do so, there was an experiential element to my

ability to appraise and judge the literature in terms of the value or usefulness it could offer me, that came through undertaking elements of the study.

I reconciled my worry about my knowledge and understanding of the topic from my work experience and from writing my proposal by finding literature that suggested the consideration of the macro, a general broad view, prior to data collection and analysis was acceptable (McCallin, 2006a, Nathaniel, 2006) but the literature continued to reinforce ideas that the researcher needs to be objective or disassociate themselves from received theory. I continued to grapple with how I would create and maintain this distance. I was weary of reading around the micro, the specific and detailed literature. It was also been suggested that if you are researching an area where previously little research has been carried out, a 'virgin land' (Thulesius, 2006) this provided a good backdrop to a grounded theory study, as there would be little to contaminate. Again tensions arose; surely a researcher would have had to have carried out some literature searching to know that little research exists in an area?

In general for the purposes of a proposal which, may require academic, ethical or funding approval a literature review is an expectation, this is usually the case in occupational therapy related studies. A researcher would have to contextualise the major area for consideration in the research to provide a rationale for it and to demonstrate that the study is appropriate, safe and not replicating others (Strauss & Corbin 1998, Robson 2002, Somekh & Lewin 2005, Charmaz, 2006, McCallin, 2006a). Recent and relevant literature reassures the reviewer, the absence of such material may not impress. The aim is to guide the reviewer to the conclusion that this work needs to be done in the way the researcher has outlined (Seale and Barnard 1998). Proceeding without some understanding of literature relevant to the area of study therefore is highly unlikely and not advised (Martin 2006) and preparation for any study is essential (McCallin 2006). If contamination derails the study, then equally an ill-informed and ill-prepared researcher could also impact negatively the research process. I did not want to add ill-prepared and uninformed to my novice status and began to reason that I had some crucial decisions to make about the way forward. How was I going to use this methodology effectively? I considered that perhaps adherence to the methods and guidance of specific authors would be less confusing, again leading me to the methods outlined in Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Working in a context of evidence-based practice both in relation to health and education, this approach to literature use (evidence that could derail or contaminate research) seems to be conflicting with evidence based practice concepts (McCallin, 2006a). In occupational therapy evidence based practice guidance states that professional decisions should be made on the basis of the best available scientific evidence. The received wisdom from literature helps a practitioner make decisions and take action in an informed and considered way. Received wisdom is judged on the basis of its value and is considered essential to modern day practice. The notion that this knowledge could impact negatively on the generation of new data which ultimately may develop a new evidence base was very problematic for me. Knowledge and evidence acquired throughout practice becomes part of the practitioner / researcher. I could not be extricated from the research, could not be disengaged from my project, and so knowledge and understanding would be carried into a project, it could be unpacked, applied, changed and repackaged as the project unfolds. I hoped that different meanings and perspectives would be gained.

In reality however, how would this distance be managed and achieved? If intervening as a professional, it is likely that the area of focus for research is an area relevant to the researcher's practice, this was certainly the case for me and my research interests had developed over time and therefore I could not be a 'blank slate', plucking the research topic out of thin air (McCallin, 2006b). I felt I needed to shelve my knowledge or bracket it off to use during analysis.

What initially I had chosen as a simple and clear methodology to guide me now appeared much more complex. The negative connotations emerging from the grounded theory literature about preconceived ideas and knowledge, along with the issue of researcher distance left me confused and focused on attempting to develop strategies to manage this. It was only later in the study, when I began collecting and analysing data that I actually began to question whether this contamination was necessarily a bad thing. That initial, somewhat superficial and limited understanding of grounded theory had disabled my ability to reason and make decisions with confidence. I document this development throughout this thesis. I was developing an understanding and acceptance that my influence on the process could be creative and enhancing. I experienced a sense of liberation and this was crucial for me. My own personal understanding of theoretical sensitivity embraced the notion of contamination, it was my knowledge and experience

which, could help in the collection and analysis of the data. The way forward for me was to be open-minded about what was influencing the research and attempt to articulate this. Dey (1999:12) suggests there is a difference between being “open minded and empty headed”. Ignoring, or at least attempting to ignore my knowledge and experience seemed inappropriate but I needed to adopt a critical and questioning approach to the use and influence of both new and existing knowledge in the research process.

There seems to be much written about carrying out grounded theory appropriately with manuals and guidance advocating specific paths and techniques. It would appear therefore that there is an expectation that reading about methodological issues is imperative and that reading literature of this nature does not ‘contaminate’.

Once a theory has emerged from the data a focused and rigorous literature review is essential (Charmaz 2006). Assessment, critique and synthesis of major works, considering major points of divergence and convergence can strengthen your argument and credibility. McCallin (2006b) however suggests that credibility and credible knowledge is built on sound research design which will only develop through literature review / knowledge generation. This supported my position that reading relating to methodological issues was necessary.

Induction and Grounded Theory

In grounded theory a range of codes and categories are developed through analysing data, these categories then are tied together with a theoretical explanation or new theory. This inductive method where the specific becomes generalisable was what Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued made grounded theory different from other methods which were deductive and focused on looking for specifics to prove a generalised hypothesis. There are a number of issues with induction which have been partially addressed in the grounded theory literature in the last 40 years. One of the issues I have with induction is that no matter how many examples a researcher can gain from analysis of the data an exception may occur, something that is different and not generalisable. It is for this reason that I chose to use situational mapping to make visual all data, not just those that ‘fit’ into the framework of examples and categories. I shall discuss in greater detail in later chapters this shift in my approach to coding and analysis. Later literature discusses the inductive method as the attitudes and actions taken with the data to reach a

conclusion, the process is still data driven and specific but this widens out the analytical process so that it is not just reliance on coding and categorisation. The use of my knowledge and experience in the process and later the use of literature has complemented the analysis leading to situated claims which, can be exemplified in the data. The credibility of grounded theory correlates to its persuasiveness; exemplification from the data is therefore of upmost importance, the theoretical sensitivity or skilful guessing that is my creative inferences on and with the data, should be as explicit as possible (Rennie, Phillips, Quartaro 1988). I have attempted to account for my creativity and contamination of the collection and analysis process in this thesis and argue for its value and positive impact. I do not feel it is possible to be explicit for all creative inferences but acknowledging this as a factor seemed an important part of my journey. My approach has held to the inductive principles of classic grounded theory as I use a range of examples to represent categories and I have tied these categories together in a narrative to produce an overall picture of students feelings of professionalism. The mapping processes I have used also demonstrate induction, the sub-categories and data of the map have relationships with each other and to the overall category demonstrating the specific rather than the general.

Initially due to my literal adherence to grounded theory principles I developed strategies for the management of contamination in the pilot and focus group study. I later reflect these were unnecessarily rigid and superficial, but I perhaps needed to go through this process in order to realise this. I now fully embrace this contamination, I see my influence and impact on the process as a positive force, my creative inferences were further facilitated by the use of situational mapping and I felt liberated and re-motivated by this creativity. Although I did delay my review of the literature until after the data collection, continuing with some of the principles of grounded theory, I stopped worrying about ideas or knowledge that might be generated through work and how that might impact on the research process, the idea that I could be objective in the process I felt was not only impossible, but became undesirable as I embraced the creative aspects of data analysis.

This chapter has summarised some of the key issues with regard to existing knowledge and ideas and the relationship of the researcher to the data. The term I adopted to illustrate the influence of the researcher on the research process is ‘contamination’, this undoubtedly has negative connotations and I have provided a rationale that as a novice

researcher I felt this distance necessary and tried to manage and contain my influence. I had perhaps myself been corrupted by received ideas from grounded theory literature and my lack of experience led me initially to take these as 'truth' or rules which must be adhered to. My capacity for reasoning and personal decision making was inhibited by a lack of confidence in a new situation, but this changed over time.

My critique of grounded theory continued and issues of distance, emergence of theory and the definition of theory itself became problematic. In the next chapter I shall explore further these notions of theory and shall elaborate on theoretical sensitivity.

Chapter 4 - (De) Sensitisation and Notions of Theory

This chapter aims to critique and explore the term theory; a focused consideration of theory in relation to grounded theory will be followed by a more general discussion about the value and usefulness of theory. The term theory is problematic in the context of my research journey so it is important to explore this specifically.

Will Theory Please Step Forward?

The previous chapter considered the notion of contamination of data and the research process, and discussed the place of literature in relation to research design and methodology. I have generated debate around this issue of contamination and propose that an uninformed or naïve view can be equally damaging to research processes. I began to consider how an individual engages with and utilises ‘theory’ in relation to preconceived ideas and professional knowledge and literature, proposing that theoretical agnosticism (Henwood and Pidgeon 2003), a critical view and a distance between the researcher and existing theories, temper levels of contamination. However, the relationship between contamination and creativity still needs to be explored and this is a theme that will be picked up later in the chapter. However, the debate so far has not defined theory and considered whether a theory will, or can be the outcome of my grounded theory study. In this chapter I will focus on theory, discussing definitions, its use in relation to practice and the ‘theory’ in grounded theory. I will also begin to illustrate my journey from novice researcher to a position of greater experience and understanding, that is not to say that the water is clearer, but I understand more about the problems with literature and theory and will show how I attempt to situate myself in the research field.

The word theory seems difficult to define; I continue to wrestle with it as a concept both in general terms and in relation to the ‘theory’ in grounded theory, the principles of which I have used as my chosen methodology for my research.

The Theory in Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) did question what they see as traditional ideas of theory and proposed the induction of theory through constant comparison of the data to be a way of explaining phenomena. Corbin and Strauss (1990) propose that theory is about providing a reasonable explanation of the relationships of phenomenon studied. Despite developments in grounded theory from both of the original authors, and their

developments as separate grounded theorists, loyalty remains from both Glaser (1978) and Corbin and Strauss (1990) with the notion of theory as an outcome (Thomas 1997). Grounded theory leaves the researcher to find the best 'fit' which explains the data (Moghaddam 2006), it claims to induce theory, however I felt confused and troubled by this issue because as a qualitative methodology it did not explicitly disclaim the more positivist explanations of theory (Thomas & James, 2006) (see also Chapter 6 'Life in the Borderlands' for more discussion of this issue in relation to modernist grounded theory and postmodern tenets). Preconceived ideas and hypotheses are to be avoided, which does appear to rule out some descriptions of theory, but no clear definition of the meaning of theory in the context of grounded theory or indeed in more general terms is offered.

When beginning my research this lack of a clear definition was difficult for me. I could not imagine what the outcomes of my research would look like and I had no real sense of what I was aiming for. I can now reflect on why the beginning of this project felt so problematic with a lack of confidence due to my inexperience in research and difficulties defining and determining the value of theory.

The grounded theory method appears to have developed over time gaining credibility through its claims related to theory development (Morse 2001). As discussed, the grounded theory literature is not explicit with regards to what can be considered as theory. Formal Theory is offered as an overarching more generalisable construct that could be applied in a range of different situations and contexts, an example of Glaser and Strauss's (1971) formal theory relates to status passage. This formal theory is built on the substantive theories, the findings from the analysis of data (Kearney 2001). When discussing theory in relation to grounded theory in this thesis I am using the word to represent formal theory. Later in this thesis I discuss the situated claims I make in relation to my data and it is these claims that I feel are what modernist grounded theorist might label substantive theory.

Thomas (1997) proposes that the differing definitions and diversity of what can be labelled 'theory', may lead to difficulties in assessing the value of the knowledge, which impacts on credibility. Strauss and Corbin (1990:27) state that well performed grounded theory meets all the requirements of 'good science'. Although Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 2008) developed approach is often labelled post positivist, Glaser's

approach is said to have a rigorous positive perspective, towards qualitative analysis (Moghaddam 2006). Positivist values appear to be entrenched; perhaps linking to cultural capital, where 'real' knowledge is valued, and hierarchies are supported by theory, between those who generate and understand that knowledge and those who do not (Bourdieu 1990).

Glaser (1978) proposed that grounded theory is based upon systematic generating of theory through specific methods such as coding, theoretical sampling and memo writing, with the data. He also claims that rigid observance of methods is necessary, but is not clear about how data is transformed into theory by the researcher's theorising. There appears to be no guidance or instructions about this aspect of grounded theory and therefore I questioned how could rigid observance happen? Glaser (2002) also proposed that theory should be generated as objectively as possible, leading to a product, which is conceptual and has abstract distance from the researcher and the researched. This theory Glaser (2002) states, should not be intuitive, impressionistic generations. However, when defining sensitivity, as theoretical sensitivity is a concept linked to grounded theory, discussions involve the concept of having 'insights' into the data, which I felt could be considered intuitive and it was proposed that sensitivity was generated through immersion not distance. Therefore I was unsure how an abstract and distanced viewpoint could be achieved. Glaser (2002) criticises constructivist grounded theory for this lack of distance but does not appear to be able to ensure it even in 'classical' grounded theory studies, due to lack of guidance about the method and definitions about theory and theorising.

But what of theorising? Is this more than critical thinking? Perhaps theory is a more romantic, elegant, containable concept, which is neat and transportable, where as critical thinking is messy, unboundaried and confusing (Thomas 1997, 2007). If theorising is the process of generating theory and theory has multiple meanings, no wonder the term is ambiguous. Bell (1984) proposes that practical theorising is a way of integrating theory and practice on the basis of parity between academic and experiential perspectives, theorising is a process rather than about knowledge generation. I propose therefore, that the questioning and testing of the value of theory in order to examine and develop practice is theorising, and not too dissimilar to critical thinking. So my view was that theorising in grounded theory could be considered to be the questioning and

analysis of the value and usefulness of the data to gather examples to help foreground particular areas of understanding relating to practice.

Glaser (1978) proposes that what he terms as ‘theoretical sensitivity’ informs theorising and has a role in informing ‘substantive and formal theory’ which is generated through systematic adherence to methods. If theorising is as whimsical as stopping and pondering (Charmaz 2006), how is this process made systematic? I would argue that the term theory may not be appropriate in this context, considering the paucity of direction regarding theorising and the misunderstanding of the methods discussed in literature (Seale and Barnard 1998) and the lack of a clear definition or explanation of theory.

Some of the difficulties I have had in engaging with this notion of theoretical sensitivity, were in relation to considering what they meant by these insights – if there was some engagement and action by the researcher following the consideration of the data, how could the theory simply emerge, surely it was created, interpreted or constructed by the researcher?

Theory has been used as a term for a whole range of intellectual activities or “conceptual endeavours” (Thomas 2007:12) and it is this diversity that Thomas proposes causes difficulties, the quote illustrates that the usefulness of the concept is impacted by the fluid, ill-defined definition of the word.

“If use of the word slips arbitrarily this way...its potential utility (assuming for a moment that it might have any utility) is compromised; it’s possible usefulness as a construct...may be diluted by its association with heuristics of dubious worth” (Thomas 1997:83).

Is theory something that can be proved or disproved by empirical data? Or is theory an attempt to explore or illuminate, as Bourdieu (Harker, 1990) proposes ‘thinking tools’. Morse (1994) considers theory to be a model which is simple and used pragmatically to explain unrelated facts. Ball (1995:266) considers that theory may be “a vehicle for thinking otherwise, a platform for outrageous hypothesisism and for unleashing criticism” providing opportunities to de-familiarise yourself with present practices and create a space to reflect, review, to question and to invent. This has certainly been true for me. By theorising about theory, by questioning and stumbling around in the literature I have questioned previous beliefs and practices opening up “static fields of habit and practice” (MacLure 2010:277). My relationship with theory, literature and ultimately with data

changed. Critical engagement led me to a point of awareness and anxiety about my practice which previously I presumed was based on theory. My naïve acceptance of certain theories was no longer possible as I made a shift personally and professionally – the ‘unfamiliar state’ was not comfortable but I felt progress was being made as I gained new perspectives. This transformation has happened as part of my journey as a developing researcher, this process has been partly active, by seeking out literature and actively questioning my understandings and also partly a passive change, as a consequence of experiential development. “...as soon as one can no longer think things as they formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible” (Foucault:1988:154).

I found MacLure’s (2010) view that theory may stop us from thinking that everything is transparent, that data are laid out clear for others to understand a useful idea. There appear to be themes that emerge in some writing about theory, particularly around visibility and questioning the self-evidence of knowledge. Foucault (1988) and Ball (1995), for example, propose theory is a mechanism for undermining and ‘outing’ practice so that it can be questioned. I particularly engage with notions of theory being awkward, of it stuttering practice (MacLure 2010) and I shall discuss this in further detail later.

Thomas (1997) argues against theory as he proposes the confusion over its definition and its structure constrains thinking and problem solving, he proposes an atheoretical stance which he argues enables fertility, creativity and invention, unboundaried by order and unconstrained by historical notions which help to foster pluralism. I certainly identify with this notion; my engagement with theory in the early stages of this thesis was problematic and focused on defining it. It is this approach, this more atheoretical stance I adopted with grounded theory, neither aiming to generate theory, focusing on invention based on data rather than on ‘discovery’ and by embracing a creative and embryonic view of data collection and analysis. The principles of theoretical sampling and constant comparison were useful and aligned with this creative view, enabling me to continue with grounded theory principles whilst continuing with a more distanced approach to a formal notion of theory.

Rajagopalan (1998) in response to Thomas (1997) suggests that not labelling anything as theory, or dismissing theory altogether is not useful either. He proposes a critical

approach to engaging with theory where value, utility and links to other 'theory' are explored and that this critical engagement may reduce unquestioning acceptance and the perpetuation of theory as "ready made in a prefabricated sky" (MacLure 2010:281). The following quote from Inglis (1985:40) provides an interesting juxtaposition to Thomas also:

"Those who refuse all theory, who speak of themselves as plain, practical people and virtuous in virtue of having no theory, are in the grip of theories which manacle them and keep them immobile, because they have no way of thinking about them and therefore taking them on. They aren't theory free, they are stupid theorists"

I do not claim to be theory free, I acknowledge the experience and knowledge I bring to interactions as a practitioner and as a researcher, but my professional decision making is considered and based on questioning received wisdom. My attempts to define theory through my reading led me to the point where a definition became less relevant, what seemed to be most relevant was how I used theory and what purpose it served. Wearing "my theoretical heart on my sleeve" (Rajagopalan 1998:337) is a stance I have taken readily in my research journey, as a novice researcher, feeling out of one's depth academically has been remedied somewhat by grasping a text or article which proposes or explains 'theory'. This has temporarily anchored me, provided a moment of stability in what has been a stormy journey. Stability, albeit momentary, has enhanced confidence, increased motivation and provided me with a sense that this is possible, I could complete a thesis. The purpose of theory may be to provide individuals with comforting and apparently stable identities in a slippery world (Ball 1995). I found I moved beyond this stable point eventually, reflecting on my stance and began to critique the 'theory' I had clung to. This shift altered my professional knowledge and challenged my view of knowledge. The actions and interactions I have continue to shape my knowledge, my understanding and will also influence my view of the world. This fluidity is both unsettling and reassuring, I am less anxious about what I do or do not know and I accept I will not have a definitive understanding. A workable, temporarily stabilised level of understanding is essential in order to take action. I reached a stage in my research journey where I could critically engage with data, evidence and literature to help articulate my research. There remains a permanent tension in my grappling with theory and knowledge which I feel may not ever be resolved and I will move on to this.

To illustrate my use of theory to engage with data, evidence and literature, I shall provide an example of how I approached methodological aspects of the study. Initially I gathered a range of texts and articles on grounded theory, I read many of them but still felt unclear and lacking in an appropriate level of understanding to proceed with this methodology. My strategy was then to revisit the original book by Glaser and Strauss (1967) “The Discovery of Grounded Theory” and focus on that. From there I read the authors subsequent works; I could only begin to engage more critically with those texts and the wider range of articles that supported and / or critiqued the methodology once I felt I had fully understood the main principles of the original methodology. The writing I did in relation to the proposal for this study is far more concrete and convinced about the methodology than the position I eventually took. I have at times critiqued theory and the methodology so much that it has inhibited me from taking action. I now have a relationship with the literature that enables me to continually raise questions whilst collecting and reflecting on the data.

I identified some themes in the reading I had done around ‘theory’ in the literature and I have already mentioned visibility, but further ideas of order and control also resonated. Writings discuss theory as a means of controlling or tidying knowledge and data, providing structure and stability and also as a repository for knowledge (MacLure 2010, Orland Barak 2002, Rajagopalan 1998, Thomas 1997, 2002, 2007, Thomas and James 2006). Thomas (2007) suggests that theory may be a scientific construct proven by evidence, theory may be a tool shed in which you keep your understandings and data or a “Heath Robinson contraption, a cross between a vacuum cleaner and a card index” (Thomas 2007:14).

I understand why the range of views on what constitutes ‘theory’ is problematic but I am self aware enough to know that this control, order, structure and tidiness appeals - my preferred learning style when completing such questionnaires is that of theorist (Honey and Mumford 1982). I acknowledge that there are critiques in the literature around the value of learning styles (see Coffield et al 2004a and 2004b) and despite tendencies to keep data and my understandings in structural hierarchies (Thomas 1997), I have learned to move away from binary opposites when attempting to position myself, which is unsettling at times. MacLure (2010) suggests that this entanglement and bafflement is part of the purpose of theory or certainly the outcome of engaging with it and I was reassured by reading her work.

I may have been naïve but I find a tidy bundle of knowledge to be a useful starting point or building block when trying to grapple with new ideas or information. As I progressed along my research journey I began to recognise that these boundaries and structures could stifle creativity and put unnecessary distance between my data and my engagement and discussions about it. Equally areas that are boundaried may not need to be and links can be made and dialogues had, across topic and subject areas. I will continue later in this chapter to discuss creativity and to link it to theoretical sensitivity, a concept developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 and taken further by Glaser in 1978.

The Relationship between Theory and Practice

Working in the area of the education of health professionals, much is discussed about putting theory into practice. The fact that there are such diverse definitions and a lack of shared meaning of theory renders this activity difficult. Students I teach often request examples of theory in practice to support their understanding. MacLure (2010) discusses that putting theory into practice is difficult and proposes that examples should not merely demonstrate application of theory, but what is proposed is that theory is developed through examples which are specific and detailed and can represent other situations / views. My difficulty here is that as soon as you capture that example, you take it out of context and make it static; consequently the meaning may be lost or translated differently by those accessing it. I also think it would be difficult to consider that one example could always 'stand for' others; it would depend on the nature of that example. All examples will be unique to the individual from whose narrative or experience it has been taken. If I was to build a 'theory' through examples, in the context of my data, I wondered how I would know if a specific example was representative *enough* to more generally represent the views of the participants. What I could see as useful in analysing and discussing my data was that multiple examples woven together could begin to build a fuller picture and that I might be able to develop understandings about the relationships between those examples, in this way perhaps I could illuminate the topic and attempt to explore practice. In the Chapter 'Life in the Borderlands' I will discuss the use of situational mapping (Clarke 2005) as a method of attempting to 'show' these multiple examples and their relationships with one another.

Professional knowledge is a difficult term to define with differing views and definitions of knowledge and professionalism. It could be considered the ability to know how and to know what and to use that in an appropriate way, in an appropriate context (Eruat

1994). It is an important area to consider in relation to theory. It may be that what is called “academic learning” (Eraut 2000) relates to the understanding of the theory, learnt in a professional context by application of that academic learning to practice; this can then be tested out by the individual in a practice context – the nature of that original knowledge will have changed however, through its enactment in practice (Eraut 2000). I propose that theory or academic learning becomes professional knowledge when it is applied or practiced. Professional knowledge therefore is constructed and shaped, developed and challenged through practice (Eraut 1994). Not all knowledge will be applied in this way and may remain at a distance as academic knowledge.

The competence of an individual in a certain occupational role may be measured by academic qualifications but is also likely to be recognised by the individual having carried out a period of pupillage or apprenticeship in the field, supported or supervised by an ‘expert’ in that field. Through this practical experience they are likely to have collected a body of evidence such as a log book or portfolio which demonstrates their competence in practice (Eraut 1994). There are often regulatory or professional bodies which define competence through standards of proficiency, for example The Health and Care Professions Council (2007) Standards of Proficiency – Occupational Therapists. These standards define observable skills and explicit knowledge that an occupational therapist should possess, they do not however define, nor could they, the full range of knowledge an individual may possess in a professional context as they are general and they cannot define tacit knowledge as by its very nature it is not visible. Professional knowledge therefore cannot be bounded in the way it has been proposed that theory has been, but similarities lie in the struggle to provide clear definitions.

Knowledge that is used in practice is subject to the actions and interactions of the user. Knowledge is developed by practitioners as they use it and engage with people and situations. In this way knowledge may be seen as relativist; the various interactions in professional contexts may shape knowledge, testing it, altering it, validating or highlighting what is not yet known (Wisker 2001).

The knowledge I have gained through undertaking this study illustrates this for me, my research journey is mapped throughout these chapters; through engagement with knowledge, people and events my views altered. The things I know and need to know have constantly changed and I have recognised that I can gain no stability in ‘knowing’

as there is not a constant position I can take in terms of what I know. There are no concrete facts or truths. Knowledge evolves, is challenged, disintegrates and is repackaged or re-constructed as I have progressed.

In terms of the outcomes of my study and the knowledge it has produced this will be contextualised and situated temporarily, demographically, and professionally. What I aimed to do is reflect the complexity of the context and attempt to represent the voices of those participating as fully as possible to help develop curriculum and practice to better support the ‘employability’ of future cohorts. Given I have critiqued theory so extensively I aimed to produce outcomes which were accessible, useful and relevant that will help myself and others question practice and construct / re-construct professional knowledge(s).

The link between theory, knowledge and practice therefore needs to be explored further and the often debated theory – practice gap is proffered as such due to the differing values and meanings related to ‘theory’. Is reading a text or a journal to understand a concept of more value than reflecting on experiential learning where conceptualisation may happen related to action? Eraut (1994) would consider that both those activities can contribute to professional knowledge and McIntyre (1995:380) argues against elevating “abstract theoretical knowledge above practical professional judgement”. MacLure (2010) suggests there is awkwardness in theory, which complicates practice and for that reason it is often placed at a distance from practice. Carr (1998) considers that if we see practice as separate and at a distance from academic endeavour we consign it to an indignity and reduce its value and by understanding that theory is in fact rooted in practice, we give practice status and rigor. However, as discussed previously if we cannot define theory how can we be sure it does / does not exist already inside of and amongst what we do as practitioners? MacLure (2010:277) views theory as a stuttering of practice, a way of halting the repetition and “reproduction of the bleeding obvious”. I propose reflection or reflective practice would be one useful mechanism to identify and analyse practice issues applying theory to change outcomes.

The Unsettling Nature of Theory

Given that there still appears to be some confusion around the term theory I had to move to a position where I felt I could accept the idea that there is not one clear definition with which I could work, but instead I had a broad understanding of how the

term was used by different researchers and academics. The ongoing opportunity to grapple with the stuttering of my practice (MacLure 2010) through engaging with this debate has been useful at times and made me examine what it was I was trying to achieve. This uncertainty was not always useful as it rendered me completely incapacitated and therefore did not stutter but stop practice altogether. This led me to consider whether I needed a definition or whether I should have been considering the purpose and value of these frameworks, writings and hypotheses termed theory for me as a researcher? What benefit did they have for me as a professional? I had spent a substantial amount of time drowning in this debate around definitions of theory, looking for a point of anchorage and I feel I had missed this crucial point. How I used and engaged with knowledge was important, how it was defined is but one aspect of this personal context. Theory for me clearly has some practical value but I could view and engage with it tentatively and constantly questioning its value and use (McIntyre 1995).

Engaging with theory in relation to my research has created more problems than it has solved. The theme that emerges throughout my writing is that of grappling, grappling with grounded theory, grappling with giving myself a voice in the text as a researcher, grappling with how to represent student views and ultimately grappling with the unease of the notion that I was generating theory.

The insights gained through the challenge of engaging with theory have been useful and I shall discuss this in relation to grounded theory and giving myself permission to be creative with data later. MacLure (2010:280) also proposes that theory is a way of policing knowledge by allowing “knowledge that can be tolerated”, knowledge that does not disrupt or derail may be classed as theory, maintaining the status quo and not radically changing practice. I had to consider and address this notion of policing knowledge when attempting to represent the views of the participants and throughout the data analysis process. I had concerns that my views and biases may permeate in terms of what counts as contributions worthy of being included, which would ultimately form the examples I used to illuminate the topic. Again my rationale for the use of situational mapping (Clarke 2005) and representation and meaning can be found later in the Chapter ‘Life in the Borderlands’.

The notion of ‘discovery’ in grounded theory implies I would be finding something which is already there, substitute this with the term construction or invention and that

suggests I propose something which, is one explanation in an “infinite universe of possibly existing things” (Thomas and James 2006:786). Invention implies creativity, which for me was what being theoretically sensitive was about. I accepted that I would interpret the data and I acknowledged and allowed myself to use my knowledge and experience to be creative with the data. This led me to accept that there would be no discovery in my research despite my use of grounded theory principles. I would be using examples that have been extracted from the narrative and through these I would construct explanations by exploring the relationships between the examples. These examples would not be static and would be contextual, temporal and mutual.

Clarke’s (2005) ideas about situated claim-making and MacLure’s (2010) ideas about utilising examples that are not just about application but that may stand to represent areas of practice resonate with ideas of invention rather than discovery. “Discovery implies a clean lineage from thing to thought and an uncomplicated correspondence between the two” (Thomas and James 2006:786).

My notions of theory evolved and I now approach literature with a less accepting, more critical view. This stance made it impossible for me to carry out a classical grounded theory study as my view of theory did not correlate with the views of the originators of the methodology. Those authors who advocate a more constructivist approach to grounded theory such as Charmaz (2006) and Clarke (2005) who propose that multiple views can be represented, do not adhere to notions of a formal theory as an outcome. I felt therefore that I could still utilise principles of the methodology to guide data collection and analysis but the study would not produce a ‘theory’ at the end. I became more comfortable and confident in my decision making as my research journey progressed. A view I continually returned to is that as long as I articulated and discussed my choices and actions then this stance would not jeopardise the validity of the study. By following the principles of avoiding a literature review I perhaps minimised the influence of what might be perceived as ‘theory’ on this topic. My professional knowledge did contaminate the study and I will account for this using the strategies I will discuss in subsequent chapters.

For a methodology that is structured and in the original tenets of grounded theory, rigid, the subjective process of sensitizing appears open to interpretation, biased and will be impacted by the skill of the researcher. If the integrity of the theory correlates to the

researcher's ability to be sensitive, then surely this sensitivity is developed by understanding the context of the study and having some understanding of the data, through prior reading, knowledge and experience. It is acknowledged that this is a skill that can be developed but there appears to be no discussion linking the issue of contamination by literature with the development of theoretical sensitivity. Perhaps what is lacking in the literature from the supporters of grounded theory is a more extensive debate about 'theory' as an outcome / concept and around how prior knowledge and experience impacts on the researchers ability to have insights and be creative with the data and the influence of this on the final outcomes of a research project.

Thomas and James (2006) consider that the focus on methods undermines the value of qualitative research. They consider it constrains creativity, open interpretation and inhibits the discovery that Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally propose. Although sensitivity acknowledges the role of the researcher, hinting at interpretation, the procedures limit reflection, creativity, exploration and representation of meanings. If the narrative has to be broken down and 'fractured' (axial coding) (Glaser and Strauss 1967) for it to be transparent and clear, the meaning and the voice may be lost. The value is clearly not placed upon context and subjective meanings but on the method. In order to develop practice authors such as Ball (1995), Derrida (in Carroll 1987), Feyerabend (1975) and MacLure (2010) propose one needs open thinking space to be creative, imaginative, inventive and unconstrained. The situational maps (Clarke 2005) I felt provided me with a practical strategy to access this open thinking space and I shall detail in subsequent chapters how I engaged with data using these maps.

The Art of Data Collection and Analysis

One of Glaser's (2002) arguments against constructivist grounded theory, developed by authors such as Kathy Charmaz (2006) is that it avoids dealing with the issue of researcher bias; Glaser (2002) states that the researcher's influence on the data should just be one of the many variables which are considered as part of the constant comparative process. He appears to propose that through comparison and abstraction researcher bias is factored out. However, coding and categorisation can be influenced by the researcher, as can theoretical sampling, which assists the researcher in collecting appropriate (as they see it after initial analysis) data. Charmaz (2002) considers the approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) too simplistic and proposes the constructivist

approach provides a way of recognising the role of the researcher throughout the process. She suggests data are reconstructed and filtered by the researcher who constructs or formulates 'theory'. This 'theory' should represent a co- construction and interpretation of events or situations. A range of examples are formulated, based on the data, which serve to represent other instances.

The term theory here again seems inappropriate. It is worth noting that despite the development of grounded theory, following a critique of it by Charmaz (2006), she still remains faithful to the notion of theory as an outcome. Clarke's (2005) ideas regarding situated claim-making where a thick, located and limited story is the outcome and MacLure's (2010) ideas of specific and detailed examples that serve to 'stand for' other instances aligned more with my viewpoint. These ideas supported my thinking enabling me to tell the story of my research, serving as a method of telling it, offering me a practical approach to what might be the outcome of analysis.

I have moved to a position of feeling that my influence is positive and feeling that my knowledge and experience supported my creativity. I finally gave myself permission to engage with the data, interpret it and explore it. Derrida (in Carroll 1987) discusses the displacement of the borders between art and theory and I feel that in accepting the art of interacting with the data, of gaining a greater understanding of a topic, the skilful creativity of the researcher is essential. I made a conscious decision that as long as I acknowledged the influence I was having and attempted to articulate and discuss my actions then I could account for my role in the process.

It is my ideas and experience that enhances sensitivity to the data and that supports the development of codes and categories. I do not need to attempt to prove that my interpretations are true, but should be able to show that I have challenged my own self understandings by becoming mindful of my tacit knowledge, recognising my assumptions and examining my pre / misconceptions. Through this process I could begin to understand the meaning I and others have brought to the discursive exchanges, expanding my capacity for informed thinking and action. However a conceptual perspective is needed and I attempted this through reflection on the individual and situational meanings in the data to attempt to give these broader perspectives (Piantanida et al 2002) (see also the chapter 'Life in the Borderlands').

The realisation for me that creativity was and could be part of the analytic process, combined with me finding a home for my preconceived ideas and experience i.e. in the development of theoretical sensitivity was liberating and increased my confidence as a novice researcher.

(Re)Positioning Myself in the Context of the Research

I feel the notion of theory is still culturally engrained and education systems still teach 'theory' to learners to help them understand complex concepts. It was not useful to me to continue to grapple with the definition in general terms and I became more inclined to direct my critique in relation to the value and purpose of the knowledge I was reading about, in whatever way it was packaged, and how it could serve to better inform me as a researcher and practitioner. Thomas (2007) proposes that using the term 'theory' adds gloss and weight to what is otherwise mundane. Adding gloss to me was acceptable if it means that knowledge is more accessible because it is more appealing. I wanted to share my research and for it to have an impact. In terms of weight, the value should be judged in terms of utility and relevance in the context of where it is being applied, but this will be an individual's responsibility and not something I can control. However I wondered whether the action of dissemination itself perpetuates notions of theory and supporting knowledge hierarchies, serving as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1990). By presenting at conferences or publishing in a journal or book can external validation of my work privilege it and lead others to take it as 'theory'?

I could use my learning and knowledge about occupational therapy, research and philosophy to help me review and question my practice and where necessary to change my practice. Engaging critically enabled me to grow and develop, considering multiple perspectives and scrutinising my assumptions and biases. Unquestioning acceptance of theory may be seen as one end of a spectrum of engagement with knowledge and literature and I moved along that spectrum to a more analytical stance where professionally- informed opinion is acceptable.

A Critique too far – Diverting from Grounded Theory Territory?

Despite my critique of grounded theory and theory itself, I continued to use the principles of grounded theory as my methodology, as the processes of theoretical sampling, constant comparison of data against other interview data, and the delayed literature review were appealing. These were still fundamental tenets of grounded

theory methodology and were sufficient I felt, to justify that I was using grounded theory principles. I liked the notion of delving deeper into a topic by letting the participants direct the questioning and in interviews being able to ask direct questions around what appeared to be areas of significance or gaps following the analysis of the previous interviews. By focusing on salient points without being reductionist I was able to let participants lead discussions by asking open questions. I debated the value of a literature review and its place with a research study, however I also engaged with the view of Glaser and Strauss (1967) that this may direct or bias the data collection or analysis, as ideas of outcome and a vague hypothesis may have been developed in my head following a literature review. A review of the literature and discussion of results can be found in Chapter 7 'From Text to Map to Text: The Interrelationships of Data Representation'.

I felt confident with my conceptualisation of grounded theory and no longer felt I had to take an objective and distanced role, enjoying the interplay with data. The creativity that mapping enabled still sat within a grounded theory domain but Clarke (2005) provided a tool for me to enhance data analysis and my engagement in making these creative inferences and being theoretically sensitive. The grappling I had done and the conflict this created dissipated as I grew in confidence and made my own research decisions. Although my conviction fluctuated depending on what stage of the study I was at, what tasks I was undertaking and what I read, I still developed as a researcher. I no longer felt I needed to produce 'a theory' having discovered literature that assisted my understanding of how examples could serve to support a more coherent understanding of a research area. The outcome of my research would be situated, temporal claims based on co-constructed examples and there would be no discovery of substantive or formal theory.

To conclude, professional knowledge, theory and research all have a place in practice, striving for clarity in defining these terms is something I decided was not useful. The stuttering of my practice and my reflections on my use and acceptance of knowledge and theory has been significant. Understanding the value and use of knowledge in my research and in practice has been my most revealing shift. The understandings I aim to share as a result of this study are not theory, they are contextualised claims and examples which can serve to further understand and enhance practice. The use of the methodological term grounded theory in this study would be misleading had I not

attempted to explicitly explore my relationship to and understandings of the term theory as I have done in this chapter.

The next two chapters will discuss the procedural and developmental journey of data collection and analysis, critiquing methods and discussing strategies for managing contamination and for situating the findings of the study. The debate about theory will continue as I discuss how analysing and privileging data through selective coding, would contribute to the outcomes of the study.

Chapter 5 – Collecting Data and Managing Contamination - Evolving Strategies

In this chapter I explore how frustration regarding contamination and considerations of the usefulness of theory influenced methods and the enactment of the methodology. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss data collection strategies and my reasoning and learning in relation to them.

When I began to consider which data collection methods to use as part of my research, I felt that focus groups and interviews would be the best way to gather students' perceptions, as I had chosen to use grounded theory principles to guide me and interviews seemed to have been used extensively within this approach. Glaser (2002 cited in Charmaz 2006:16) states that "all is data", however the quality of the information a researcher will encounter in the field will vary and the focus of the research clearly needs to be considered when choosing the methods or tools with which to gather the most appropriate data. As I was attempting to understand students' perceptions of employability / professionalism I wanted to understand thoughts, views and feelings and I felt the best way to do this was to gather information directly from participants in face to face discussions.

The process of moving from focus group to individual interviews would enable me to get a broad range of views initially and then focus to gather further detail. Qualitative methods enabled me as a researcher to pursue new and interesting information provided by the participants whilst undertaking the research. The flexibility to focus in and explore a new avenue or discussion with a participant helped me to build a rich data set (St Pierre 1997). Charmaz (2006:14) encapsulates this with her camera analogy, where a "broad sweep of the landscape" is taken and then by changing "your lens you bring things closer and closer into view". I felt that using focus groups initially and then individual interviews would be appropriate to obtain the level of detail I wanted from the participants. The 'broad sweep' using a focus group to capture multiple views seemed a good strategy although I anticipated less detail due to constraints of time, group dynamics and multiple participants. The 'change of lens' would be the individual interviews, where I anticipated I would gain greater depth and detail by building rapport and giving time to individual participants. In the focus group there was some discussion about whether occupational therapy was a vocation. This theme was explored further in the interviews and led to discussion around personal values, attributes and professional

values and philosophy. These methods allowed flexibility to pursue all directions and to clarify meanings directly with the participants. The comparative analysis / data analysis process (Strauss and Corbin 1998), which I shall discuss later in greater depth in the Chapter 'Life in the Borderlands' initially seemed a useful way of filtering and refining data into categories. I had also hoped that this process would support my analysis of the understanding of the relationships between those categories. The further I engaged in this process, the more I discovered the limitations of these methods, the narrowing and focused grouping of data into categories began to feel mechanistic and limiting in terms of viewing and engaging with the data. Later, I shall discuss the additional methods I used to enhance my relationship with the data and my struggles with defining and representing meaning (See the next chapter 'Life in the Borderlands?').

Attempting to Manage Contamination

As discussed in the chapter 'Embracing Contamination', Glaser (1978) considers that a comprehensive pre-study review 'derails' a grounded theory study and I should have "as few predetermined ideas as possible" (Glaser 1978:2). On this basis I had delayed a comprehensive literature review until after the collection and analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978). The data and the emerging theory are said to be 'contaminated' by previously considered ideas or received theory (Nathaniel, 2004) which they propose I would have picked up from reading and researching the topic in depth. Charmaz (2006) argues that delaying the review encourages the researcher to articulate their own ideas rather than imposing others ideas upon the study, I viewed this as a useful principle and considered how I could apply this also to the data collection process. Part of the argument by Glaser and Strauss (1967) regarding literature use relates to their opinion that researchers are daunted by the literature and constrained by existing theories or that time is wasted considering areas which may later prove to be irrelevant. However in the previous chapter, I discussed theory and its possible purpose as "a vehicle for thinking otherwise, a platform for outrageous hypothesisism and for unleashing criticism" (Ball 1995:266) providing opportunities to 'de-familiarise' yourself with present practices and create a space to reflect, review, to question and to invent. Therefore could the contamination of the research process by existing theories be positive? Could they provide me with support to critique, analyse and consider data? It seemed the way forward for me was to be as open-minded as possible about what was influencing the research. I continued to be mindful of Henwood and Pidgeon's

(2003:138) term ‘theoretical agnosticism’, acknowledging that my knowledge and experience was an influencing factor. I attempted to take a critical, objective stance on the theories and ideas I was familiar with, whilst being open to ideas and possibilities that the data may generate. This also enabled me to harness the creativity and liberation that emerged from both embracing contamination and reconfiguring my view of the use and value of theory.

In the initial stages of the research distance seemed necessary as I perceived my influence and bias on the research process negatively. I spent time contemplating how to develop questions and prompts that were not tainted by my experiences and views. I decided I needed a method or tool that would enable me to capture students’ terminology and views to enable me to develop further questions for the focus group. I felt that the shelving of my experiences and values was not possible, so I needed a strategy to manage my influence. I was then a novice researcher and I now realise that I relied too heavily on focused reading and grounded theory methods. As my confidence improved, I felt more able to engage with critiques and developments in grounded theory, this led me to take a position where I could view distance as unnecessary and view my influence positively. More extensive discussions about this and my management of contamination can be found later. I began to feel liberated and empowered by the notion that my creativity and engagement could be of benefit. There is correlation in the shift from the strict adherence to methodological guidance and the shift in my perceptions of the definition, value and use of theory as discussed in the previous chapter. The chapters of this thesis are mapping my development from novice to more experienced researcher, linked to an increase in confidence which enabled me to intervene and reason as part of the research process.

However, back to the beginning of my research journey, where I was developing strategies to manage and contain my influence; I came across the Ideal *** Inventory (Norton 2001) (Appendix 1), which is a tool derived from the Ideal Self Inventory based on personal construct theory and designed by Norton, Morgan and Thomas (1995) as an alternative measure in relation to self esteem. The stars *** represent the topic to be investigated, in my case The Ideal Employee Inventory. I felt this tool offered me a simple way of eliciting students’ views and of generating a framework of the topics / questions, using their terminology on which to base the focus groups and interviews.

I decided to utilise the Ideal *** Inventory (Norton 2001) as a tool for a pilot study, to generate areas for discussion in the focus groups, which in turn would generate topics or a focus for interviews. I felt this way the data collection process could develop and I felt confident that this strategy could go some way to ‘manage’ the impact that my views and knowledge may have, correlating with notions of a more focused data collection based on previous data.

The Pilot

I chose the sample for the pilot from a group of undergraduate occupational therapy students in the final year of their programme. I had used a mixed approach to gather my sample as it could be considered purposive or criterion based sampling (Burns 2000), in that I directly sought out the participants, who would have something to contribute to discussions on the topic of employability (i.e. final year students in the process of applying for jobs). However, my selection may also be understood as convenience or opportunity sample (Burns 2000) as it was a group I had easy access to having been able to gain ethical approval and I had chosen to use my own professional group, occupational therapists in my own institution. I could have considered using the same professional group from another institution or indeed other professional groups. However, I wanted to understand factors relating to employability from my own programme, so that curriculum development and programme evaluation could take place as a result of the findings, therefore I had to focus on my own institution. I was not aiming for a representative sample of Level 6 students and had not sampled across the range of academic marks, age or previous experience, for example.

Initially I asked Level 6 students (graduated 2007) to participate in the pilot, 6 completed consent forms (Appendix 2) and participated in the activity. I asked them to complete an individual inventory identifying what they thought were the Ideal / Not Ideal characteristics of employability on a grid and advised them to identify up to 6; opposites did not have to be literal opposites, it was how they described the Ideal / Not Ideal characteristics that was important. Once they had completed the individual inventory they came together to decide on characteristics as a group, using consensus decision-making. They then ranked these in terms of importance individually and then finally as a group.

The ideal categories they agreed on, in order, from the most important to the least were:-

- being a good communicator
- being flexible and able to work in a team
- being able to work within professional boundaries of own role and aware of limitations
- having theoretical knowledge and being able to transfer this into practice
- having time management, prioritisation and organisational skills
- Motivated to identify needs and able to plan own continuing professional development

I felt this process would reduce the influence I had on the development of prompts or questions for interview so that my views and language did not directly influence categories generated. However, on reflection I realised that due to my relationships with the students, they may well have felt pressure to share what they thought were the 'correct' answers rather than their own opinions due to my tutor role and their student status. This is one of the sites of contamination in the data set, how much did my role as tutor, assessor or mentor influence the answers given? What were the perceived benefits for students of engaging with the project and how were their answers influenced by their assumptions about these benefits? Notions of empowerment of participants by asking their views are discussed in the work of Patti Lather (1991). The idea that praxis, the engagement by the participants in the process, can bring about change for them is an interesting notion. I wondered if by considering these notions of employability would it help those participants better communicate those skills to future employers? The idea of reciprocity was appealing (Lather 1991). Postmodernism attempts to challenge a world where inequity is present, oppression is accepted and power and hierarchical structures of 'knowers' are the norm. I acknowledge in this study that this inequity existed despite attempts to manage it; this is unseen contamination, which perhaps cannot be mapped but is discussed in relation to taking different perspectives on reading situational maps in Chapter 6 'Life in the Borderlands'. Notions of power, relationships and conformity (Wuest and Merritt-Gray 2001) will be raised again when I move on to consider other forms of data collection.

With these categories generated I then developed a list of questions and prompts, which could be used in a focus group. I was undertaking focus groups, with students, who study part time alongside working as I hoped this might elicit data which would add an interesting dimension to the topic. Recruitment criteria for the part time programme means all students on that programme are classed as mature or over twenty one years. I felt these students would be likely to have previous or current work experience. This group would generally have an understanding and experience of being employed but would never have had experience of being employed as an occupational therapist. I hoped they would understand the wider context of employability but could still discuss how it felt as they were about to apply for occupational therapy positions, a new experience for them. I did not purposefully seek out 'outliers' (Barbour 2001) to ensure conflicting or diverse opinions were gained, the sampling strategy was as described earlier and the entire cohort were invited to attend the focus group.

The Focus Group

The part-time route is a four-year programme, with a two day per week pattern of attendance. Three quarters of students at the time were seconded from health and social care settings, and worked in those settings the other three days. Nineteen students were asked to participate and sixteen returned consent forms. Age and ethnicity data was not collected; all students were mature students, an admission requirement of the part time route meaning all were aged twenty one or over. One male student attended the focus group, all other fifteen were female. I included all those who had consented and gathered views from this critical mass rather than selecting a smaller sample. My preparation for the group included reviewing the questions / prompts with another student on the full time route to check understanding and clarity. I planned to record the focus group using a camera and organised the room to enable participants to sit in a manner that would be conducive to discussion.

Focus groups can be used in exploratory ways; I hoped that by interacting with each other the students would extend their range of thinking in relation to the topic, and that by having a discussion with a plausible audience, not just myself, rich and thick data would be captured. I hoped discussions would provide stimulation and elaboration through engagement with peers. I was however aware of the limitations of a group discussion. Conformity in discussions can lead to individuals feeling less confident or being less likely to express their views, if they are different from others' opinions in the

group and certain individuals may dominate. I needed to be skilled as a facilitator in order to encourage all participants to contribute (Fontana and Frey 1998).

Once I had completed the focus group I began to question the value of the inventory. I had thought it essential to carry out the pilot in order to use terminology and a framework relating to employability that the students themselves had generated. However in using the Ideal *** Inventory (Norton 2001), as a strategy to reduce the influence I had on the process (by using knowledge and personal ideas about what constitutes employability), I could have potentially constrained the breadth and depth of the data gathering process by asking students to only define characteristics in the pilot.

I felt uncertain at times in the focus group. Much of this uncertainty revolved around my need to cling to the list of characteristics generated by the students in the pilot as the only concrete aspect of my research. I was grappling with epistemological issues, in terms of how my knowledge had influenced the students, how I might capture data to generate further knowledge and a range of methodological issues such as distance and contamination. These issues posed an anchor at this time of uncertainty and anxiety. I was only able to move away from and realise their limitations once my confidence grew and I became liberated by understanding the role my knowledge and experience could have.

In attempting to articulate my actions and decisions in the data process I had been writing a journal of reflections. I intended to use these as a method of challenging my own self understandings, bringing to the forefront any situations where I felt I could be influencing the data gathering or analytical processes. I hoped to challenge any pre or misconceptions and scrutinise my tacit knowledge to help develop a conceptual framework as part of my research findings (Piantanida et al 2002). Initially I found the facilitation of the focus group difficult and following the focus group I wrote the following reflection in my research journal.

“I opened the discussion with a question and was given a short answer directed back to me, this was a group of 16 so I had expected multiple answers, but no one else contributed. I had presumed that the students would discuss the topic amongst themselves and that they would almost be able to ignore my presence. I was wary of leading the discussion, but concerned by the limited response I wondered would direct questioning from me bias the data collection process, should I ask individuals direct questions?” (Journal notes April 2009)

I feel this extract exemplifies my lack of confidence and experience in facilitating a focus group combined with the personal importance I placed on gathering ‘good’ data, which seemed to temporarily paralyse my ability to take action. I reflected in action (Schön 1983) and was able to adapt to the situation. I had decided it would be better to resist directing the discussion too heavily and avoided asking any direct questions, such as ‘What do you think about team working skills?’ for example, and asked general questions such as ‘is there anything else you feel is important in relation to employability?’ The narrow characteristics that the pilot had generated had begun constrain my thinking and I had expected these topics to be discussed. The following excerpt intimates this:-

“The information discussed in the group was not what I had expected, I had assumed that specific characteristics or skills relating to employability would be raised, but there was much more discussion about experience, confidence and personality. I realised that the structure of the inventory had guided the students only to pick characteristics and that without this guidance or structure the discussion was much more diverse. I resisted the urge to discuss specific skills or to mention the topics discussed in the pilot, I omitted some of the prompts and began to take the lead from the topics the students were discussing. Was this the correct thing to do?” (Journal notes April 2009)

The focus group session resulted in five completed flip chart sheets, which captured key words, phrases and categories and were agreed with participants during the group. The analysis of this data is discussed in the chapter ‘Life in the Borderlands?’

Exploring Perceptions through Interviews

I intended to use interviews as I felt this would give me an opportunity to gain more in-depth individualised data and an extended narrative (Wuest and Merritt- Gray 2001). My idea was to use unstructured interviews, which would allow for exploration, deviation from specific prompts or questions and enable the interviewee to direct the discussion. I was using the principles of theoretical sampling and focused questions for comparative analysis from grounded theory and I needed to be able to pick up on topics or categories, which emerged from preceding interviews, with the aim of ultimately reaching a point where no new information or categories were being discussed by the interviewees (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Unstructured interviews would enable me to enact these principles of grounded theory and use questioning to explore gaps in the data set, pick up on emerging categories and to follow the direction of the participants

in the interviews in terms of areas of focus. The comparative analysis process would enable me to develop new questions for each interview, after analysis of the previous transcript, so the unstructured nature would enable the addition of prompts and questions in the process of the interview (Wuest and Merritt- Gray 2001). Here again my contamination is present as I analyse in action much as Schön (1991) described about reflection and change the course of the interview through questioning. This is another site of contamination and another area where I acknowledge my creativity. Initially I was concerned about the unstructured format and that it may lead to bias and increased subjectivity. With this in mind I reviewed questions in my journal as well as noting key issues in the analysis of each interview (Cohen and Manion 1994).

The conflict between my engaging in the process as an enthusiastic researcher and the issues around contaminating the data continually resurfaced. Using unstructured interviews or discussions would give me freedom regarding the wording and order of prompts or questions, whilst still being focused on the research area (Gill et al 2008), but this would also allow my thoughts and views to infiltrate the questions, whether this was consciously or subconsciously. Having considered this idea of contamination extensively and as discussed in previous chapters, I had begun to accept and indeed embrace this notion of contamination and see my experience and creativity as valuable in the process. I was also aware that as well as having a role as researcher, I was also a staff member of the programme team the students were from, I needed to make the interviews as relaxed as possible and make them as much like a 'real' conversation as possible and being aware of issues that impacted due to potential power imbalances (Wuest and Merritt-Gray 2001). Expression of student views could be hampered by the presence of a member of staff who teaches them and marks their work, covert oppression of participants due to hierarchical power structures was likely (Lather 1991).

Data from the pilot, focus groups and individual interviews could be considered against each other to look for commonalities and agreement / disagreements. My aim was to explore the topic as fully as possible, and as I have already acknowledged there were limitations with each method and I had to consider that any differences could be due to the method itself, due to power imbalance or bias of the researcher. As the researcher I was present in all methods so the degree of influence / impact would be difficult to ascertain. I felt that the different methods could perhaps serve as different ways of

telling the story (Gergen, 1998) and explicit and rigorous analysis and comparison would be important.

The unstructured interviews would still require planning (Cohen & Manion, 1994) and I felt I needed to be skilled in order to obtain relevant data. The open and flexible approach to question formulation I was adopting may create ambiguity through language, as questions cannot be piloted or checked for clarity and intended meaning. I was aware that flexibility should not lead to over-informality, over-identification or sympathising. However, over-managing an interview could lead to a lack of sincerity and reciprocity which, could lead to a pseudo conversation impacting negatively on the richness of the data and the engagement of the participants.

My aim was that following each interview, I would transcribe the data and carry out microanalysis, to develop codes and categories; these could then be compared to the framework of categories and sub-categories that were developed from the analysis of focus group data. What Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to as higher order concepts, could then be developed.

All interviewees were female; as previously stated there was one male who took part in the focus group, but he did not offer to participate in the interviews. The profession is still dominated by females, in the last five years less than ten percent of admissions on to the degree programmes at the higher education institution where this study took place were male, so it is unsurprising that all but one participant in this entire study from pilot to interviews was male.

The First Interview

I used the principles of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967), where selection of participants is based around developing and exploring topics and categories. Sampling therefore was not random and I did not aim to reflect the normal distribution of the sample, it was solely based on selecting those people, information or events that could best respond to the focus of the study. I revisited the data from the focus group; a re-occurring theme was that of personal attributes and whether occupational therapy was a vocation. A number of respondents had said that they thought it was and that they had skills or traits such as a caring nature, empathy and ability to listen to others well. One participant said it was her skills of logic and the practical nature of her personality

that had led her to the profession, and she was very clear that it was not a vocation for her, nor would she consider herself to be a caring person. This issue generated much discussion and I sensed some conflict in the group about this. It was here that I decided to begin gathering further data and I asked the participant who had stated it was not a vocation to be the first interviewee. The interviews took place in different locations and they were arranged at a time and place to suit the participants. This interview took place in University on a day students would normally be attending, in my office.

Following the analysis of each interview, codes and categories were developed further; I considered what the key areas for further exploration were and selected another participant who could provide this following the theoretical sampling principle (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The following provides a brief rationale for my theoretical sampling methods with the second and third participants to exemplify this concept and process. The second and third participants were chosen due to their strong views on occupational therapy as a vocation to contrast the first participant in order to explore this topic area in greater detail. The second participant discussed how unprepared she currently felt for employment - participant three was chosen as through discussion with her, outside of the study I knew she was currently applying for jobs and I therefore wanted to explore this notion of preparedness and confidence with her.

Each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder. Transcription happened immediately after the interview and prior to the next one. Following transcription I read and re-read the transcript in attempt to become familiar with the data. Holton (2007:275) states that it is important that the researcher does their own coding in a grounded theory study as it “continually stimulates conceptual ideas”. The transcript was coded line by line highlighting words, phrases or concepts that seemed significant (examples of this can be found in the next chapter); the constant comparative ethos of grounded theory methods means that analysis and collection occur alongside each other and questions can be developed for subsequent interviews based on themes or categories that have emerged through analysis.

Outliers and Managing Difference

When considering the view that everything can be included as data, I began to review how to represent that data, and how to present data or codes that did not fit into the categories developed. There was data that had emerged following analysis that did not

concur with the common themes and views. I was unsure of how to judge the significance of this data and for this reason I was worried about discounting them just because they did not fit the developing categories and sub-categories (Schumuttermaier and Schmitt 2001). At this point I began to reconsider my preconceived ideas. I felt occupational therapy was a vocation, I had wanted to be an occupational therapist since I was 15 and by this age had already been working part time in a health and social care setting. I wondered how my views had permeated that data and constantly re-examined categories to ensure that any data that did not fit, had not been constructed as such, due to it not conforming to my view or understandings. Only one participant who engaged in both the focus group and interviews felt that her career choice was not a vocation. As the sample was small, (seven participants) it was difficult to ascertain if this was very significant, what did I do with data that did not conform, did I have ideas and norms about this established? What was interesting was the conviction of all other participants that it was a vocation, with discussions about passion and alignment of personal attributes to the philosophy of the profession, it was the contrast in these views for me that made this data significant.

Clarke (2005) discussed that data can only be considered as 'negative' or 'deviant' if the researcher holds a clear and preconceived theory they are trying to prove. Analysis and coding started in this project in an open way, and I had tried not to place more or less value on the differing codes or categories. However on reflection, I clearly did do this, the process of theoretically sampling participants based on what they might offer to the data collection process places value on different data. Where 'negative' or 'deviant' data emerges Mays and Pope (1995) propose you try to give a fair account of this and attempt to explain it. St Pierre (1997:175) proposes that "transgressive data", that which is emotional, sensual or perhaps responsive to questions in the data collection and does not fit a category should be accounted for. The situational maps proposed by Clarke (1995) I felt could help me represent all data. Data which linked to emotions and feelings which emerged due to the discussions in the interviews could be placed on the map; participants discussed their 'feeling' professional, such as "being an OT means something", "makes me part of something", and I included these data on the Professionalism map (Figure 11). There was a sense of pride in their profession implicit in the participants' discussions that was not captured in a sub-category, as there were too many different verbalisations of these feelings. However the map enabled me to

represent this somewhat by including direct narratives on to the map to highlight these emotions.

I was attempting to produce a located story which represented all views and valued all narratives. Although not all data would find its way into some sort of conceptual framework or final narrative that helped me better understand and share these understandings on notions of professionalism, I wanted it to be represented in some way through the process of mapping, I wonder if this is the *professional* nature of intervening as a professional?

To conclude, this chapter has focused on the methods I have used to gather data, providing a rationale for my choices. Discussions have continued around notions of contamination and the management of this including my relationship with the data. I have begun to consider how data is represented and accounted for following analysis. My awareness of the complexities and fragility of data collection and analysis was oppressive in the research process (Lather 2004) and I had to start to manage those tensions and frustrations. The next chapter will look at my journey into the borderlands, a creative space where tensions were reconciled or at least tolerated. The dynamic, fluid complexities of data representation will be explored.

Chapter 6 – Life in the Borderlands

This chapter has three aims. It will outline ways in which early articulations of grounded theory, as part of the modernist tradition (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), holds on to notions of meaning, reality and truth. As the chapter unfolds, it unravels some of the frustrations of my journey as researcher/map-maker, to explore the borderlands of modernism and postmodernism in a quest to disrupt some of the stronghold positions of modernist traditions in classical grounded theory research. Using an aspect of Adele Clarke's (2005) work around Situational Analysis, the final aim is to reflect upon life from the borderlands, as I document my struggles to handle and analyse data.

Introduction

Anzaldúa (1987, as quoted in Lugones 1992:37) describes a new, ambiguous state of being as “the new mestiza”. She says: “It is this learning to live with *la Coatlicue* that transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience. It is always a path/state to something else”. For Anzaldúa, the *mestiza* or hybrid is a figure experiencing the complexities of life in the borderlands. This existence holds enormous potential, as her multiplicity allows a new kind of consciousness to emerge moving beyond the binary relationships and dichotomies that characterize traditional modes of thought. Amongst her struggles, she finds herself living in the borderlands, *la Coatlicue* in a state of creation, which raises a number of interesting ideas for this study. In relation to making methodological moves from modernist traditions towards the promise of postmodernism in this chapter, this quotation opens up the idea of borderlands as spaces that allow for being in a state of creation, in a process of resistance.

Modernist Traditions and Early Articulations of Grounded Theory

MacDonald and Schreiber (2001:37) describe Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) take on modernist qualitative research (which they claim grounded theory falls into) as having three common features, these are:-

- (a) a quest for respectability
- (b) a realist ontology
- (c) a focus on the common (hu)man

As it was originally conceived, grounded theory fits neatly into the modernist tradition. The aim of classical grounded theory studies is to generate a theory grounded in data. Issues of reliability and generalisability have been obscured by using the grounded theory approach Silverman (1994) suggests. By not claiming to test theory in my research, these issues may have been side stepped rather than explored overtly. The quest for respectability may be seen to be supported by notions of theory and an association with positivist objective stances. In terms of my research my initial struggles with accurate enactment of the methodology and managing contamination can be seen as strategies employed to enhance my credibility and respectability. Living in the borderlands has enabled me to move away from a quest for truth and objectivity towards a more subjective and creative stance. This position is not postmodern either, nor stable; there is order, self imposed boundaries and a continued connection with some key practices of grounded theory in my research. My development has moved me to unfamiliar positions, embracing a range of ideas about theory, researcher distance, creativity in the research process and the making of meaning from data. The term grappling has been used throughout this thesis to encompass the frustrations and difficulties I have had in taking a methodological stance. The following quote from Anzaldúa (1987 in Lugones 1992:33) has supported my understanding of this state and why this grappling felt so difficult, “the in-between-self at the moment of germination may be unable to make new sense, and that is a terrifying possibility”. Britzman (1995:155) calls this “the limits of intelligibility” in relation to educational research and I can certainly engage with that as a concept. It was clear early in my research journey that many aspects of grounded theory that were influenced positivist notions, or at least judged by them, did not fit with my research practice, but it took time and confidence to critique those aspects of grounded theory and to act on that critique to develop my data analysis and understanding of data representation.

The realist ontology in grounded theory proposes there is a ‘real’ world to be discovered and a truth to be found (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) reject research driven by theories deduced from a priori assumptions – they sought their ‘truths’ in the everyday worlds of ordinary and marginalised people, enhancing the potential for human emancipation, a focus on the common (hu)man (MacDonald and Schreiber 2001). Voices should be heard and listened to and theory is developed by grounding it in these narratives. This was something I aimed to do. I wanted to hear

participant's perceptions and views. I attempted to distance myself from my existing knowledge and experience to let the participant's voices be heard untainted by the researcher. Again this was not a stance I held for long and quickly conceived that that unbiased, distanced, blank slate state was untenable.

The process of theoretical sampling, a process which aims to support the (hu)man focus and the realist ontological perspective can be argued to be deductive rather than inductive participants are selected to who may provide data which populates categories or to create new categories to confirm or support your suppositions (Schumuttermaier and Schmitt 2001). If your view is that of a classical modernist grounded theorist, you would shelve these preconceived ideas and start with data in an inductive process. The data however may be seen as constructs which reflect the values, assumptions and experiences of the researcher themselves (Silvermann 1997).

These processes, be they deductive or inductive are in my opinion interpretive and creative. I have argued that my claims, the outcomes of my study, are situated, contextual and open to interpretation and scrutiny. I have not held with the notion of theory as an outcome, I have not maintained that the process is solely inductive with a focus only on hearing and representing participants' voices, but my own too. I have moved to view respectability as attempting openness in my research as far as possible, so it can be held to scrutiny. My initial ideas of discovering the truth about employability were quickly dispelled and I realised it was a much more complex business. My research therefore began to move away from some modernist traditions.

Analysis of Data from the Focus Group – A Modernist Approach?

Prior to data analysis of the focus group material I revisited the grounded theory texts and decided to use the principles outlined in Strauss and Corbin (1998) 'The Basics of Qualitative Research', as I felt the guidance was clear and practically applicable to my needs. I started the analysis by doing what Strauss and Corbin (1998:102) refer to as open coding "being open to the text, exposing thoughts, ideas and meanings". Charmaz (2006) describes this as initial coding where words and phrases are given codes to represent action or meanings. I did not feel it was appropriate at this stage to transcribe verbatim the groups' discussions. Instead the key words, phrases and sentences which were recorded as bullet points on the flip charts formed the data set. The idea of the

focus group was to gather data from a critical mass, generating initial ideas and concepts, which could then be followed up in interviews.

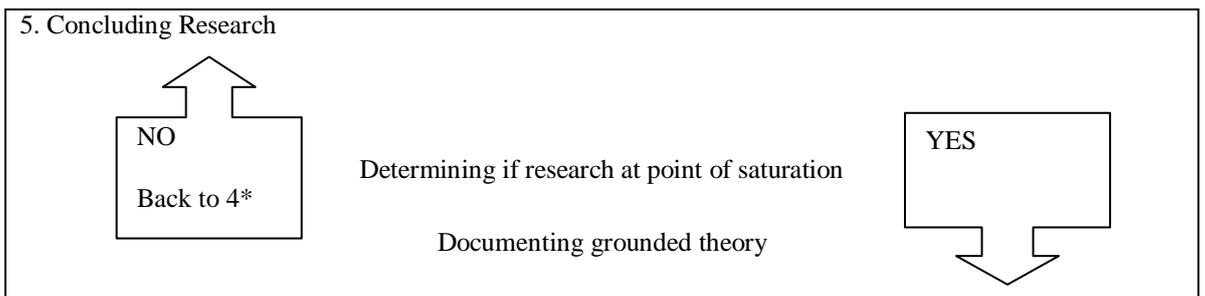
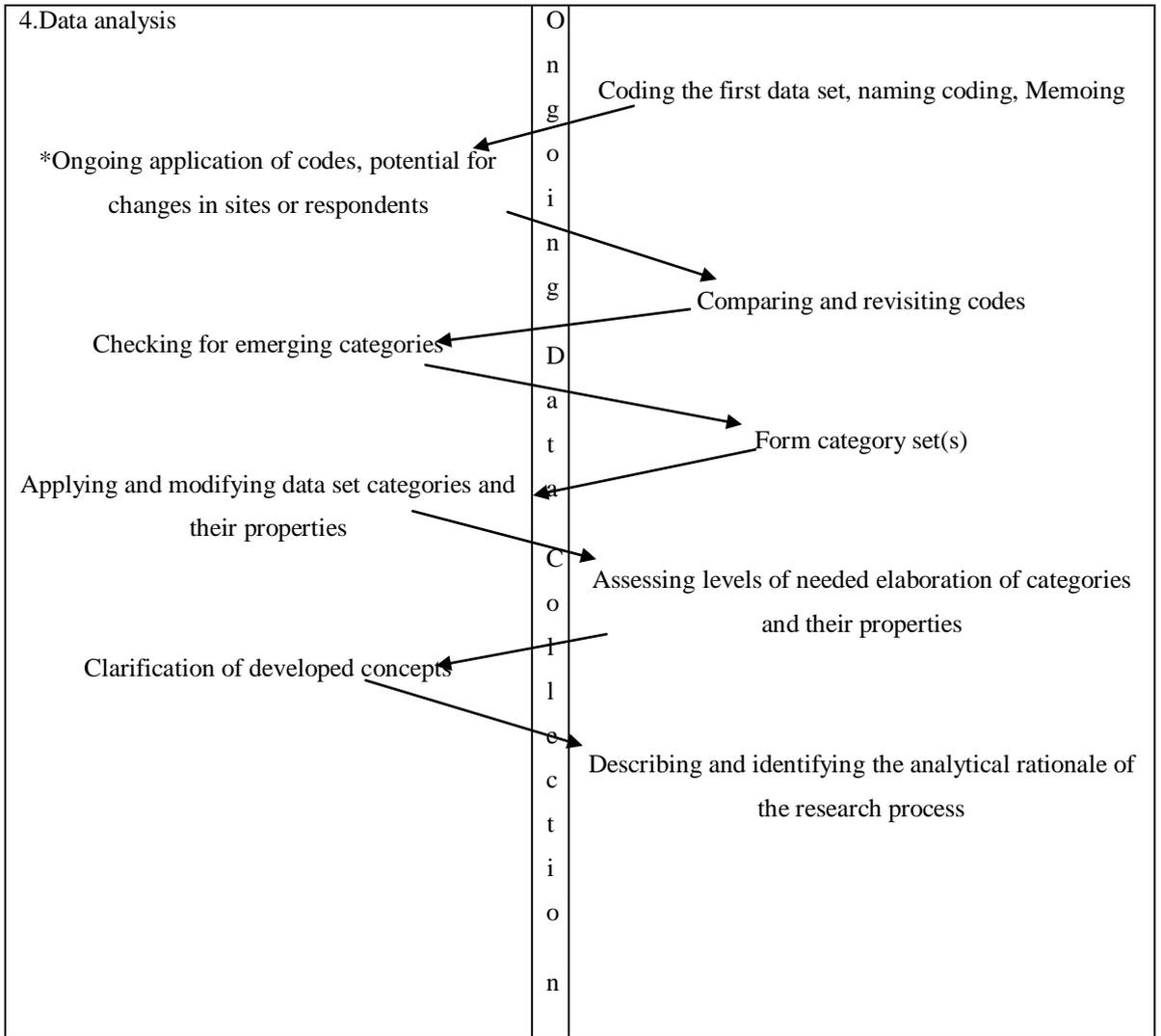
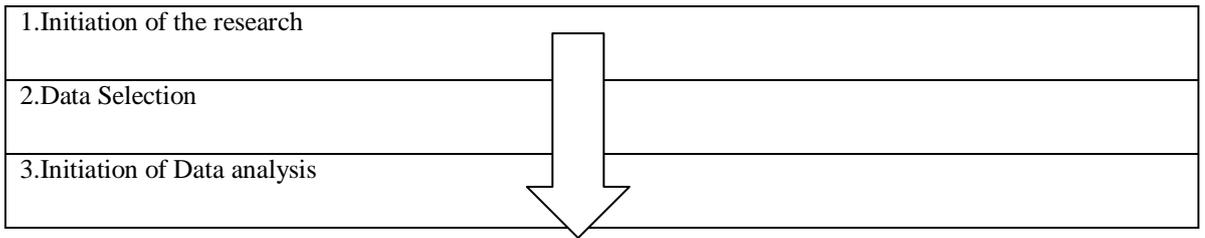
This aligns with a characteristic of modernist research as a realist ontology, a focus on the common (hu)man and a quest for respectability (MacDonald and Schreiber 2001 P37). I have discussed earlier in this thesis how the formal structuring of methods and the claims toward theory and generalisability have been components of classical modernist grounded theory viewpoints. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) work does reflect a move from realist to a more relativist position, where constructed and localised narratives form the grounded theory. Mills et al (2006) discuss the developments to grounded theory, such as those by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as 'evolved'. However the prescriptive methodology proposed may also be seen to reflect a desire for respectability, a factor more akin to modernism rather than postmodernism. When I began this process, a lack of confidence and motivation led me towards a method with some procedural clarity and the guidance by Strauss and Corbin (1998) offered this. Grounded theory was still appealing to me in terms of its structure, the variety of literature on the subject and the flexibility I could have in defining what was data and in collecting data in a way that I could determine.

As discussed in earlier chapters a constant comparative method is used in grounded theory, so data collection and analysis processes are interwoven (Egan 2002). The diagram (Figure 2) shows the different stages in data analysis when using grounded theory, Egan (2002) acknowledges that creativity of the researcher plays a part in the process but stresses the need for rigour in the stages of analysis.

Initial or Open Coding

The data were broken down into key phrases and words and by comparing the similarities and differences between them and my interpretation of the meaning or the action they described, I began to group them together and initial codes such as skills, attributes, what employability looks like, concerns, aides, type of job and placement experience, were allocated. Words and phrases such as ability to research, problem based learning, clinical reasoning, problem solving, presentation skills, currency of knowledge and theory, for example, were words allocated to the 'aides to employability' category.

Figure 2: Stages of data analysis in grounded theory



The analysis of focus group data (key words, statements and phrases recorded) was micro-analysed as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), microanalysis of narrative focused on individual words. At this stage codes were tentative and could be reorganised. I then tried to provide a label for the groups or clusters I had developed; Strauss and Corbin (1998) call this type of activity ‘concept building’, where phenomena are labelled. Most of the labels / group names came from the words the participants used, which were then adopted by myself; in vivo coding (Corbin 2004) refers to a process where codes or categories come directly from the words the participants used (Charmaz 2006). The categories that emerged were ‘experience’, ‘knowledge’, ‘personal attributes’, ‘practical skills’, ‘approach to employment’, ‘choosing a job’, ‘aides to employability’ and ‘miscellaneous’. Once the words and phrases were grouped and given preliminary labels, the data was reorganised into more focused categories. Some of which were renamed and sub-categories were developed. The category ‘experience’, for example, included sub-categories of ‘placement’, ‘practical teaching’, ‘work place’, ‘preference for area of work’ and ‘concerns regarding lack of experience’. The ‘placement’ category also had a sub-category of ‘role emerging placement experience’. Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to this stage of analysis as axial coding, and this will be discussed further. The categories of ‘preparedness’ and ‘personal attributes’ were labelled by myself. Using Egan’s diagram again for structure, what I have described above can be tracked in stage 4, comparing these ‘chunks’ or segments of data, developing categories, revisiting data to see where they ‘fit’, or whether a new category needed to be defined.

Axial Coding

Strauss and Corbin (1998:123) describe axial coding as “the process of relating categories to their sub-categories”, whereby the links or properties of the categories are not descriptive but conceptual. The codes and sub-categories should begin to answer the questions asked about the categories such as why, when, how and with what (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

In this part of the process of analysis the relationships and dimensions of the categories are explored, these categories remain tentative and subject to revision. This aspect of theoretical coding was dismissed by Glaser (1998) as an over complex component of methodology. However for me, this grouping of words, re-analysis and exploration of sub-categories began to feel like I was gaining a fuller explanation of the perceptions,

views and concerns of the students. I was becoming frustrated with the realist ontology and ideas of universal, singular truths and discovery as an outcome of the study. In engaging with the data I could begin to conceive that construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the data in a creative way felt useful and meaningful.

Nine initial categories were refined to six as part of the (re)constructive process, with most words and phrases on the flip charts being allocated to a group. One student commented when discussing aides and hindrances of the programme in relation to employability that they felt “*full time placements were demanding*” although other students had discussed practice placement experiences, this statement did not seem to fit into a category nor did it appear to assist my understanding of the research area. This phrase was disregarded from the categories at this time, however a note was made in my research journal of this as it may be that later following interviews and the development / refinement of categories that it would ‘fit’.

One category that was particularly interesting was that of personal attributes as there were some very diverse opinions and ideas. Some students felt that to be a ‘good’ occupational therapist you needed to be caring and have a genuine interest in people, where as another student stated that they disagreed with this

“I have not come into this (profession) because I think I am a caring person, this sounds awful but I do not class myself as a caring person...I am logical and practical” (Focus Group participant).

I felt this was an area that clearly needed further exploration in the interviews. There was not agreement here, indicating that these differing perceptions would not lead to universal explanations. The thing of most interest for me and perhaps most frustrating was the diversity that comes from a focus on individuals and my engagement with them and the data.

When it came to the analysis of the interview data I took the same approach, but transcribed verbatim; from the audio recording of the interviews microanalysis was carried out of individual words and phrases and the codes, were compared to the established categories from the focus group data, categories were populated and new categories were developed. I was already frustrated with the narrowing focus the process of coding and categorising data produced. Despite aiming to be inductive I was

creating more categories and trying to represent as much data as possible. Categories are not supposed to represent the data exactly, but are indicated by it (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Below is an explanation of the colour coding:-

- Yellow highlight = confidence / preparedness
- Pink highlight = professionalism / professional identity
- Green highlight = factors which contribute to feeling prepared

.....Yes, it came at the right time because the placement I'd done before that was a mental health one, and like I said I felt that staff perhaps treated the patients like children and they wanted to control every aspect of their lives, um, all sorts of things really, which I thought were quite unfair and quite inappropriate, and I've been kind of like mulling that over the summer and then to come back and do that module put all these vague thoughts I'd had really pinpointed them all, so it just came a the perfect time after that placement.

That's good. What about the role emerging placement, what was that placement all about.

Really difficult I can see how it would be very valuable, I think it depends on where you go, I don't think I went to ... it depends what you want to get out of it. I learnt to defend myself quite a lot I think because where I went to I felt that people didn't understand OT, well they had these preconceptions.

Right, OK

Urm and people didn't have much patience because they thought Oh you're only here for a few weeks so when I would try to explain, that isn't OT, this is OT, people just I don't care because you're going in a few weeks so I'm not really bothered.

Right

People had expectations that you could come in and fix somebody and you would see them and you would make them better and that would be the end of the matter.

Right OK

... and some people I think just felt very threatened that they'd been doing these things for years and years and you came in and you sort of this oh this is an entirely different profession I am going to walk all over you, and I tried very much to be aware of that but I didn't feel very welcome where I was and it was a struggle, so ...

So it's likely to be the nature and the quality of the placement that ...

Yes

That leads to what sort of impact, because what you were saying about having a professional identity and being able to describe OT, theoretically some of that should fall into place in your role emerging.

Yes

In that it's the time to be autonomous, it's the time to explain your role to people, it's the time to work autonomously, but then it depends on the type of placement you get.

Yes

What about the final placement, really kind of, people say it pulls everything together.

Yes people think it is great, it was nice to be there for such a long time as well, I always felt like it to me a week, probably two weeks to really settle in and feel like I knew what was going on and then you'd almost be half way through the placement and so to have 10 weeks was really really good and to be allowed to go off and do much more by myself as well it was great and it ... like I say I was itching to finish and test myself, I was started to get to that point at the end of it which was really good.

An ontological shift was beginning by engaging with the data, moving me from the realist ontology of classical modernist grounded theory to a more anti-foundational, fluid and creative position (MacDonald and Schreiber 2001). The development of categories was revealing multiple truths and perspectives indicating an instability or fluidity with the boundaries of the categories and the relationships between them.

Following the process of theoretical sampling each subsequent interviewee was chosen on the basis that they could offer information which could illuminate further the categories that had developed. The seventh interview was considered to be the final one as no new information arose from the discussions, that is to say all data that was analysed fitted into the established categories or had been discussed by other interviewees / participants in the focus group. Here is an example of life in the borderlands, as I retreat back to more safe, firm, more modernist position. Given my frustration at discovery and truth versus (re)construction and endless possibilities the decision to stop, to call it done in terms of data collection should have been a tricky one. It was not, there was a sense that I knew enough and I could stop, tempered with a feeling that I could never know everything on the topic.

Revisiting transcripts as I did throughout the collection / analysis process reignited my worries regarding distance and objectivity. Around the time of the second and third interviews I began reading around additional coding processes and techniques and I came across the work of Adele Clarke (2005). This seemed to offer an opportunity to develop my skills in coding and analysis of the data. I was feeling unhappy with the mechanistic processes of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and felt I was forcing data into categories in a rather superficial way. I was concerned about the narrow focus, the authenticity of the data, and the representation of participants' voices. My attempts at rigid adherence to the methodology, my quest for respectability, for doing the research

correctly, left significant feelings of unease. I also felt that the narrow focus of coding, comparing and category building left a great deal of data uncoded and I felt I had grouped data into over simplistic hierarchical categories. It was interesting that even after the focus group and initial interviews I had started trying to visually represent my data, playing with different versions of trying to represent 'reality', creating diagrams that indicated somehow the relationships between the categories I had constructed.

Memoing, the process by which a researcher makes field notes, records decisions and notes any significant dilemmas, issues or concerns, alongside this process, enabled me to check my own active role and creativity in the analysis. In this process life in the borderlands is expressed. Reflections on decisions and dilemmas as I moved from one position to another, was documented. In the transcript for participant 2, for example, there was a discussion regarding transition:-

“Well obviously there aren't any jobs in my clinical area at the moment, I am going back as a technical instructor...but I am an occupational therapist and I think there is going to be a bit of a role identity thing going on, I think...” (Interview 2)

I debated when developing the category 'transition' whether to focus on identity, a category already established or whether to expand the category to encompass identity / role change – I decided a broader term transition would cover the identity change from unqualified to qualified, undergraduate to graduate and would also encompass any work related changes a new role identity or new job could bring. This process represents my shifting from narrow, focused categories and modernist respectability to creation of new categories, broadening the view, representing as much data as possible and moving towards the postmodern borders. There are dalliances over the border and retreats back to original positions.

In interview 3 the participant stated;

“I think you have an identity, whether that is understanding the boundaries, but there is a sense of being an OT means something. At the moment I am still very much in my work identity, I know I will go on placement and I will go into my student identity.... At this time I am in transition” (Interview 3)

This participant is discussing the struggles of being a Rehabilitation Assistant in work where she is autonomous and the transition to occupational therapy student, where she is not. However the placement she discusses is the final one and immediately after this, she will have to make the transition from student to practitioner. I compared this to the previous participant's data and felt the issues around transitions remained pertinent, but also felt it was necessary to refine the category of identity to professional identity, as the students were discussing this particularly in relation to being an occupational therapist.

This excerpt particularly is interesting as it is about the struggles for this participant to negotiate being a powerless object buffeted by the forces of the profession in terms of history and practices set against her sense of autonomy. It represents the participant in the borderlands. The use of the excerpt to exemplify transition is also indicative of my movement in the borderlands and a preparedness to represent multiple perspectives, not just from different participants but the multiple perspectives of individuals.

The interplay here of my actions to generate more categories and sub-categories and the induction of refining identity to professional identity, again shows the movement to different positions in my thinking. I resist endless category generation, oppressed somewhat by adherence to the original inductive tenets of modernist grounded theory.

I noted in a memo that professional identity seemed significant but I was not sure how the participants defined this. Was it about identity more generally or in a professional context? I was trying to harness the truth here, to gain a simple, clear universal definition, where there was not one to be found. In subsequent interviews I was able to ask specific questions about this to explore the topic further (see example below)

“So do you feel you have got a professional identity as an occupational therapist and how has that developed?” (Question from interview 5)

Using the data gathered from these more specific questions, I could continue to populate, or not, the categories of professional identity and transition with data. The category of professional identity expanded through the constant comparative process to become professionalism and professional identity to encompass somewhat, the breadth and depth of discussions.

Memoing was one space for resistance and exploration, as I found the strict adherence to modernist grounded theory untenable. Lugones (1992:34) discusses how in this state in the borderlands you develop “tolerance for contradiction and ambiguity, by the transgression of rigid conceptual boundaries, and by the creative breaking of the new unitary aspect of old and new paradigms”. Embracing contamination and the move to creativity, acceptance of life in the borderlands was the liberating outcome of my grapplings.

In Egan’s (2002) structure this data analysis is the latter stages of section 4, as data was organised and modified, comparing data against developing categories. An accumulating level of unease began to develop. At first I repressed it and reasoned that it was due to my lack of experience, but I continued to feel I was forcing these words into categories and labelling them in what felt to be a rather superficial way. So whilst not wishing to completely disregard the analysis I had done, and accepting that those categories and labels were now formed and would continue to exist in my head even if they did not on paper, I began to consider alternative or additional analysis procedures, tentative steps had been made into the borderlands until now but this was a turning point, at which I felt confident and impelled to explore further. I felt the analysis was becoming mechanistic and my focus was more on what methodological rules I should be following and less on what I was learning from the data. I was becoming increasingly frustrated with this quest for respectability by trying to produce valid, generalisable data categories. Data did not seem to fit clearly into one category, it leaked out of the boundaries into others, there were linkages that were not represented by simple categorisations and data that was not codable, that did not fit or populate existing categories that I did not want to disregard. I began to feel constrained by the rigidity and by the sense that heterogeneity could not be represented as fully as I would like; later in their literature Strauss and Corbin have acknowledged the need for flexibility and creativity in the process (Mills et al 2001).

Moving into Methodological Borderlands

Figure 3: Banksy (2006)



In conversation with the graffiti artist Banksy, an old man was watching him write on the wall. He said, “You paint the wall, you make it look beautiful,” to which Banksy replied, “Thanks.” The old man then continued, “We don’t want it to be beautiful, we hate this wall, go home” (Parry, 2007). My frustrations with the borders of classical modernist grounded theory, restraining my thinking and action are reflected well in this image. As I moved into more postmodern realms it is important to outline the key tenets of postmodernism.

Considering Postmodernism

Anti-foundationalism proposes there is “no firm ground or singular, stable truth on which to base any system of beliefs, philosophical principles or research methodologies” (MacDonald and Schreiber 2001: 39). Macdonald and Schreiber (1991) explore the tenets of postmodernism and their discussion is summarised here. Postmodernism challenges any grand narrative or theory that offers universal explanations. It proposes truth is multiple and shifting, is constructed, both individually and collectively and reflects the social construction and reconstruction of reality. Authority is not only questioned, as a truthful (singular) or correct construct but is rejected; leaving debates around what constitutes right / wrong, good / bad, appropriate / inappropriate open for discussion. Clear solutions, norms or appropriate actions in given situations are left to an individual to determine; contextualised judgements and local stories rather than an overarching theory or narrative are proposed. Individual meaning can be made whilst celebrating difference. Reproduction is as valued as production, valuing everything as authentic, whether in its original form or when

deconstructed / reconstructed. Language is also significant in postmodern principles and is often dense and inaccessible; I discuss this later in this chapter in relation to meaning making in the categorisation of data on my maps. This makes debates involving postmodern ideas difficult to engage with and the grasp. The essence of postmodernism it seems is the notion of a fluid heterogeneity in the world. Here in attempting to define and boundary postmodernism I am again in the borderlands grappling with modernist tendencies of order and uniform assumptions.

In postmodernism truth is not rejected, but rather contextualised and situated, individual circumstances create their own problems and solutions and those will differ in individuals and communities (St Pierre 2000). I have learnt to stop over analysing my position, to acknowledge my location in the borderland and to look at the value and usefulness of my position. There are links back to my chapter on theory, where unproductive attempts to define it made way for a critique of its value and use in a particular context. Meaning-making without the signposts of certainty becomes dependent on understanding context as well as individual views. I therefore needed some guidance about how to include this context as part of my data collection so I could in some way represent the fluid and temporal, contextual backdrops against which the narratives should be situated.

“... an everyday example of the postmodern aesthetic is the re-appropriation and re-contextualisation of older forms” (Sim 1998: 350). This is how I see the maps I have made for data analysis and representation. They are drawn, redrawn, re-orientated and re-contextualised in each reading. Clarke (2005) has offered a re-appropriation of grounded theory. There is still order but this is only momentary, framed in the capture of the data and the reading of the map. The re-ordering is what enhances the authenticity. The maps enable me to indicate multiple perspectives and truths and how these can be reconstructed. I can make claims which are situated rather than generalising and that can account for individual agency and action. In attempting to represent data more visible I can offer them up for scrutiny in a more accessible way.

In the borderlands tensions continue. My issues with the production of theory as an outcome of a grounded theory study, has not been entirely resolved, but I have learned to manage these tensions. Moving into the borderland gave me space to consider these issues, to allow unresolved questions to remain. The atheoretical stance is discussed in

Chapter 3 which enables fertility, creativity and invention, unboundaried by order and unconstrained by historical notions which help to foster pluralism (Thomas 1997). This stance was attempted in the borderland, although by my very presence in it (moving away from modernist principles) I acknowledge that being atheoretical was not achievable. I have stated that preconceived knowledge could not be shelved and certain deductive processes, albeit subconsciously, may have been evident, theory was covert. In my study I focused on construction and reconstruction of data rather than on 'discovery' by embracing a creative and embryonic view of data collection and analysis. The different positions taken in the borderlands enabled action and reconceptualisations of my study, its data and their implications. "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary... a constant state of transition" (Anzaldúa 1987 in Lugones 1992:36).

Grounded theory does not foreground context unless it emerges through data analysis, so the nature of culture, society and individuals, those issues of social reform, power, marginalisation, alienation and cultural differences only surface if they fit and populate a category. These tensions and the conservative nature of grounded theory are not entirely addressed in this thesis. I did not focus on ideals but on reality as the participants saw it, I attempted to understand perceptions of professionalism as the individuals conceptualised them and did not clarify whether these were idealistic views that represented a need for change or whether there was an acceptance of a social / professional order, a narrative which participants and myself reconstructed in the context of practice, entrenched in more overarching narratives of professionalism. I strongly suspect the latter.

Since early modernist development of grounded theory forty six years ago, many aspects of life have changed. Research has changed and there is a multicultural, diverse and more inclusive society, with more of an acknowledgement in my opinion, of heterogeneity. Given that, grounded theorists and those associated with the methodology have had to respond to this. The work of Clarke (2005) on Situational Analysis, I felt might offer this and support my existence in the borderlands. It operationalised for me the influence of postmodern ideas on my grounded theory study to enhance my relationship with the data and deal with some of the frustrations outlined.

Situational Analysis

Figure 4: Frayed string



From a singular tight thread, to loosening and unraveling towards a mesh of complexity that frays at every edge, the image above attempt to represent my movement from early articulations of grounded theory mapping towards Clarke’s Situational Analysis (2005). I will begin this next section by summarising my interpretation of Clarke’s work in this area.

Situational Analysis is proposed as an extension of, or complementary to, grounded theory analytic methods. They are proposed as tools which, “draw together studies of discourse and agency, action and structure, image, text and context, history and the present moment to analyse complex situations of enquiry” (Clarke 2005:xxii)

Situational Analysis is a new approach to grounded theory that takes into account the postmodern turn (Clarke 2005). Building upon Anselm Strauss’s (1982) social worlds/arenas/discourse theory, it offers three main cartographic approaches:

Situational maps	Strategies for articulating the elements in the situation and examining relations among them
Social worlds / arenas map	Cartographies of collective commitments, relations and sites of action
Positional maps	Simplification strategies for plotting positions articulated or not articulated in discourses

(Clarke 2005:86)

I have chosen not to use social worlds / arenas and positional maps in this study. My issue with these maps relates to the tension between the temporal capture and the opportunity to re-read and re-draw the relational maps offered. By further analysing the context and analysing the positions of the data as a result of the relational analysis, I felt I was further structuring and fixing that which, I wanted to be more fluid and dynamic.

Although diagramming, the use of graphs, tables, flow charts, photographs, images or pictures to help visually represent the data is central to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) coding, Clarke's Situational Analysis (2005) appealed to my study in many ways. Firstly it seems to provide structure and guidance, whilst enabling creativity. In my analysis I had begun to experience dis-ease as I tried to generate rigid categories. This dis-ease marked the beginning of my methodological restlessness and urges to be creative in my engagement with the data. I had gained confidence and was able to take action by critiquing Strauss and Corbin's (1998) process of analysis. I have already acknowledged my concerns about evidencing my contamination as analyst and my penchant for order and tidiness and the mapping Clarke (2005) proposed addressed both these issues for me.

The second reason I was drawn to Clarke's Situational Analysis was traditional grounded theory's failure to look and the macro and consider the wider debates influenced by social, economic and political factors is denying the impact of these on human action. Postmodern ideas encourage the consideration of context from multiple and individualised perspectives. Layder (1989) believes that researchers who take a strong grounded theory stance in terms of methodology will deny themselves or exclude themselves from important and relevant debates. However both Denzin (1992) and Glaser (1992) would propose that the impact of these factors on human action is present and we should let the data speak for itself.

The third reason for adopting Clarke's approach was that coding data had already been really useful for me, as the process itself forced me into the data, it had to be read and reread and this helped me to develop a relationship with the data (MacLure 2012). However difficulties still arose in understanding the complexities of language, professional, culturally bound understandings and symbolic order. The postmodern difficulties in anchoring and grasping meaning are enhanced through coding; coding also recodes and renames (MacLure 2012) and it could be argued that this recoding

makes the data less accessible and ‘real’ meanings may be lost. It was important for me to balance this dilemma, there had to be some degree of order and analysis so I could understand commonalities and differences and so that I could disseminate the information, but I was concerned that the richness and diversity within each category could not be reflected by a single overarching name or theme.

Clarke (2005) suggests that coded or partially coded data is the best starting point for using maps, which, she considers to be analytic exercises, as a familiarity with the data, is better. The maps facilitate analysis, helping the researcher become more familiar with it, avoiding ‘analytic paralysis’ (Clarke 2005). The instability and fluidity of uncoded, unordered data would lengthen and increase the complexities of the analysis process.

All initial categories from the focus group and the first two interviews that I had developed using Corbin and Strauss’s (1998) methods were placed on the abstract situational map alongside other words, phrases or statements I had highlighted as being significant. As I continued the analysis of subsequent interviews, words and phrases were added to the map.

In the literature there does not appear to be discussions about tensions between grounded theory and situational mapping. In fact, Mather (2008) in his critical analysis on Clarke’s book proposes that her work is an extension of Straussian / developed grounded theory and that therefore they ‘fit’ with the methods of collection and analysis central to grounded theory. The critique discussed the narrow and temporal nature of the maps, offering only a snapshot of the data. The relationships and boundaries imposed by making a visual representation of categories and connections may also be seen as superficial and unnecessary, however I found that being able to visually represent the data helped with the accessibility of it for myself and I hoped, therefore, for others. Linking this discussion back to the on ‘(De) Sensitization and Notions of Theory’, MacLure’s (2010) ideas of how examples can be used to represent theory, similarly the categories and sub-categories can be considered as examples. The maps show my attempts to formulate a more coherent, less rigid more fluid and creative overview of the data, although by the nature of the ‘capture’ and the order imposed by drawing boundaries; the dynamic nature of the narrative is lost. The maps enable a partial, temporal and situated reading to be made by both the map-maker and the map-reader. It is important for me to navigate the reader to ensure they are aware of the map’s

limitations and the manner in which it should be read. I acknowledge however that the map is only as good as the map-maker and that is a significant criticism of using such methods of analysis. However I felt that my understanding of the data could only be enhanced by using a map.

Putting Situational Analysis to Work: from text to map

The maps, I hoped, would provide a mechanism for presenting all data on a page, to show my analysis and to show that which did not fit into specific categories – something I felt was important. I felt an ethical obligation to the research and wanted to give a voice to the participants as truly as I could. It therefore appeared to be important to include “fragments of ‘data’ that refuse to settle under codes or render up decisive meanings” (MacLure 2012:12).

Situational maps fall into 3 different categories; messy abstract situational maps, ordered situational maps and relational map. Initially I completed a messy abstract map (Figure 5), which listed all the categories, key words, statements and contextual considerations.

When making the messy abstract map, statements and views captured on the flip charts and from the initial coding of interview transcripts were placed randomly onto a page, this provided a snapshot or data capture in a visual way. The majority of the words were taken verbatim from the flip chart, “vocation”, “problem solving” for example. Other data on the flip chart had already been coded in the earlier stages of analysis (Initial and Axial coding as per Strauss and Corbin 1998). These categories also appeared on the messy map “aides to employability” and “hinders to employability” for example. Data categories from the initial coding following the focus group are indicated on the map by green and red shading, green to indicate categories labelled with direct data labels, red with labels developed by myself and indicated by the data. A number of participants in both the focus group and interviews discussed employers, some discussing specifically their own current employers and some discussing future employers, the general term “employers” was used to encompass the range of people / organisations, I justified this in field notes by considering that all current employers could also be future or potential employers and therefore a distinction between the two need not be made. As I highlighted words and phrases on the transcripts of the interview data I was able to then add these to the messy map, I repeated this process with every interview transcript and

was able to compare the words and phrases to those already on the messy map.

This process with every interview transcript and was able to compare the words and phrases to those already on the messy map, I questioned what meaning was being inferred by looking at the sentences or paragraphs that contextualised that chunk of data. Clarke (2005:88) proposes the first map is intentionally messy to make it “accessible and manipulatable”; the messiness in my first map is also a result of it being an amalgamation of data both coded and uncoded from the focus group, interviews and from my field notes / memos.

I then moved on to create an ordered map to provide further structure (Figure 6); this method forced me to consider further the temporal, spacial and socio-cultural elements that lay within the research field. There is a relational nature between the messy map and the ordered one, with the latter situating the first. I feel the relational map brings the two maps together well. Context can be indicated by text on the relational maps, and by showing supposed relationships between contextual issues and participants. However throughout the map-making process there is a filtering process and creativity on my part in drawing these maps.

I attempted a very rough and basic relational map; this is where I started to link defined categories and sub-categories in a visual way and attempt to show my assumptions about the relationships between those categories (Clark 2005). An example of the relational map for the category Professionalism is provided later in this chapter see Figure 11. I felt even this first very basic attempt at producing a diagram helped me interact with the data. Throughout the process I had to decide whether the meaning inferred was already captured on the map or whether new words or phrases need to be added. It felt that I was being more transparent about my decisions and assumptions about the data and the relationships between them. The process of comparison and the boundaries of categories might be better explored I felt by ‘laying them out’ on a page , helping me ‘see’ them and by seeing where I was placing them in relation to other categories I could begin to explore my assumptions about boundaries and relationships.

Figure 5: Abstract Messy Map

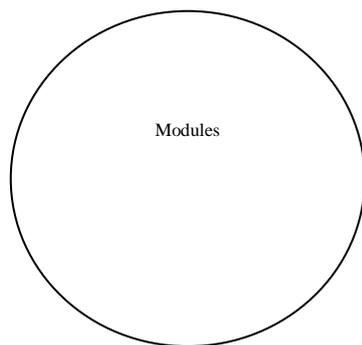


Figure 6: Ordered Map (Clarke 2005) using interview and focus group data

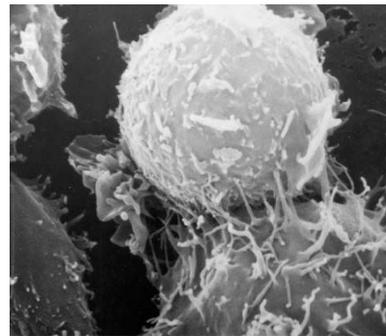
<p>Individual human elements / actors Students Lecturers</p>	<p>Non human elements /actants Employment settings Placement settings Educational setting</p>
<p>Collective human elements / actors Health and social care settings Employers The professional body</p>	<p>Implicated / silent actors / actants Patients Employers Academics Patient’s carers / friends and family</p>
<p>Discursive constructions of individual and / or collective human actors Employability Employability Skills Confidence Placement experience as significant Students have to ‘fit in’ to jobs Type of job chosen and relationship to experience Aides and hinders to employability</p>	<p>Discursive construction of non human actants</p>
<p>Political / economic elements Choice of job pay / hours Context of NHS</p>	<p>Sociocultural / symbolic elements Caring nature of profession Vocational Interest in people Comfortable with disability</p>
<p>Temporal elements Changes to NHS and Health and social care funding and structures</p>	<p>Spacial elements Geography – where jobs available / placements available</p>
<p>Major issues / debates (usually contested) Gulf between academia and practice Quality and range of experience Occupational therapy as a vocation Mature students advantages / disadvantages</p>	<p>Related discourses (Historical, narrative and / or visual) Modernisation of NHS Health and well being – view of illness and wellness, dependence / independence Gender and the caring professions Mature students and flexible access to study</p>
<p>Other kinds of elements Programme is a part time 4.5 year degree</p>	

Far from a neatly ordered and bounded circle as extracted below from the Focus Group relational map (Appendix 3), I envisage disruptions to the surface, growths from within, new tentacle-like features that reach out, connect and break membranes. The use of diagrams although supporting the creativity of the researcher, can have their own constraints. The drawing of the diagram felt artistic, yet did not quite represent the dynamic and complex nature of the categories.

Figure 7: Deconstructing the boundaries of categories



Messy abstract Map



Relational Map

My presence cannot be removed from the maps. The following quote from Clarke (2005) which raises the multi-dimensional nature of the maps supports the view that my presence on the map can also be evident. The multiple positionalities mean that I could read the map from a stance of my choosing and in doing this may view the data differently. A participant may view the map with a different perspective based on their experience and knowledge. There is interplay and fluidity on the maps. The view does not solely depend on the initial stance, just as the view from a Ferris Wheel offers a particular view initially, but as you move round your view is broader, changing and by the end of the journey more diverse, fragmented, complex. Each rider will come with their own understanding of the landscape they see before them and their own experiences and narratives linked to that landscape. Turning the map and adopting different positions will give a different or differentiated view and each viewer or reader will interpret what they see based on their own positionality.

“My argument is that we need to conceptually replace modernist unidimensional normal curves with postmodern multidimensional mappings in order to represent lived situations and the variety of positionalities and human and non human activities and discourses within them. Otherwise we merely continue performing recursive

classifications that ignore the empirical world” (Clarke 2005:25)

The messiness of the first map was useful and Clarke (2005) supports the accessibility / visibility of the data the drawing of the map can produce. The ordered map was somewhat useful, the headings made me think about the data in different ways but I found the structure limiting and unappealing. I needed to closely examine exemplars of this map to get ideas of what to put under the headings, I felt the categories hindered my creativity as I struggled to understand what ‘discursive construction of non human actants’ might be. Overall the map did serve as an analytic exercise, so fulfilled its purpose, but was less useful for me than the messy version. Again here I see my struggles in the borderland, another pull to mechanistic adherence to methods dictated by others rather than liberation and creativity; an ongoing tension with authenticity and authority. I do not know why I persevered with this type of map as I have assessed the usefulness and value of it as low. The move into the borderlands and relinquishing hold of authority left me in a place less safe and less clear. I can reflect now that it was for safety that I continued to use and write about the map despite its value in the process of data analysis and representation.

Attempting to locate myself in the research field, I felt, was meaningless without providing context to the research; the maps enabled me to show some context. My position can be located in several places on the map and can only provide a temporal snapshot of position at the time of drawing the map. On the relational map (Appendix 3), for example, drawn with focus group data, I could position myself in terms of ‘Academics’ which relates to a professional role I had, (again my contamination is evident as this is my term and not the participants). The reading of the map from this position would be different from placing myself on other co-ordinates. As an academic, I may filter the information from the map with a frame of reference that looks at students as graduates, employers as stakeholders and the professional body in terms of quality assurance. However were I to shift to a position as Module Leader in the category ‘Module’ my perspective will be more ‘local’ thinking about the pre-requisites for the module, the module contribution to the overall programme and the skills or knowledge that the students need to meet those particular learning outcomes. This will certainly be in a professional context with an awareness of the macro but micro positions on the map can be taken which, will alter the direction and view of the data that is seen. The images below, linking again to my borderland discussions show the

Berlin Wall. The view of the wall depending on your position will be different, a localised picture or a broader sweep can be taken depending on your position, your understanding of the view and the way you articulate that understanding will depend on your experiences and knowledge and will change over time. The boundaries imposed to categories may block the view of the other aspects of the map, putting up a wall which can impact of the reading of it.

Figure 8: Images of the Berlin wall



Relational Maps

Clarke's (1995) suggestion that the researcher should use their own experiences and investigate the sites of silence I think aligns well with my research development; giving me permission to be creative was liberating. I feel the use of the relational maps as analytic exercises enabled this creativity supporting me to consider sub-categories and the possible relationships between the categories. In drawing these maps I often went back to the data and 'discovered' something I had not initially felt was significant but now was, in relation to a more specific category area. I was also able to group key words together under umbrella terms – such as 'skills' for example and add in aspects of my own interpretation of their experiences. I will use the example of the relational map for Professionalism to illustrate this further. (Figure 11 Relational Map: Professionalism).

The relational maps helped me show the general categories but also display sub-categories and potential relationships. In Figure 11, I made all circles on the maps the same size so that I did not dictate greater or lesser significance for any category. Lines were drawn from sub-category to category to infer a relationship; the clustering of sub-categories inferred a relationship between sub-categories. I am aware however that there

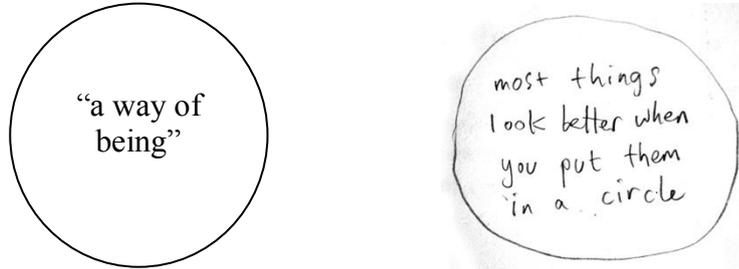
will have been differences in the interpretation of significance of the categories by the participants and this may also be likely for the reader of the map, further sites of contamination. Lines were drawn out to sub-categories and quotes. The sub-categories that had been developed in the initial analytic process were written on the map and a circle was drawn around the text. As I developed each map for a particular area of focus, I revisited the transcript re-reading it and looking for significant data that could populate each map, these were added to field notes and then compared to each other and established sub-categories to form new sub-categories or to add to existing ones. I clustered together sub-categories on the map which, seemed to have synergies, 'Code of Ethics, Health and Care Professions Council' and 'College of Occupational Therapists' all were linked to professional regulation and accountability, for example, so they were clustered together on the map.

When describing what professionalism actually was different quotes resonated "being an OT means something", "a certain presence about you", "a way of being", "putting my professional hat on". I added these quotes to the map not as sub-categories but to serve as exemplars for the main category being considered. Additional text was added to the map that I felt was relevant to the category but that was not directly linked to a sub-category. The purpose of this was to ensure there was no 'hidden' data or sites of silence that there may be data for. Words such as 'holistic' are fundamental to occupational therapy philosophy and practice, and this was discussed by participants in the interviews, however participants were not explicit as to how being holistic related to professionalism. I could infer meaning but chose not to, so simply added this text on the map to add another piece to the jigsaw.

Despite my attempts to represent complexity, oversimplification is discussed by MacLure (2012) as she proposes that coding misses movement and difference and that things are often fixed in place by the coding structure. The combination of circles and lines (that include the lines forming letters in the words chosen to denote categories / subcategories) seem to deny any sense of movement and of difference. At a glance and amongst a two dimensional representation, the circles on the map are enclosed, creating a bounded space, through which nothing seems to be able to pass. They contain words, hold on to and fix meanings that seem to denote singular ideas. They are connected by long, straight, non-tangential lines. These features are reminiscent of modernist

preoccupations with transparent language, realist ontology and with traces of respectability where truth can be sought, lines followed, circles drawn.

Figure 9: Most things look better when you put them in a circle

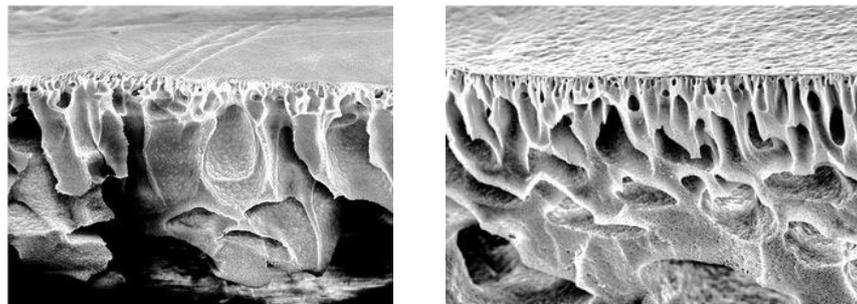


Excerpt from Relational Map Figure 11

Banksy, 2009

However, I would argue the maps are more fluid and dynamic than I can ever hope to represent here. The map needs to be imagined suspended in space. The circles represent fluid, porous spheres, the surface and interior made of complex heterogeneous structures.

Figure 10: Porous surfaces of spheres



Beneath the porous surface lie subcategories drawn from a plethora of data sources. These bear a relationship with but also fragment away from each other under and across the sphere's surfaces. The lines that connect the spheres are not flat and straight, but complex relative structures that twist, turn and shift direction and surfaces as you follow them with your eye. (See figure 12 Baobab Tree)

Figure 11: Professionalism and Professional Identity Map: Relational Analysis using Situational Map (Clarke 2005) – Interviews

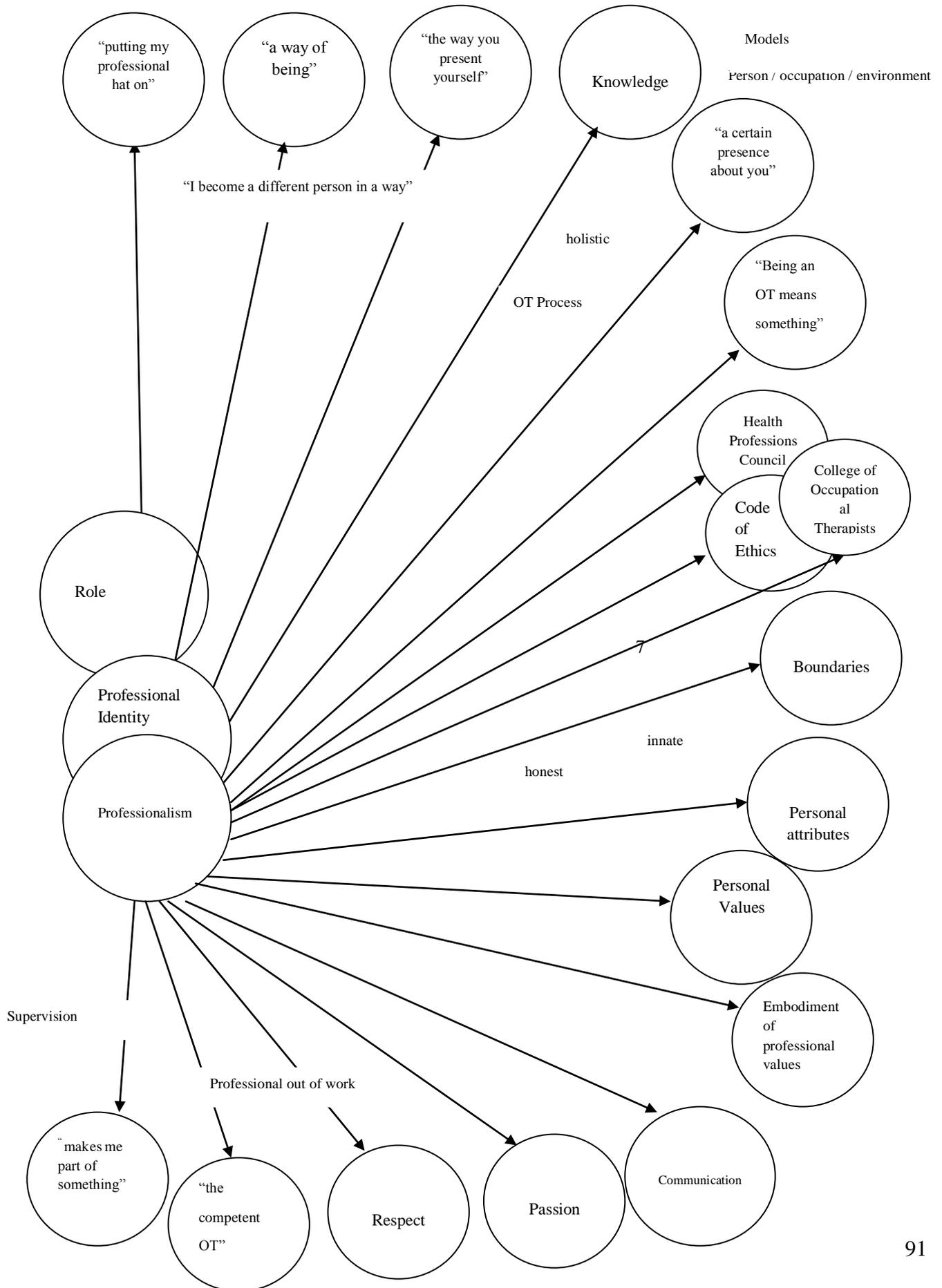


Figure 12: Baobab Tree



www.bigstock.com · 762878

In drawing the maps it became clear that the text, the labels of the categories and narrative excerpts were of great importance and the significance of these words and their meaning needed to be examined in greater depth. The difficulties lie in defining each category, position or view, by attempting to label it to support the understanding of meaning. What I am suggesting here though is that these groups of words, letters are only ever momentarily accumulated to form certain meaningful encounters, seemingly fixed, suspended as signifiers of something that is already passing.

Figure 13: Mushroom Cloud



In reading literature around language and meaning Derrida's ideas of 'différance' is a moment where meaning is deferred by using other words to signify the meaning of the original (signified). The signifiers on the map, the speech, the words produced from my interpretation are the categories and narrative excerpts, comparison of categories and the language used could support the understanding of the meaning of the other categories, by comparison to what it is / they are not, but does this difference actually defer the meaning of the original (signified)? The signified however may be professionally contextualised and the meaning may vary depending on the viewer of the map

(Schostak 2002). Neither conflicting opinion nor views that correlate are given precedence, all views and positions can be placed on the map. The map again I felt made this more visual and made these comparisons more overt. The intended meaning (mine or the participants') could be supported by looking at the other categories and the relationships between the categories.

In considering how the meaning of the categories could be interpreted, the concepts of 'point de capiton' and anchoring point (Atkinson 2004, Lacan 1977, Zizek 1989) seemed relevant. The point de capiton is the point at which the signifier and signified are tied together to stabilise or anchor the meaning. It is based on psychological ideas developed by Lacan (1977) but used more recently by Zizek (1989) in his critical commentaries on contemporary culture and politics, to justify particular capitalist motivations behind various forms of exploitation. Lacan's and Zizek's differentiated 'point de capiton' are distinctive, these were all useful ideas in trying to understand how my thinking had contaminated the map-making process. If the categories and narrative excerpts are the signifiers that link together the text on the map to make meaning, then the meaning is undoubtedly contaminated by me as the researcher as I have privileged and labelled data. In using profession specific language, for example, I have situated the map in professional context, of my own understanding. Language on the map relating to professionalism has 'OT process', Models', 'Code of Ethics', all 'real' data but my choice to use these labels and excerpts on this map shows how my perceptions of professionalism bias the process of analysis; had I not been an occupational therapist and not been a lecturer on the programme would I have associated these concepts with professionalism? Atkinson (2004) discusses how the point de capiton reveals the symbolic order, my idea of professionalism despite immersion in 'real' data still influences the analysis – what is drawn on the map is not the symbolic order of the students but my interpretation of it, it has become my symbolic order. Perhaps evidence again of my covert deductive processing.

“The ‘quilting’ performs the totalization by means of which this free floating of ideological elements is halted, fixed – that is to say, by means of which they become parts of the structured network of meaning” (Zizek 1989:87)

Derrida's (1978) purpose is to continually challenge notions of fixed meaning. He proposes that there is no point where signifier and signified are tied to create meaning, meaning remains clear or unclear depending on the reader and the framing or

contextualisation of the reading. Zizek's (1989) notions of a deliberate and manipulated fixed meaning to serve particular purposes and Derrida's (1978) determination to wander initially felt like different ends of a spectrum upon which I had to locate myself, however as my research journey continued I realised that my ownership of the maps, the meaning I made of them and the way I utilised maps to enhance this, was in fact of greater importance than 'taking sides'. In the context of my maps I felt both viewpoints could be considered. Meanings in the maps are fixed, deliberately quilted into the map but with the acknowledgement that the map provides a temporary snapshot, which is situated. The meaning will wander as soon as a different position on the map is taken, that is to say with each reading of the map.

With these more complex features of spheres, relative lines and slippery words in mind, if the circles and their relationship to one another, as well as the lines, are taken as I propose, as a temporal snap shot on each reading, then there is always the infinite possibilities of re-readings or re-drawings of the map. The maps can show difference and contradictory views within one structure and the re-reading allows for data to become something new (MacLure 2012). The maps do not entirely address issues of representation, nor do they address the difficulties with language and meaning but they do at least attempt to represent the data in a more complex way.

Taking a sub-category, 'Respect' from the professionalism map (Figure 11) I will attempt to show some postmodern ideas at work. The relationship to the category infers that an aspect of professionalism is respect. Respect for patients / service users, colleagues, carers and respect for the profession and its professional body was all discussed by participants. The leakages from this category and the cross contamination to other categories on the map, 'The College of Occupational Therapists', 'embodiment of professional values', 'personal values', 'boundaries' and 'Code of Ethics' all could have relationships with each other. The straight directional lines on the maps cannot fully represent this interconnectedness, this mesh of meanings and understandings seeping from one category to another. The construct of respect is historically, experientially and contextually bound, ideas about respect for elders and respect for authority may underpin this concept for participants, and readers of the map. Gender roles, ethnicity, culture and religion may play a role in individual constructions of this term. These contextual considerations are only foregrounded in modernist grounded theory if they emerge through comparative processes. The maps are a compromise to

mediate my concerns with modernist grounded theory and my wish to share and disseminate. My implied meanings and interpretations may not be evident to the reader, they will make their own. This means that the boundaries and the order is fluid and bound in localized narratives and individualised epistemologies.

Despite trying to represent the data more fully and less hierarchically I have succumbed to a structure which, albeit momentarily in the reading, stabilises the relationships and does not show intensity, speed of change or the numerous relations between and amongst the sub-categories. The categories and sub-categories although not aborescent, do infer hierarchy by the nature of the category and the sub-category (MacLure 2012). In the future a development of these maps could be to consider virtual worlds where notions of rhizomatic movement, depth and interaction can be further developed.

In my mind, these maps are alive, full of energy and vibrancy. For me the usefulness of the maps represented here relates to the ability to show the data on a page, to dissect them into categories / sub-categories and to indicate my assumptions about the relationships between them. I felt able to add narrative and key words even if they were not in a category. It was both an issue of accessibility and of representation. I felt no other tool I had used enabled me to see, share and engage with the data in the way the maps did. I enjoyed the artistic nature of drawing them, yet felt frustrated at the limitations of rendering it two dimensional. However despite some limitations, maps have enabled me to conjure action, movement and development in terms of the data analysis and in terms of my development.

Overall I drew six maps, one using the categories and flip charts from the focus group and five focusing in on the categories Values, Programme, Professionalism, Placement and Employability.

Situating Myself in / on the Maps

My position is interrelated to the positions of others, being present on the map is not something I can do alone; “The disclosure of oneself as someone, as some *one*, can only happen against—or better with—others” (Biesta 1998:17). Attempting to locate myself and making the contamination explicit can only happen against a backdrop of students, employers, the National Health Service, professional bodies and the programme for example. It was impossible for me to not view the map as an academic – I was involved in programme development and delivery, I taught on modules, have written student

references and tutored individual students.

My experiences permeated my view and formed conceptual spectacles through which I viewed the data and the map. It is this view that may have contaminated and biased data collection and analysis. As part of my role I had to oversee quality assurance measures linked to the professional body, moving myself to this perspective on the map may have altered my view and reading of the map.

The Authentic Map: embracing contamination

In the abstract / messy map (Figure 5) I could attempt to represent all the data, the frame or border of the map represents the temporal capture of the data, like the edges of a photograph. What this map does not reflect however is the filtering of the narrative by myself, albeit subconsciously, which happened in the focus group, where I had decided what was significant and what was not from the discussions and recorded significant phrases / words on the flip chart. When taking a modernist stance, notions of contamination and inauthenticity caused me concern and can be traced right back to these early stages of collection, although I checked with participants as I recorded the data, some privileging of data may well have been happening here. My covert ideas of correctness, the possible subconscious answers to my prompts may have been at play as I selected data to record on the flip chart and as I summarised participant's views in the focus group, the language would have been influenced by my understandings of meaning. This was the early stages of research, I had not yet ventured into the borderlands and ideas of capturing the voice of the participants and authenticity against the need for credibility created tensions. Data which fitted with my pre-existing views / knowledge may have subconsciously been viewed as significant over that which did not and therefore may have been noted / acknowledged in the discussion. From the borderlands of Clarke's work, where grounded theory embraces subjectivity, local interactions that continually engage the researcher are the point of departure. From this position, I would resist tendencies to consider both the researcher as powerless embroiled in the forces of history and nature and her agency as reigning supreme. Instead, I lean to Luca (2009) who discusses how the agency of the researcher is being recognised, intricately woven into situations, embroiled amongst contexts, history and mediated by gender, class, ethnicity, as Clarke suggests, "Researchers should use their own experiences of doing the research as data for making these maps" (2005:85).

This quote reinforced what I was feeling in relation to how my subjective experiences contaminated the process. There are shared understandings and views being developed in my study as participants and I interacted and the data was analysed. I have questioned myself about whether in the focus group or interviews the ‘significant’ views / data captured were significant to me or to the participants. I could argue that the fact that as participants raised these issues in the research interview context then they should be perceived as significant. However was my ‘hearing’ and judgement about what was significant influenced by my preconceived ideas, experience, a priori assumptions, knowledge and values? Acknowledgement of this goes against the modernist grounded theory principles of not using theory of previous knowledge but to focus on the voices of those in the study. I would have to say undoubtedly that these issues did influence and were another step into the borderland. I reflected at the time of the focus group that this could potentially be an issue and attempted to manage this contamination by not prompting or probing too much in the discussions and I attempted to facilitate a discussion that was participant led. Luca refers to a “circling of consciousness” (2009) referring to a process where self-awareness, knowledge and reflexion come together, I recognise this is a process that I have been through in the journey of my research but especially as analyst.

“Being a consumer, a critic and a creator of knowledge, requires participation in the world, immersion, interpretation and reflection of understandings. Knowledge remains abstract and pre-reflective until researchers engage in a circling of consciousness, which is not a linear process but one involving abstract-reflection to reflection-in -action and embodied reflexivity. It is characterised by embracing knowledge tensions with integrity, truthfulness and commitment.”

(Luca, 2009

www.wales.ac.uk/en/featuredcontent/articles/staffarticles/EmbodiedResearchandGroundedTheory.aspx)

I feel my tensions around embracing contamination are captured in this quote and my struggles to use my knowledge and to be creative have links to this notion of “circling of consciousness”. My potential to privilege data on the basis that it fits with my experiences, understandings or values is possible but I feel I have always tried to acknowledge possible contamination from the outset. This links to discussions earlier in this chapter about the ‘point de capiton’ (Lacan 1977, Atkinson 2010) and continuing

discussions regarding contamination and liberation. Further evidence of life in the borderland and the movement between modernist and postmodern ideas.

Is there evidence of this privileging on the map? I am not sure that this has been done consciously but there is certainly some evidence that my knowledge and experience permeates the analysis. Participants discussed the need for good team working skills, problem solving and communication; these are listed on the messy map as individual statements/ fragments of narrative but the more global term, which could encompass these skills, the term 'generic skills' is also there (see Figure 5 abstract messy map). I have grouped the skills together in the early stages of analysis and used the terminology generally found in the literature, a term from my own frame of reference. It does not change the data as the individual skills discussed are still there but it is interesting that my knowledge and influence is evident and clear on the map alongside the views of the participants. I have accepted this notion of my views and experiences being present on the map alongside those of the participants. This reflects ideas discussed about multiple voices and perspectives existing within the dynamics of the map. There is no truth, no discovery or consensus. Data is constructed and reconstructed with each drawing and each reading.

However, I recognised there is also another deeper level of contamination in relation to authority and power that is associated with a shared professional context. Despite efforts to address the balance of power from my perspective, participants were more likely to say what was expected, what they thought were the 'right' answers because the peers and a tutor, from their professional group were present. The theory of conformity, where behaviour or views are changed due to perceived or real group / peer pressures to meet social or cultural norms, may have led to participants providing answers that they felt they ought to and these may not have reflected their true views (McLeod 2007). The modernist ideas of authority and power are undercurrents in the maps. Again these notions situated each category, each sphere as these notions permeated data. The difference, the heterogeneity I was hoping for may have been hampered by my very presence in the research field. Biesta (1998) offers a framework to shift the way we think in relation to intersubjectivity in research.

Intersubjective Spaces

The dynamics of the relationships between myself and the other people and categories

on the map, the intersubjective spaces (Biesta 1998) where discourse happens between data and myself is visible on the relational maps. The lines drawn are an attempt to show relationships and interactions indicating possible discourse and connections between categories and sub-categories.

Clarke (2005) proposes that situational mapping moves grounded theory around the postmodern turn by situating knowledge producers, acknowledging complexity and difference and making situated claims rather than claiming formal theory production. I propose that she also does this by focusing on the subjectivity and identities of those in the research field, through positioning themselves on the map and enabling the relationships and discourses that occur in these intersubjective spaces to be more visible (Biesta 1998). Kendall and Wickam (1999) suggest the subjective positions in the discourse can be contradictory and irrational. However, the potential transgression, pushing myself the researcher out of the boundaries of a particular position and viewing the map from other positions is a useful journey (Foucault 1977). This transgressive moment nudges the boundaries of the categories or position / coordinates on the map, which are only ever temporal and enables a step out of the 'limits' of the position, towards another, which would require the map to be redrawn as the dynamics and relationships change. Embracing contamination, accepting that traces of my footprints are visible on the map, is a transgression in itself, a transgression of classical modernist grounded theory, moving into the borderlands and mapping contamination I hoped in some way to acknowledge the limits of the study. My "contemporary sensitivities" (Schostak 2002:6) perhaps derail the original principles of Glaser and Strauss (1967) by making explicit my discomfort with notions of discovery, researcher distance and the production of formal theory. Clarke's (2005) methods have provided a bridge upon which I can take the principles of grounded theory and my sensitivities and idiosyncrasies into my research field and into the borderlands, without abandoning them altogether.

The Embodiment of 'Knowers'

Clarke (2005) discusses her views that grounded theory be pushed "around the post-modern turn" by acknowledging that those who produce knowledge are individuals in differing contexts and that there will therefore be individual and multiple truths, it should be these contexts which ground a study. She would argue that 'knowers' are embodied and knowledge is situated. In this study the 'knowers' would be both myself

and the participants; using the ordered and relational situational maps helped me examine and consider who the other ‘knowers’ may be in this study. Acknowledging their presence was useful to help me better understand the perspectives of those I was engaging with, partial perspectives suffice as long as I was not claiming to gain a complete or full picture (Clarke 2005). The research focus itself limits the exploration of the topic and questions become situated both in the context of the social world within which the researcher and participants exist, but also because of the very nature of the constant comparative methods of the grounded theory principles and ideas of theoretical sampling. As each participant is selected following analysis, these limits become more constraining and the research focus more narrow. Although the questions become increasingly situated and focused, the benefit of interview is that the participant is still able (should they wish) to pursue other avenues and bring up any topic.

Below is a trail of interview questions, written sequentially, which shows how questions developed and became more focused and situated due to the analysis of previous data, the initial sets of questions were general questions about values and philosophy, I was trying to ascertain whether they felt personal values informed career choice:-

- “..so is it anything to do with your own values or philosophy?”
- “..so do you think it has a lot to do with your personal philosophy as well, that fits both?”
- “..do you think it is about your personal values as well , sort of aligning those to kind of the professions values?”

As participants raised the notion of a vocation, in the next two interviews a specific question was asked to develop this strand of enquiry:-

“Do you see it as a vocation?”

“Yes it is and I think to be a good OT and to keep your passion about it I think it has to be.”(Interview 5)

“Do you see it as a vocation?”

“I think maybe it is for me I never really thought it was, it was always a practical thing when I first started.....But its turned into more of a

vocation, I think because, especially your mental health which is what I've ended up going into, I've been on mental health placements, I've seen other professionals treating patients in what I think is quite a horrible way really, and it always seemed to be OTs that have a bit more understanding.”(Interview 6)

When discussing professionalism the next participant discussed cognitively rehearsing,

“Urm, I've got a little commentary all the time in my head saying is this what a competent OT would do? Would a competent OT say that? Would a competent OT wear those shoes to work and that's always in the back of my head and I don't know why, but I've always found it really helpful.”(Interview 6)

I wondered what they perceived as a “competent OT” so the next question was asked in the subsequent interview:-

- “What do you think makes a competent OT? What do you think a competent OT looks like?”

It is really interesting to me that this strand seems to have taken an almost cyclical course, the construction, deconstruction and reconstructive cycle that is a facet of postmodern thinking. In the final interview I again am asking about values:-

-”could that be about somebody's values and the way they view people more than someone's knowledge or qualifications?”

I could direct my questions to explore issues raised in previous interview to try and unpick a topic and gain more depth and breadth of understanding from the subsequent participants. I think this questioning strand demonstrates how I was able to do this. This is another aspect of researcher creativity and influence.

These historical traces of questioning are interesting here, as it is suggestive of an everyday example of the postmodern aesthetic, which is “... the re-appropriation and recontextualisation of older forms..”(Sim 1998: 350). Far from taking an objective,

disembodied stance, I am embroiled in local decision-making, being responsive to the particular situation and revisiting (but not ever in exactly the same way) similar questions. Clarke (2005:20) dismisses the idea that researcher's disembodiment is possible and that the stance of the "modest witness" is not one that can be taken by the researcher, with power to establish fact. She argues that a stable, unbiased and unobtrusive position is impossible to achieve and therefore it cannot be said that the researcher adds nothing to the study (Clarke 2005:20). Consideration is given as to what can be perceived as legitimate knowledge, by not acknowledging the influence of power and the role of the researcher in the production and analysis of data, hierarchies of legitimate and illegitimate knowledge may be created with little or no acknowledgement of how these judgements were made and the power that exists in this process. Again these debates link to my own study and the debates that emerge around contamination and creativity.

As a researcher I have a relationship with the participants, Luca (2009) proposes that this leads to an "embodied investigation" which conflicts with classical modernist grounded theory views regarding preconceived ideas and suggests these can be bracketed out. The term coined by Luca (2009) seems to be closely associated with my discussions regarding embracing contamination and liberation. Luca (2009) proposes that the researcher can bring knowledge and experience as long as they are open about and recognise this. From the beginnings of my writing, in early chapters, such as 'Embracing Contamination', it is clear that I have grappled with these very issues and my reasoning relating to liberation and embracing contamination seem to mirror some of Luca's (2009) views. The map making process has made my contamination of the analysis more overt and maps have provided a conduit for this embodied bracketing.

Stuttering Spaces

The use of the maps and reflection on the process has led me to question how a research object comes into being if I support the notion of the wandering of meaning and the re-reading, re-drawing of maps. Harvey (1989) questions notions of privileging time over space in relation to social change processes and he suggests that we assume a pre-existing spacial order within which temporal aspects operate. If my maps are a 'spacialisation', (a structure which both uses space and attempts to represent space through boundaries and relationships), can it represent flux and change? How is the temporal aspect of the map considered? When reading the map the research objects may

be perceived to be on the map, inferring existence and perhaps a passivity. This links with the notion of capture where flux is momentarily stabilised and the dynamic nature of relation maps is suspended in order for the reader to gain some coherence. The data becomes a research object through data gathering, through discourse and analysis. The indicated relationships on the map may perhaps remind the reader of the dynamic nature of the map and its underlying meaning. The notion that time is privileged over space is challenged by the maps; time is stuttered through the capture / reading of the map where meaning is temporarily fixed. The space however remains explicit and fundamental to the reading of the map. This is perhaps another example of how Clarke positions herself in post-modern discourses rather than in modern ones?

To 'be' on the map was essential, I have discussed this in relation to the context, the intersubjective spaces and the potential for contamination. Much of this thesis has mapped my research journey, my 'becoming', a transformative and developmental journey aligned with the research process. *Where* I will 'be' on the map will depend on the reader and the position they take, the experience and assumptions they bring.

In relation to position it may be useful to consider how the maps could be represented differently. What would the map read like for example, if turned, rotated or read upside down? The relationships would still be the same, the categories would still be present, the space would still be on the page but the representation would be different visually and aesthetically this may be unrecognisable and/or preferable to some readers.

Figure 14: Upside Down World Map



The maps enabled me to temporarily locate myself, to grasp and to interpret data in a way that was necessary for the purpose of this thesis. As discussed throughout the

thesis instability was a common theme for my research journey, the need for space to reflect and learn, the borderland, has been essential in order to develop confidence and develop my own research decisions. There is an implicit drawing of a map of my research journey throughout this writing, the frequently occurring ‘point de capiton’ in this journey have been important signposts in helping me temporarily stabilise myself in borderlands with no signposts, “maps help the researcher to live with uncertainty and be more modest and quiet when making claims of the nature of the field” (Mather 2008 <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs080244>)

This chapter has considered modernist and postmodern tenets and their relationship to this study. The coding process and the drawing of maps to interrogate the data and to map my impact on the analytical process have also been explored. Tracking the development of myself as a researcher, my life in the borderlands, has also continued and will remain a theme throughout this thesis. Ideas of fixed versus wandering or floating meaning have been explored and notions of fixing or stabilising meaning on maps in a contextual and temporal capture have been considered. The reader of the map and their position and perspective will alter the reading and the meaning. As with the upside down world map, a transgression from the original position of the map-maker and / or map reader will lead to meaning being de-stabilised. The usefulness of map-making, as part of the analysis process including the difficulties encountered in trying to represent all its intricacies and complexities, has been argued, as

“as long as one is ‘inside’ the **process** of coding, folded into movement and becoming, there is a possibility of a very different kind of engagement with data from the distanced contemplation of the table that is the arrested result of the process. The question of what one brings ‘out’ of the process will depend on how far one is committed to the overarching project of including all the data within an abstracting structure of categories and levels” (MacLure 2012)

Through my engagement with the maps I felt an ethical, representative and interactional relationship was beginning to be fostered between myself and the data and I developed strategies of resistance to deal with frustrations and self manufactured calls to cross the borders.

“So the self-in-between in the *Coatlicue* state, the resistant state, needs to enact both strategies of defence against worlds that mark her with the inability to respond and distractive strategies to keep at bay the fear of having no names” (Lugones 1992:34)

The next chapter will use literature as further data and compare themes from pertinent literature to categories and subcategories that have been developed through the data analysis process, narrative will be included to enhance the dynamic reading of the maps.

Chapter 7 - From Text to Map to Text: The Interrelationships of Data Representation

In this chapter I aim to demonstrate how I have used literature as a data set for comparison to my findings to gain new insights and understandings. I begin to make some situated claims and weave contextualised narratives around the maps to begin the process of scrutiny. Authenticity is explored through the deconstruction and reconstruction of the maps using this additional literature and my insights. I will further discuss my research journey outlining how my understanding of the data and the literature has enabled these new insights into professionalism and employability for occupational therapy students.

The journey of my development as a researcher and a professional has been discussed as a theme through this thesis, as I attempted to “deconstruct the research encounter” (Finlay 2002:210). I have offered a self critical, reflexive and honest account of the research process, highlighting dilemmas with researcher presence. I will explore literature which considers the criteria against which research of this nature can be judged, providing further support to my rationale for undertaking this study.

For structure the chapter will use the student journey from beginning the programme of study to graduation, focusing on what the data has indicated are critical experiences for participants, to explore the themes in the literature and the data. I allow the literature to further contaminate my data using the constant comparative method, viewing the literature as an additional data set. Insights gained from engaging with this new contamination necessitated re-engagement and reconstruction my data set from focus groups and interviews, leading to new understandings and interpretations.

I continue to use the individual maps in this chapter to help share my data. I considered making one overall map and wondered if I placed each map on top of each other, so each layer formed part of the whole, what map would I see then? I feel one comprehensive map could be useful, a holistic and complete view of analysis, but I think that the map would be dense, inaccessible, more fluid and the connections would form such a complex web it would be even more difficult to navigate. The value of the individual maps is their accessibility.

The student journey will be juxtaposed with further reflexions on my research journey. Finlay (2002) proposes that reflexion is a difficult territory and throughout the journey

the individual can make ‘interesting discoveries’. I think this is very true of my experiences and at times my journey has been challenging. I have grappled with whether to bracket my preconceived ideas and experience or whether to exploit them and use them in a creative way in the research process. Reflexivity and ‘outing’ myself and my influence has enabled me to interrogate my own conceptualisations and understandings and I aim to share that in this chapter. I aim to show in this chapter that the journey has proved both useful and enlightening and that progress has been made in terms of my knowledge and skills. I invite the reader to navigate my maps from my coordinates acknowledging others reading of the maps may be different. I write a situated subjective narrative on professionalism and employability based on my analysis of the data sets. Direct quotes from participants are used to provide detail and more contextual information to each category or critical experience. I have used what I feel is sufficient data and literature to do this and have not completed an exhaustive and comprehensive literature review.

I use the categories as headings to structure my writing, linked to critical experiences in the student journey. I acknowledge however, the dynamic relationships between these categories and the leakage between them and therefore the demarcation of these categories is for procedural rather than for theoretical reasons. I maintain some order in the borderlands for the purposes of dissemination of my insights. This discussion of ideas does not represent a definitive reading of the maps but represents a reading and interpretation which, like the maps, is temporal and contextualised at the time of writing. Like the mushroom cloud (figure 13) the interpretation and the meanings indicated will dissipate due to the fluid nature of the maps.

The Beginning of the Student Journey: Values

The first critical experience I will focus on relates to applying to an occupational therapy programme at University. A common theme within the data was the alignment of values; many participants felt that certain personal values led them to choose occupational therapy as a career, suggesting that they were predisposed to this type of career, which many believed was a vocation. Personal and professional value sub-categories are shown as interconnected on the map (Figure 1) for this reason. Participants discussed how their values were reflected in the philosophy of the occupational therapy profession initially, leading them to apply for the course. As they progressed through the programme, one participant suggested, it became hard to

separate what were existing personal values and what were professional ones. The embodiment of these values in relation to practice was significant. When using quotes I have emboldened the words that connect these narratives to the categories and sub-categories on the map.

*“Well I think it was always a **caring** career from being 16 and I thought I would look into that a bit more, but it’s also the **philosophy of OT** as well, you know that man is an occupational being, just makes so much sense and so it goes back to you know, what I believe in....I think I do have **high values** and of my children as well, and because I have those **values**” Interview 4 3 July 2009)*

In his study of nurses, Öhlén (1998) supported the notion that professional and personal identities are integrated and I propose this applies to occupational therapy students as they progress through their degree and into practice. Many characteristics which are listed as sub-categories on the map ‘Values’ (see Figure 1), to further illuminate what participants meant by values, could however be perceived to be shared by other health professionals. Empathy, respect, caring, for example, could be used to describe the attributes nurses, doctors or radiographers. Participants seemed to stress that what made an occupational therapist unique was enabling independence, empowering individuals and facilitating individuals to look after themselves. The following excerpts are useful to illustrate this.

*“I’ve done auxiliary nursing and learning disabilities and I’ve always wanted to help but I’ve never been somebody, one of these who wanted to do it. Even when I was 18 and I was doing the nursing, I’d always kind of think, can you not have a go yourself? Can you not? I can.. I got stuck in the **caring** role, and I didn’t like it, but I think it suits my personality and how I work better because I can **enable** and I can use my logical side” (Interview 2 4 May 2009)*

*“Because I’ve always been interested in health and working with people but I like the idea of, rather than nursing and doing for people and more sort of **empowering** and **enabling** people” (Interview 5 9 July 2009)*

Participants also had a belief that occupational therapists look at the whole person in the context of social, economic, cultural and political factors, a term occupational therapy

literature refers to as holism, added as a key word on the map and an example of my influence using my theoretical knowledge to generate a sub-category (holistic).

If values influence a choice of career and are likely to be established by the time an individual enters higher education (Hamilton 2008), how do we instil professional values into students with already established personal ones? Reviewing the literature in this area has been a useful experience but has also raised some questions. My data indicates that personal values are important and often mirror and develop into professional ones. Literature has supported my view and proposed that the two become integrated. This process has led me to refocus on my data relating to values and generated some useful practice issues to consider. This is cyclical process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction; examining my data, comparing this to literature, reviewing data in light of this literature and developing new insights for my knowledge development and practice within my workplace. What can be learned in relation to recruitment and the teaching and assessment of professional values? One answer would be to look at values based recruitment and selection activities for applicants to the programme. Matching personal values to desired professional ones may indicate those best suited to the programme. The other, Hamilton (2008) would argue would be to use an appropriate pedagogy which can influence ethical professional identity which is linked to values. These are significant issues to consider as part of my practice and curriculum review and development. Although my data highlighted the importance of personal and professional values, the recontamination of literature in this area had developed further insights and given a clearer direction for action. My personal views and experiences relating to values have been confirmed and strengthened by this process. The maps enabled me to untangle data and temporarily fix data so I could better understand it, once each map had been drawn, relationships between maps could also be acknowledged. The maps have helped me engage with the data, the structure they have provided enabled opportunities to really interrogate the data and make inferences about relationships between them.

Reflexivity as Discursive Deconstruction

I had difficulties in writing this chapter, I reflect that my difficult relationship with theory, my acceptance of a late literature review, my hope to use literature as further data and my problematising of received wisdom meant I approached both the literature searching, reading and the writing up with some caution. I wanted to begin to reconcile

the tensions I had felt to enable me to share my findings from the borderlands, in a meaningful and appropriate way. I approached the literature with a questioning and analytical stance, albeit still tempered with historical notions of ‘T’heory lingering. My maps and narrative excerpts serve as my examples around which I write a story about professionalism and employability for occupational therapy students. The ‘theory’ in this grounded theory study is not theory at all, I have argued that extensively. Received wisdom, that is literature and my learned experiences from practice provide me with a professional language, constructs and understandings which taint this narrative, as they contaminated the analysis. The mutlivocality in the narrative includes my voice as well as the participants’ voices. I am accepting of this; in fact I celebrate this as part of the creative process. I have used the maps to show heterogeneity and offered them up with the caveat that meaning will be interpreted and anchored temporarily on each reading, by each reader. This is supported by Finlay (2002) who proposes that in the interpretation of data no single or consensual meaning may be found. I am able to write this narrative in a way that no other could, based on my current reading of the maps. Others would not have my experiences, they would not know my data as I do and would not have undertaken the research journey I have, this gives this research its uniqueness.

I have attempted to show rigour, authenticity and ethical integrity. In my journey I have found myself looking for external validation of the value of the research, holding to modernist notions of authority and realist ontology. Using literature as an additional data set has provided this somewhat as my categories and findings resonated with themes I found in the literature. Qualitative research is so diverse that there cannot be a set of standards to aspire to or judge myself against (Freeman et al 2007). The quality of this study has developed over its course and this is evidenced through explicit discussion about research decisions regarding collection, analysis and representation of data. My claims bound in data exemplify my interpretations. This self-critical, open and honest account of the process aims to limit reader concerns regarding the value and credibility of the study and contribution this will make. I now move from discussions of my research journey to sharing this data by discussing the student journey.

The Programme – Continuing the Journey

Student’s first encounter with the programme following recruitment, selection and induction processes will be engaging with modules and being taught in lectures, seminars and workshops. When discussing the programme of study and its impact on

employability and professionalism, students discussed their knowledge and skills, acquired through these specific modules and through Problem Based Learning (PBL) and presentations. These are areas highlighted on the map for the category, the programme (see over Figure 15). The programme also includes 30 weeks of practice placement over the 4.5 years, placements as a topic appeared to be fundamental in developing a student's sense of professionalism and employability. Placements will be explored in this chapter as independent critical experiences distinct from the programme.

My initial drawing of the map did not explicitly indicate relationships between the sub-categories as these were not discussed by the students. I acknowledge that despite a lack of lines drawn on the map, I suppose a relationship between the development of presentation skills and Problem Based Learning, between knowledge and skills and specific modules, some of which are delivered via PBL – a web of connections exists between these data in my head and the complexity of this is not represented on the map. Where contamination is clearly present is in my inclusion of key words (core, generic, team working etc) from the narrative that I interpreted as having a relationship with this category and its sub-categories, specifically to 'skills'.

Skills were something also highlighted in the pilot study where the 6 prioritised characteristics of the ideal employee were:-

- being a good communicator
- **being flexible and able to work in a team**
- being able to work within professional boundaries of own role and aware of limitations
- having theoretical knowledge and being able to transfer this into practice
- having time management, prioritisation and organisational **skills**
- Motivated to identify needs and able to plan own continuing professional development

It was interesting to see although team working had emerged as a prioritised characteristic in the pilot; it was not discussed sufficiently in the interviews to warrant a category or sub-category of its own on the maps. Had I used the Ideal *** Inventory (Norton 2001) as my main tool, I have argued that I would have had only a superficial

view of the data. Compare the above list with the pages of coded transcripts and the maps produced and I feel this proves my point.

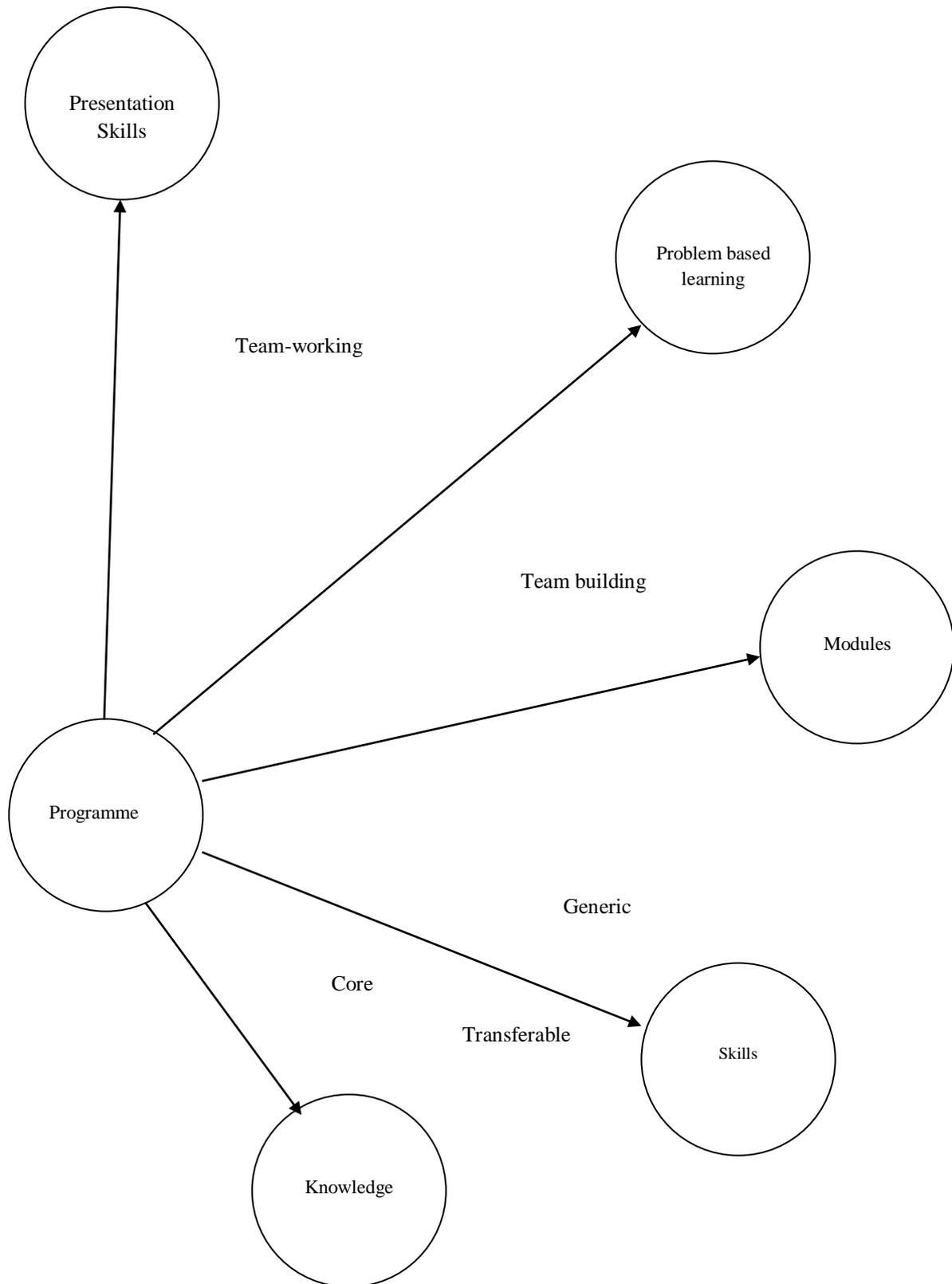
Problem Based Learning - a critical experience

A key aspect of the programme for students was PBL; this is indicated on the Programme Map (Figure 15). Students discuss engagement in PBL as a critical experience in the formation of knowledge and skills. Therefore this will be the next experience I shall explore in more detail as part of the student journey. The literature data set is again used to provide both context and as data for comparison to my findings.

Generally the credit for introducing PBL into the curriculum is given to McMaster Medical School in Ontario, which started using it in 1969. Its aim was to develop lifelong learning in professional practice in a multidisciplinary and student-centred way (Boud & Feletti, 1997). This approach to teaching and learning was adopted in the UK in the 1980's, in response to debates around professional education and the need to further develop the skills required by employers and society in the learning process, and not just simply the acquisition of specific theoretical knowledge (Savin-Baden, 2000).

Different programmes and institutions that use it as a teaching method may define the term PBL differently and this can lead to confusion in the context of educational debate and research (Maudsley, 2002). There are however general principles or agreements about the 'core' elements that PBL contains (Barrows, 1986, David et al., 1999, Maudsley, 2002, Ross, 1997). PBL is a method of providing opportunities for learners to explore practice issues posed to them in the form of a scenario or trigger, usually in small groups or teams. These groups set their own learning tasks that they define as relevant to that trigger. Learners would be facilitated to evaluate their progress as they move towards an understanding of the issues explored (David et al., 1999). The issues explored are not closely linked with specific curricula areas and therefore predetermined solutions; practical application drives knowledge acquisition rather than following it (Maudsley, 2002).

Figure 15: Programme Map: Relational Analysis using Situational Map (Clarke 2005) – Interviews



PBL aims to enable the student to go beyond operational learning where the learner must demonstrate specific and focused competencies which, may be set by a professional body and act as an outcome measure for fitness for purpose or practice (Savin-Baden, 2000). PBL should be about learning for capability rather than for the sake of learning and this, Barrows (1986) discusses, is in line with adult learning principles, making active use of the learners previous experience, to produce learners who can engage in continuous and future learning and development. Learners should be able to apply their knowledge through the process of enquiry to any specific situation in any particular context (Boud & Feletti, 1997).

The quote below supports this pedagogy, the participant valued this way of working, there were however also some negative comments regarding PBL and this is something the programme team should reflect on as part of curriculum and programme review.

*“Sometimes in **PBL** as well to be quite honest when you’ve actually been researching on your own, you’ve actually done the work and you’re thinking you feel pretty isolated at times and then you come into the group and you start discussing issues I think that’s when you all have eureka moments at that point because then you’ve got the chance to discuss, and say this is what I was feeling I didn’t have much confidence in this area. ..although I wasn’t a lover of **PBL** at all, there was eureka moments going back to the previous question, at the end of **PBL** when it had actually come together I did actually say I actually love **PBL** I think it’s an absolutely wonderful way to work and I absolutely slated it at first – but now I love it - I think that was in the final year when we no longer had **PBL** it was, oh but I need that now I want to be in that kind of environment.” (Interview 7 24 September 2009)*

I see the narrative almost as a speech bubble that comes out of the category to give it greater depth and to personalise and further populate the map. This makes the mapping more three dimensional as voice comes out from the page. Taking the maps in a more simplified form is useful for accessibility, but the depth of understanding comes via detailed narrative excerpts from the interviews and the understanding of the leakage and interconnectedness of the categories and the maps.

A significant aspect of PBL seems to be the development of presentation skills, participants have felt that presenting in a group has been a significant skill to acquire and this will be an essential skill in terms of employability. Occupational therapists will work in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams and liaise with colleagues. Feedback at ward rounds or case conferences will be something that features regularly for a qualified occupational therapist. I feel the following excerpts illustrate the importance participants placed on presentation skills.

*“PBL has been really good from the point of view of your having your **presentation skills** and stuff like that; I am surprised at that, with that aspect of it.”* (Interview 3 14 May 2009)

*“ I think that's the **problem based learning** groups have taught me more, you were saying about the **team building** and **team working**, and my own **communication**. I think probably the **problem based learning** a lot of students are a bit daunted by it and having to present and stuff and that's actually a good way of building confidence. And I think for future jobs where you may have to do **presentations** and training and for your interviews and your general **communication**, I think to be able to sit in front of 10 peers and your tutor every few weeks and think that really is quite good experience and build your confidence.”*(Interview 5 9 July 2009)

There are some criticisms of PBL, with academic staff reporting difficulties and concerns with the intensive resourcing of a curriculum that moves from using a traditional delivery method to PBL (further thoughts on this subject can be found in Assignment 1 from Phase A of my studies). There may also be issues with group dynamics and the process of PBL requiring cohesion and a degree of “collectivism” (Miflin, 2004). Other critiques include the anxiety that learners may have about gaps in knowledge, students may lack in depth knowledge of basic science or the theoretical knowledge base related to the specific programme or module and may learn less efficiently (Bernstein et al., 1995, Vernon, 1995). For some learners this tension about knowledge and self direction is problematic, the following excerpt exemplifies this.

*“And I think that, yes, I think, yes I think that perhaps **PBL** has been good in that sense of negotiating and conflict resolution and being able to talk in front of a group of people and put yourself out there and get it wrong and it doesn’t matter it is not the end of the world, you’re not being marked on it. Sometimes I think that there is a temptation to do a bit of a half sort of a job because you are not being marked on what you are doing, but then again it gives you the chance to maybe do a bit more than you would have done and do something a bit differently because you are not frightened that you’ve gone a bit too far, you are going to get it wrong and lose marks for it, so it’s a good place to test yourself”*
(Interview 6 10 August 2009).

Seeing the category PBL on the map does not provide the differing perspectives that these narrative excerpts can. It became clear when writing this chapter that the maps alone could give a distorted picture or because of the simplified two dimensional format, could be open to interpretation so that the voice of the participants could be lost. Using multiple methods to gather and analyse data I feel has enriched the story I can now tell and share. Again I contemplate the dilemma of researcher presence; my creativity I have argued makes a valuable contribution to this thesis, however it is this very process that deconstructs and reconstructs the narrative distorting the original voice. The tension of representation of participants voice is one I have reflected on throughout my journey and the maps have helped somewhat to reduce this tension by displaying data in an accessible way.

I was conversant with the literature on PBL having co-developed the current programme of study which introduced this as a new pedagogy. Reviewing the literature and reflecting on my data however has provided useful insights. Participants felt they had gained skills through PBL, team working, communication and presentation skills were discussed by participants. Two participants discussed their ability to go and find information for themselves. As the pedagogy is offered as one that produces excellent resource investigators I was surprised this did not feature more in the interviews. More worryingly was that knowledge acquisition seemed to feature even less in discussions about PBL. PBL seemed to be a critical experience for participants but only in relation to learning what could be classed as transferable skills and not in relation to subject or profession specific knowledge. The emphasis on knowledge in the literature and the

process of re-contaminating my data made this finding clear to me. This is a significant issue for consideration. I did not pick this up through the analysis of the data and therefore did not question participants specifically about this in interviews. If this pedagogy is not perceived to be facilitating knowledge acquisition, a review and further investigation of the appropriateness of this pedagogy is necessary. I shall now go on to discuss another area on the 'Programme' map; skills and knowledge.

Knowledge and Skills – validation and literature

“Personal knowledge is defined as the cognitive resource which a person brings to a situation which enables them to think and perform, together with procedural knowledge and process knowledge, experiential knowledge and impressions in episodic memory. Skills are part of this knowledge, thus allowing representations of competence, capability or expertise in which the use of skills and positional knowledge are closely integrated.” (Eraut 2000: 114)

Based on the above quotation, again an example of re-contamination and by reflection on the nature of the relationships between knowledge and skills on many of the maps, I have decided to discuss these two areas together, proposing a relationship between knowledge and skills. Knowledge and skills both as sub-categories and as additional data in text on the maps are the most frequently occurring labels for the variety of things the participants talked about in relation to learning and acquisition. I would also include reference to the sub-category of modules, as formal ways of delivering and testing out knowledge and skills. Again this is my assumption and evidence of my contamination in reading the maps. The maps have supported me to see and infer these relationships but also to duplicate sub-categories when I felt this was appropriate. The creativity of drawing the maps has enabled fluidity in the display and positioning of the categories. What once I would have perceived as contamination, my assumptions about relationships between sub-categories I now see as a positive, by decontextualising the data and fracturing it completely, I felt important insights would be lost and I would risk missing something important (Finlay 2006), reconstruction therefore was necessary.

Another critical experience for participants was the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This topic was often discussed generally by participants presuming some agreement as to what was meant by knowledge. Learning is where new knowledge is acquired or existing knowledge is applied in a different context or is repackaged, creating new personal knowledge (Eraut 2000). The occupational therapy programme is structured to

enable knowledge acquisition which, can then be applied either in University through case study work, skills sessions and workshops and / or through formal assessment procedures such as essays, vivas and placements. The graduates of vocational programmes such as this not only have to demonstrate an academic ability for the award of a degree, but also need to demonstrate the application of that knowledge through placements which form approximately a third of the course.

Gleeson and Knights (2006) would suggest that professional knowledge has a different dynamic to personal knowledge, however, in that it is situated in an ever changing context where culture, practice, identity and agency all create a localized unstable picture. Within this context creative or innovative practices can be developed by enabling individuals to adopt different roles and identities depending on the local situation that they find themselves in. As the interviews progressed it became clear that students did not simply discuss a defined body of knowledge or set of skills but talked more broadly about confidence, competence and professionalism. Lucey and Souba (2010) suggest that professionalism is a competency which is multidimensional and includes knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgement. Their paper supports my situated claim that knowledge and skills both relate to each other and have a direct relationship to professionalism. All participants in my study found professionalism or competence hard to define, but there appeared to be some similarities in the areas discussed. Role models and the value of autonomy on placement were significant factors in developing their knowledge base and testing it out in a safe environment.

The Skill Acquisition Model of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) where an individual progresses from novice to advanced beginner, competent, proficient to expert, demonstrates the shift from rigid adherence where learning may be applied in a limited procedural way exactly as taught or shown, to competence where an individual has some tacit knowledge gained through experience, which enables a person to develop routine / standardised practices. It was interesting to me that the participants' perceptions of the standard they were aiming for was competence; the terms 'proficient' or 'expert' were not used, nor was practice described at that level. Contaminating my thinking about competence by referring to the Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) model, generated new questions and a different perspective on the data. Leach (2004) proposed that professionalism could be viewed along the same continuum from learning rules and adhering to them (novice) to progression to applying the rules and using situational

judgement in much more complex settings (expert).“The fully formed professional is habitually faithful to professional values in highly complex situations” (Leach 2004: 12).

The profession of occupational therapy is one which strongly advocates lifelong learning and the use of support mechanisms for newly qualified staff such as mentoring, supervision and preceptorship (to be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter). This forms part of the professions universal narrative about what professionalism encompasses. My situated claim is that professional behaviour and attitudes develop alongside appropriate subject learning and can be taught in a formal way, but experience is essential. Knowledge and skills form part of this dynamic. However aspects of professionalism are internalised and localised, participants discussed feeling professional, ‘being’ a professional and the way that impacted upon them as individuals. That aspect of professionalism may not be taught in the usual way in a classroom, a more creative and practitioner centred approach may be beneficial. This subjective and developmental view of professional behaviour goes against many of the views of professionalism where adherence to externally set rules and standards is seen as a benchmark for being a professional. I shall discuss and problematise professional regulation later in this chapter. Again re-engagement with the literature and data was insightful. Reflecting on how I could have interrogated the term competence further, I feel I could have better understood participant’s views on skills and attainment. My understanding / conceptualisation of competence may have acted as a barrier by assuming agreement on the term.

I think the following excerpt from the transcripts is useful to link to the above discussion; the term “competence” is used repeatedly. The quote illustrates the developmental nature of professionalism and the emotional response to professionalism “I feel” “I become”. This also links to the next discussion which focuses on placement experience and role models.

“Do you think you kind of know you know what professionalism is and have you learnt that or is that something you kind of ...” (Interview question)

“That’s something I’ve learned, definitely”.

“Right what is it do you think?” (Interview question)

*“Urm, that’s really hard to define as well, I feel like I’m going to work and **putting my professional hat on and I become a different person in a way** and it’s how I behave to other people, it’s how I speak and how I dress.”*

“OK”

*“Urm, I’ve got a little commentary all the time in my head saying is this what a **competent OT** would do, would a **competent OT** say that, would a **competent OT** wear those shoes to work and that’s always in the back of my head and I don’t know why, but I’ve always found it really helpful”*

(Interview 6 10 August 2009)

Perhaps the ‘graduation threshold’ for students / participants is competence, acknowledging that on-the-job experience will bring proficiency or expert status. Reviewing literature and the terminology around competence and proficiency has provided a useful benchmark for my data. I have examined the data again looking for indicators of perceived levels of skill and knowledge and how that is defined. Competence was clearly perceived as a satisfactory level of skill / knowledge by participants. It is important for programme evaluation to consider whether competence is the standard the university and professional regulatory bodies perceive as an appropriate indicator of knowledge and skill acquisition at graduation / registration and to review how we could measure or assess this subjective area. Literature proposes that professionalism can be taught, in part and that creative solutions and strategies need to be considered to support the development of learners from entry to graduation and beyond. My perspective on learning has been altered by engagement with my data and the literature forcing me to reconceptualise my ideas around teaching, training and educating in order to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to be professional.

The other sub-category on the map was modules, these were discussed in general and the term appeared to be used by participants to describe packages of learning. Two specific modules were discussed by participants in terms of their value and enjoyment. I will briefly discuss one of these modules later when discussing employability.

At the end of the first semester and second semester in the first year of study, students undertake a placement. Placement appeared to be another critical experience for participants in terms of testing knowledge and learning skills. This will be the next area of focus, as discussed earlier I decided to develop a separate map for ‘placement’ as the frequency of its discussion and the amount of data relevant to it, seemed to warrant a category distinct from others.

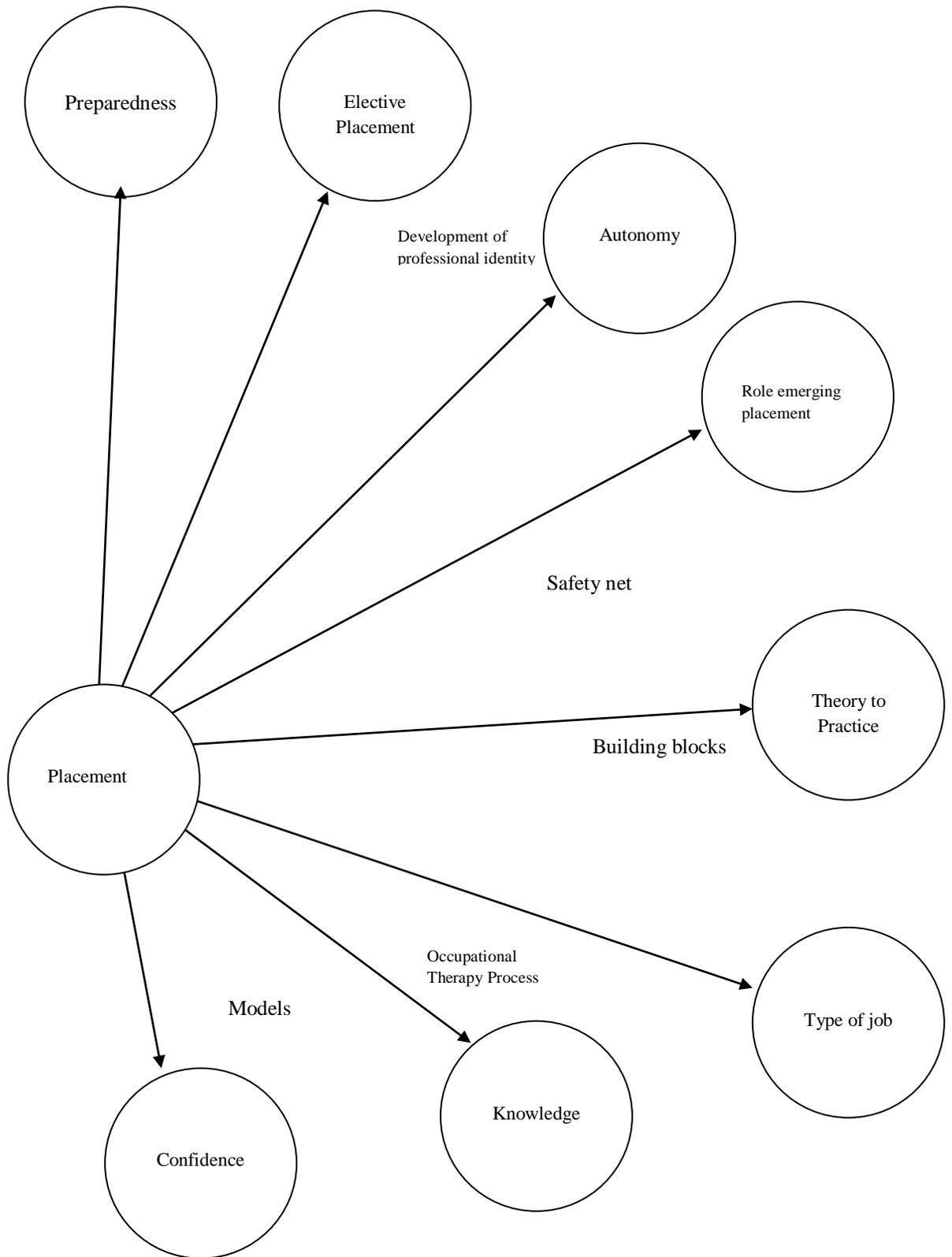
Placement and Authenticity

In the map for ‘Placement’ the sub-categories I developed were preparedness, elective placement, autonomy, role emerging placement, theory to practice, knowledge, confidence and type of job. The map was drawn to show the relationship between these factors and the category ‘Placement’ (see Figure 16). Again what was most useful about the maps was the ability to show the categories, sub-categories and other data in a visual way. My assumptions about relationships were clear but what was also obvious about each sub-category was what it was not. Again this is where reflexivity leads to discursive deconstruction (Finlay 2002). Each category is given a label and that label is open to interpretation, I feel I was able to limit some of this interpretation, therefore trying to protect the voice of the participants by enabling the reader to visually compare that sub-category to others at a glance, all on one page. In order to help facilitate the understanding of meaning and to support the understanding of the reader of the map with regards to my implied meaning, the meaning of the label could be deferred by comparison. Again here I acknowledge the porous nature of the category spheres, the complexity beneath and the slippage of meanings due to the dynamic nature of the maps.

By ‘Placement’ I did also include role emerging placements, as these are different from more traditional placements, a map reader could see that because it was clear on the map. The category ‘preparedness’ had subtle differences for me to the category ‘confidence’, one is more about feelings (confidence), the other about practical skills, ability, knowledge and experience – a readiness for employment. By placing categories on the map and by reviewing them to write this chapter I was able to clarify my own thoughts about what I meant by each category and sub-category, which in turn helped me write the story and better situate my claims.

There is a regulatory requirement for all occupational therapy courses to include at least one thousand hours practice placement experience integrated into the programme (World Federation of Occupational Therapists <http://www.wfot.org>). Because of the diversity of practice areas, students will be provided with a range of experiences across different settings. At the institution where this study took place, for example, students undertake two placements per academic year and these will be balanced between working with clients with physical and mental health issues, in acute hospital settings, community settings, private and third-sector organisations. Placement experience may range from neurology, paediatrics, burns and plastics, forensic and secure settings, orthopaedics and with older adults in day care to name but a few. The length of time spent on placement increases each year concluding with a final ten week elective placement prior to graduation. All participants in the study were interviewed in a seven month period starting a month before the final placement, with the final interview taking place three weeks after this had finished (April – September 2009). Given that placement seems to be so pertinent in the development of the participants, the impact of this on the data should be considered. Those interviewed prior to the final ten week placement may well have different perceptions of employability / professionalism than participants who were on this placement or the one who had completed this. This is another possible site of silence in that I did not explore specifically through questions as to whether this was the case. However this study is not aiming to generalise, nor does it claim to be a comprehensive review of the topic; it is an exploration of perceptions and experiences so it is acceptable for interviews to span this range of time. I feel the differing experiences added to this study, rather than be a limitation of it. All students in the study were part time, mature students and I assumed some conceptualisation of employability on their part, as all had a job prior to commencing their studies or currently.

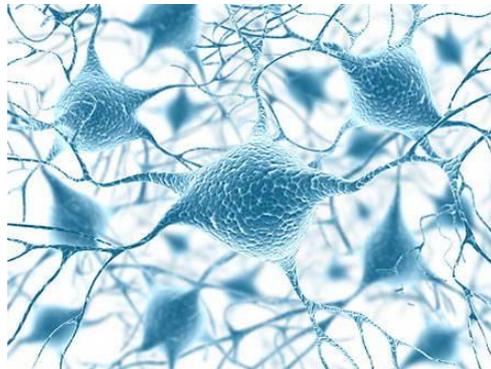
Figure 16: Placement Map: Relational Analysis using Situational Map (Clarke 2005) – Interviews



Placement as an Apprenticeship

In his article Hamilton (2008) cites the Carnegie Foundation and their work which looked at the professionalism of lawyers and clergy, the concept of apprenticeships is raised. It is suggested that students entering a particular profession may undertake an academic apprenticeship, an intellectual exercise in gaining the profession specific knowledge and skills, alongside a practical apprenticeship, testing out the skills required for professional practice and a process of professional identity formation focused on ethical aspects, they call this aspect professionalism. The practice placement may go some way towards offering the practical and professional identity forming experiences cited as significant. Development of professional identity was a sub-category on the professionalism map (see Figure 11). It is at times like this when constructing a narrative around the maps and data, that I see the links, the leakage between all the individual relational maps. They make up a complex, multilayered, multidimensional picture. No map stands in isolation from another and the narrative from the interviews can also be woven into this web. I hope the visual image below helps to demonstrate my thinking here.

Figure 17: Connections Image.



Articles by Hamilton (2008), Thompson et al (2008) and Clouston and Whitcombe (2008) all propose that professionalism is taught as an essential part of the curriculum. The teaching of this however can only be hindered by the confusion around the term, with no clear agreed definitions within a profession of what constitutes ‘professionalism’. Later in this chapter I shall explore elements of professionalism cited in literature and consider this with the narratives provided by the participants.

What seems to be significant in terms of placement is the authenticity of the practical experience. Clandin and Connelly (1996:24) use the term “professional knowledge

landscape” to describe the point at which theory and practice intersect, (theory to practice is a sub-category on the map). From many of the interview narratives it seems that putting theory into practice and testing it out is fundamental to the development of confidence and a sense of competence. Myrick et al (2010:82) discuss placements and specifically having a one to one mentor, a process they call preceptorship for nursing students. In their study they found that the development of practical wisdom in the practice setting is gained by engaging in what they call “authentic nursing practice”. Reid et al (2008) drawing on the work of Wenger (1998) discuss how professional identity is developed along a trajectory and this is supported by legitimate participation in a community of practice. The community of practice perhaps is what makes the experiences authentic and enables students of a profession not only to test knowledge and skills but to understand and become immersed in the culture of that profession. It is important for higher education programmes to anticipate what working life will be like for the students and to ensure that students are prepared for the workplace. My situated claim here is that authenticity is not something that can only be provided on placement and that classroom experiences should also be authentic. A review of teaching and learning activities in relation to making them more authentic will be crucial to enhancing classroom learning. The lecturers and tutors who teach on the programme are all occupational therapists and therefore part of that community of practice. My review of the literature and consideration of authenticity and communities of practice made me re-examine my data, it was enlightening to discover that authenticity in terms of university based experience was not discussed. I situated myself in the occupational therapy community of practice but reflect whether students / participants perceive me in this way. I shall discuss this issue further when discussing role models.

Trede et al (2012) consider literature on professional identity development and terms such as legitimate engagement in practice, professional enculturation and professional socialization commonly occur. Placement can offer this authentic, legitimate engagement in practice across a range of settings and with a range of role models as part of the professional socialisation process. Placements provide the opportunity for preparation for the professional role as the quote indicates “participation in the professional role, or in preparation for that role, was a [sic] key for students to gain insights into professional ideology, motives and attitudes” (Cornelissen and van Wyk (2007) in Trede et al 2012:376).

It is worth considering here negative aspects of professional socialisation and received wisdom to balance the discussion. The professionals engaged in that knowledge landscape, acting as role models and mentors may have differing views of professionalism. Experience may have left them jaded or the realities of doing a job may not match up to their ideals. University programmes teach ideals and the transition into work can often present challenges adjusting to contextual issues such as team dynamics, resources, political agendas within services and teams and ingrained norms of practice. It is therefore important that we both closely monitor those mentors in practice and support them to develop themselves and the students they take on placement and to ensure we produce graduates who question received wisdom and reflect on their own ideals and development needs.

The following excerpt provides an example of how the “professional knowledge landscape” (Clandin and Connelly 1996:24) is crucial to building a professional identity and the placements are considered by this participant to be crucial in the professional identity formation trajectory (Wenger 1998). The key word ‘building blocks’ is also added as text on the placement map to reflect my assumption that the placement is a place to test out knowledge and develop further another site of contamination.

“Right, yes, yes. OK well that’s good yes. So in terms of having a professional identity as an OT at what stage do you get that and have you got it and what’s it about, do you get a sense of who you are as an OT?” (Interview question).

*“It’s developing, I think it’s, it comes on in leaps when you are on **placements** and then seems to stall for a bit and then you go on another **placement**, I think because doing a part time course you have gaps between **placements**, so you do a **placement** then it’s a year before your next one, and I always felt that it stalled a bit in the year in between **placements** and it came on loads again once I got out there doing it.”*

“OK so it’s directly related to actually doing the job?”

“Yes”

“Not directly related to knowing the theory about the job?”

*“No, I didn’t feel that it was which is strange, but although . . . you sort of I always felt that you didn’t know how useful the **theory** would be until I got on placement and then it all came together really really quickly and*

for those few weeks everything would seem to change really fast.”
(Interview 6 10 August 2009)

Professional Regulation – Problematising Professionalism

What is taught to students early in the programme is an externally defined view of professionalism, a view that considers universal standards of competence and proficiency. As this discussion is beginning to indicate professionalism can be a very subjective experience. This section will consider the tensions around these issues.

The technical rationality that has emerged in education that considers professionalism as delivering predetermined standards or behaviours, may be seen to limit or even discount the professional ‘tampering’ with the delivery of services and may lead to greater compliance and implementation of policies and initiatives (Fish & Coles, 1998). An individual defines professionalism in relation to their beliefs, but employers and regulatory bodies will also have their own definitions. In the current culture of audit and accountability, “an economy of performance” (Stronach et al., 2002:109), professionalism is often defined externally to the individual. Professionalism for the individual may be about best practice, ethics, morality, equity, belief in their role and the contribution they make, meeting personal standards and adhering to Codes of Practice or Conduct. “Ecologies of practice” or communities develop where individuals or groups of individuals share and develop common commitment and attitudes to professional practice (Stronach et al., 2002:109).

Notions of professionalism are problematic, no wonder the map on professionalism (Figure 11) is the most complex, with these notions being dictated by external bodies and grand narratives of modernism, when it seems that the conceptualisation of professionalism is an internalised, affective process, individualised in many ways by a person in their professional context. Professional regulation was a commonly occurring theme in the interviews when participants discussed professionalism and professional identity. Interestingly they viewed regulation positively and it appeared to give them a sense of belonging to the community of practice.

*“Yes, I think it is the fact that we are **registered to the College of Occupational Therapists**, I think that that is ingrained to us, you know,*

from the forefront. I think from my point of view I actually felt quite honoured to be member of the College of OT and working towards that honours degree (unclear) I am representing the College of Occupational Therapy, that really even as a social kind of thing, it would make you think differently about your outlook about how to be professional and when I'm outside of work, not that I wasn't before, you know that are going to still have a certain presence about you, and it's definitely made a big difference in regards to you know..." (Interview 4 3 July 2009)

When you say that you think employers are looking for you to be professional, what does that mean to you? (Interview question)

"Um I think to be aware of sort of the guidelines, that the Health and Care Professions Council and the Code of Ethics and your duties as an OT, and also just in your behaviour really and your manner and the way that you present yourself in knowing the theory behind what you are talking about because one interview that I went into, they were asking you know what does an OT do, so I was able to really talk about the theory and the philosophy, and to you know to be familiar with all that and to professionally relay that to others because the interviewer, my interview panel were two GPs, a nurse and a chief executive, so they didn't actually know what OT was."

"... So do you feel that you have got a professional identity as an OT and how has that developed?"

"Yes I do um, I suppose over the four years of training and from all the reading that I've done, from the first year having a good grounding in what the basics of the philosophy is and then building on that then learning all the theory of all the models, the OT process, um Code of Ethics, just all the theory underpinning really". (Interview 5 9 July 2009)

Whilst studying to become an occupational therapist, students are eligible to register as student members with the College of Occupational Therapy. During their training they must adhere to the guidance and standards set out in the Code of Ethics and Professional

Conduct (COT 2010). Occupational Therapy programmes are approved by the Health and Care Professions Council, guided by Standards of Education and Training (2009) and completion of the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy gives eligibility to register with the Health and Care Professions Council and use the title ‘occupational therapist’. There are associated Standards of Proficiency-Occupational Therapists (HCPC 2007) and Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC 2008). Once registered there are Standards for Continuing Professional Development (HCPC 2012) to adhere to. Programmes may also be accredited with the College of Occupational Therapy by following the curriculum guidance process (COT 2009).

Universalism, a culture where policy makers develop and express desirable generic skills, abilities and behaviour, has led to national and sometimes international definitions of competence regardless of individual or personal characteristics (Stronach et al., 2002). These standards outline the requirements of a teacher, an occupational therapist or a midwife for example and are becoming key contributors in the debate relating to the definition of professionalism. Gleeson and Knights (2006:284) consider the “existential tension” that is created by trying to adhere to external standards. Conflict is created by a mismatch in what a professional believes in and what external targets demand. This is problematic and I would refer the reader to discussions in this chapter regarding competence and possible multiple identities of ‘**an**’ occupational therapist. Numerous references were made to standards and codes by the students when referring to professionalism and these are clearly reflected and grouped on the professionalism map (See Figure 11).

Engagement with the literature here was insightful. The participant data highlights no negative issues in relation to external regulation, whereas the literature exposed tensions and potential conflict. This has led me to speculate whether these tensions only arise in practice when the ideals and expectations of practice have been shaped by experiences from the workplace. If I had solely focused on my data set, professional regulation would be unproblematic; engagement with literature has muddied the waters, evidence of contamination by the literature. If I had done a pre data collection literature review, my approach to the analysis of this sub category may have been different with these preconceived ideas of tensions influencing category development and question development.

Given my exposure to literature now in relation to professionalism and my data set I make a number of situated claims. Providing a sense of a prospective identity, through engagement in communities of practice, through role models and authentic learning experiences, is key. The role emerging placements in the final year of the programme appear to offer these opportunities so the discussion will focus here next.

Placements – Role Emerging

Role emerging or non-traditional placements were also cited as significant by the participants. The aim of these placements is to send students to areas of emerging practice where an established occupational therapy service does not exist such as homeless hostels, care homes, schools and charitable organisations for mental health service users. Students are encouraged to identify where occupational therapy could make a unique contribution to the setting and to establish a temporary service or set of interventions which will benefit service users. The major components of these placements are the marketing of occupational therapy and using their knowledge base in a new context. Anecdotally students have discussed this placement as being significant in terms of developing their professional identity due to increased autonomy (another sub-category on the placement map), the opportunity to reflect on what their unique contribution may be and by working with others to educate them on the role and remit of occupational therapy. Here is another example of where the maps join and create this web of categories, narratives and perceptions. The role emerging category on the map has a link to the professionalism map (see later in this chapter) in terms of professional identity formation. In terms of their apprenticeship this may well be a significant experience in terms of intellectual apprenticeship by testing out skills and knowledge in uncertain environments. By gaining practical experience / apprenticeship with less supervision and by understanding what they can offer to this context they begin to develop a greater sense of their identity professionally and can explore the possibilities of their scope of practice. The following quote from transcripts illustrates this from a participant's perspective. My views with regard to this placement were supported by participant five. Again this quote is the speech bubble that gives further depth and understanding to the sub-category role emerging placement.

*“I think the **role emerging placement** was a big turning point really, I think going into a service where there's no OT, although initially daunting and coming away six weeks later thinking we did actually you*

know provide intervention, assess people, provide occupational therapy in a service where there wasn't any, yes, I think that's a big turning point really and to be able to set your own records up and to be able to tell all the other people there what OT is in a more simplified form, but then we were asked to present to the rest of the staff what OT is, so we had to do that in a different way to them.” (Interview 5 9 July 2009)

As I weave the literature into my data to create this narrative I can see how a range of themes or categories are coming together, further supporting my idea that the maps are connected and dynamic. This quote supports my ideas that there are critical experiences throughout the programme, and this placement is one of those, “*a big turning point*”. The quote implies increased confidence and competence when the experience is reflected upon. The reference to presentation skills also reaffirms this as a valued skill. The participant identified that they had made a contribution that was occupational therapy focused which, I infer strengthens professional identity by working within appropriate boundaries. Many themes run as strands throughout these quotations, my original straightforward view of categories when I started this analysis is now impossible to keep. The complexity of the data reinforces my view that a reductionist focused view, narrowing categories down through constant comparison and ignoring data that did not fit this constrained view would have been an inappropriate position for me to take. I do not feel this approach would have really represented my data. My engagement with the literature has helped me further unpack the categories and see further connections and relationships.

Preparedness- Strengthening Connections on the Maps

As part of the teaching and learning process role models seemed significant. As participants discussed their readiness, confidence or how prepared they felt to get and do a job, many referred to their role, skills or practice in comparison to that of another qualified therapist. Theoretically, teaching staff are role models and the way they deliver the curriculum and interact with students and colleagues in university should provide real exemplars of professionalism. However in the interviews the occupational therapists who the participants worked with on placement seemed to have a greater impact on their professional behaviour. The following excerpt is significant to this discussion.

“And what’s your sort of benchmark or your role model for that then?” (Interview question)

*“Probably to a certain extent other OTs that I know in the department and I will watch them and see how they behave and see how they speak to people and one thing that I struggled with when I first started was that I’d go on **placement** and I’d want to be everybody’s friend, staff, patients, everybody and I would talk to them as I would talk to my friends and I would see another OT wouldn’t do that, and at first I thought she was very stand-offish then I saw the respect that she had.”*

“Right”

*“It’s very hard to put into words but I sort of **modeled** myself on her way of dealing with people which was warm and open but at the same time she was not giving as much of herself out there as well.”*

“Right OK, so it’s having a boundary sort of?”

*“Yes, it’s like having an internal **boundary**, like you are having this much of me but that’s it.” (Interview 6 10 August 2009)*

Again although only anecdotal there appears to be a definite gap in student perceptions between what they are taught by ‘academics’ and what they learn from ‘real’ occupational therapists out in the field. Perhaps role models bridge the theory practice gap by demonstrating application of theory in practice. It may be that they are encapsulated in what is perceived to be authentic experience which is valued more than simulated practical or theoretical experiences delivered in University. The following excerpt illustrates the difficulties applying theory to practice settings.

*“To be quite honest on the last **placement** after I felt really **confident** on most of my **placements**, this last **placement** was the one that I learnt quite a few things about myself. I came across too **professional** if there is such a word – I was talking in OT speak from **University** instead of actually talking to the person like they were a person and I found that out after observing other members of staff and then in my first communications with patients and I was asking them about ... I was*

*using all the terminology about do you give consent for this that and the other and all my terminology was too **professional** and **University** speak and I came away, I did reflect on it, I came away just feeling that I hadn't engaged the person and they didn't kind of get where I was coming from. It was all too **theoretical** and I think that was probably all down to the fact that it was off the back of two assignments and it was all going round in your head and you just come straight into a different environment again and it was toning that down so that I could communicate with somebody normal and it was just about being normal in a way ...” (Interview 7 24 September 2009)*

There is clearly some adjustment required to put theory into practice whilst maintaining relationships with clients and other workers. I wondered if this quote illustrated the difference between teaching and learning ideals and struggling with implementation in practice. Mentors in practice provide accessible, instant role models against which students benchmark their skills, knowledge and behaviours; this reinforces for me the need to establish good relationships with these professionals and to monitor the experiences students have in practice.

The notion of authenticity again came from the literature, it has been useful to scrutinise this concept in relation to my data. This has made me think differently about the theory practice gap and the link with communities of practice. The way in which authentic experiences on placement are discussed has assisted me to understand why students value this. The ability to compare literature to my data set has generated this new understanding which I feel has directly influenced the findings. Preparedness is the term I used to describe how practically ready / able to do the job participants felt. For future curriculum development looking at ways to enhance authenticity will be important, further consideration of the link from this to preparedness will also be useful to evaluate.

Professionalism- Ideology, Individuality and Prospective Identity

Throughout placement experiences participants report that their feelings of professionalism grow, identity is shaped and a sense of confidence in their skills and abilities is nurtured. By the final year students linked placement experiences and University based activities to a growing sense of professionalism. As part of the student

journey this seems to be an appropriate area to discuss next. I do not propose a linear development trajectory for all students which starts at entry and progresses upwards to graduation showing a direct correlation between experiences to increased competence / confidence or a sense of professionalism. However there is a sense that over time, given more autonomy and more experience, the capacity to feel and act as a professional develops.

By far the most complex map was the one relating to data on professionalism, professional identity and role (see Figure 11). It was very difficult to separate and allocate data relating to these categories and it appeared that students discussed these areas in an integrated way and used terms such as professional, professionalism, professional identity and professional role interchangeably. There are numerous sub-categories and some narrative excerpts on this map and in the following section shall try to offer my current interpretation of these sub-categories. One of the contributing factors as to why this area is so complex is because there appears to be a lack of consensus on the definition of professionalism.

There are discussions regarding power of professional groups and their social standing within the workplace and the higher the standing the more professional they are (Clouston and Whitcombe 2008). In medicine, an area occupational therapy is historically associated with, a study recognised some key and common elements of professionalism which were putting the interest of the patients above one's own, adhering to moral and ethical standards, responding to needs of society, having strong humanistic values, being accountable, demonstrating a commitment of excellence, dealing with uncertainty and complex situations and being able reflect on one's own practice and decisions (Hamilton 2008). These key elements are clearly reflected in the College of Occupational Therapists Code of Ethics and Professional Standards (2010) and the Health and Care Professions Council Code of Conduct Performance and Ethics (2008). For illustrative purposes I shall provide three examples from the Health and Care Professions Council's (2008) code; "keep high standards of professional conduct." "You must act within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience and, if necessary, refer the matter to another practitioner" and "You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in you or your profession"

Codes such as these can be problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly these behaviours, actions and competencies are difficult to measure. How does a practitioner assess the public's confidence in his or her profession? How is honesty measured and how is it applied? What are high standards of professional conduct? These guidelines may be open to personal interpretation. Many of these behaviours or actions will be considered and internalised by practitioners who build cognitive libraries of experiences against which they can compare their own and others actions. This is difficult to teach, role models may give mixed messages based on their own interpretations and therefore judgements around professional issues can be contentious. The flexibility in interpretation of such codes may also be perceived positively. A code that was more prescriptive could produce clones unable to reason, make situated judgements or act in changing circumstances. The professional may have multiple selves shaped by identity, role, policy, professional standpoint and personal values.

Literature has suggested a polarity in professionalism where practice may be seen as art or science, practical versus technical, or traditional versus progressive (Stronach et al., 2002). However professionals will have many roles and identities, within these multiple selves' artistry, empiricism, practical skill, technical ability, and traditional and progressive views can coexist. Therefore professional practice cannot be clearly defined, constrained or explained. The 'art' of professional activity may involve the use of professional judgment and reasoning through reflective processes, utilising experiences to influence future action, such as decision making. However, action based on this alone may not be taken seriously in the context of accountability (Fish & Coles, 1998). These judgments and decisions can be perceived to be based on hunches and gut feeling, however a professional's reasoning skills may be based on extensive experience, incorporate the use of transferable skills tested in other settings and based on knowledge which although tacit should not be discounted as invaluable. The art of professional intervention may also include knowledge of ethics.

There is a strong ethical and moral element to the standards outlined in the codes which also led me to question how we can teach this to adult learners who will have formed their personal values and belief systems prior to starting a degree. This issue was discussed earlier in this chapter when considering values.

The development of a professional identity seems to go hand in hand with the development of a person's sense of professionalism. Therefore it is important that we engage students in an explicit process of mapping their identity formation and put mechanisms in place to support the development of an ethical professional identity which can adapt and respond to the demands and challenges of the role in practice. The literature has supported my understanding that defining and explicitly teaching and assessing professionalism should be an important aspect of the programme.

A Social Contract – “being an OT means something”

The sense that occupational therapy was more than a job for participants became evident throughout the interviews and I tried to capture this as part of the mapping process. Quotes such as “a way of being”, “being an OT means something” and “a certain presence about you” were placed as sub-categories of the map. I did consider putting all these statements together in one sub-category but struggled with a label that might really capture what the participants were talking about. Hamilton (2008) discusses the “social contract” professions have developed with the public. The autonomy and ability to regulate within the profession has been an agreement developed over time. There is an implicit trust in professionals to be professional and if they are not there is an expectation by the public that the profession itself will manage that (Hamilton 2008). The idea of a social contract I felt tied together some of the quotes I had placed on the map. This social contract impacts on the education and training of individuals, professionalism therefore needs to be an explicit component of the teaching and learning strategies of such programmes as this quote indicates;

“This social contract shapes-and makes distinctive-professional education. Across otherwise disparate-seeming educational experiences of seminary, medical school, nursing school ...and law school... professional education aims to initiate novice practitioners to think, to perform and conduct themselves (that is to act morally and ethically) like professionals” (Sullivan et al 2007 in Hamilton 2008:472)

I have used literature about professionalism from a range of professions such as law, medicine, clergy and allied health for this very reason. There is some commonality amongst occupational groups classed as professional to do the right thing. There are however no clear messages from this literature about how this is taught. The notion of teaching professionalism will be explored next.

The nature of professional programmes often means that not only do knowledge and theory need to be taught and assessed but competence needs to be ensured to allow an individual to practice under that professional name. Professionalism also needs to be taught but without a clear definition this may prove difficult. The teaching and experiential practices developed over a professional programme may be laden with tensions. The tension that ensures an academically able student is also competent or fit to practice, and vice versa, and the tension between teaching ideals and the reality of practice a student often encounters. A ‘symbolic mandate’ (Atkinson 2004) is developed by students as part of the pedagogy of their programme, by the uniform or dress code and the associated rituals linked to a profession (Thompson et al 2008) and a sense of the ‘professional’ or the ‘good’, teacher, occupational therapist or nurse emerges. An individual’s own experiences may be different from this symbolic mandate causing stress and tensions that may require supervision, mentoring and reflection to resolve. Supervision is another key word placed on the professionalism map. A sub-category of boundaries also reflects the students’ perceptions of a good or competent occupational therapist who could maintain appropriate professional boundaries with clients and colleagues. This is something some participant viewed as important to professionalism. An individual or amalgamation of a number of individuals forms a role model as part of this symbolic order.

Another concept identified in the literature around professionalism was that of an occupational paradigm. The interrelated practice, identity, self esteem, self image and role of the professional form a complex set of circumstances which make this occupational paradigm (Öhlén and Segesten 1998), personal identity and confidence and values therefore directly influence professionalism. The example below illustrates this point well.

“When you talked before about professionalism and a competent OT is someone who is professional or has professionalism, what does that mean to you to be a professional or to have that sense of professionalism?” (Interview Question)

“Somebody who you can respect and has a Code of Conduct. It’s kind of innate in them that they are making sure that everything is done by the book, that they are following legislation, that they are following

*procedures, they are following **codes of conduct** so that each person who they are working with can expect that they are going to get consistency ... that they are going to get **respected**, that's what I think **professionalism** is.*

*I know that I do it, and I've observed other people do it and its down to an understanding of the individual, and an understanding of yourself, that you're not giving too much of yourself but yet you need to come across as personable and it's about explaining to that individual that you are putting **boundaries** and they don't have to give me X Y and Z however I am going to need to get certain bits of information from them in order to support them through one of the processes they are going through at the time, it's about giving them information on what they can, what do they expect ... I don't know ...” (Interview 7 24 September 2009)*

Professional Identity

Professional identity is a sub-category on the professionalism map, however it was too difficult to separate this category from professionalism as the narratives about professionalism were all personal, all used the words ‘you’ or ‘I’, it seemed that being professional and having a professional identity were conceptualised in the same way for many participants. When asked about professionalism this quote I feel captures the conceptualisation of identity and behaviour coming together.

*“I feel like I'm going to work and **putting my professional hat on** and I become a different person in a way and it's how I behave to other people, it's how I speak and how I dress.” (Interview 6 10 August 2009)*

For this reason the categories are shown as interlinked on the map. Personal identity, a therapist's core beliefs or personal values are significant to consider (Öhlén and Segesten 1998, Trede et al 2012). An individual could not have a professional identity without a personal one (Öhlén and Segesten 1998). Having this personal / professional identity seems to emerge in the narratives when students discuss values and ways of interacting with others. Many of the participants discussed ‘being’ a professional and

the personal meaning and satisfaction gained from this. The following excerpt illustrates an individual grappling with defining their professional identity.

“....In terms of you having a professional identity” (Interview question)

*“I think it’s the skill that certain OT’s have when engaging with somebody..... they’ve got that professionalism, the person who their working with understands ... it’s something that you can’t put into words sometimes **an aura of an OT** ... it’s having the **confidence** to engage with somebody and then just having this way that the person feels calm, confident disclosing information to you, then from there ...”*

It’s about your professional identity? Is it about what you do? Or is it about who you are or both or none of those or..?

*... it doesn’t come down to what you do because you can be very generic, I mean there are a lot of generic workers out there who are **professional** ... however OT ... it’s so difficult to actually put it into words ... I’m so sorry (Interview 7 24 September 2009)*

The professional identity of occupational therapist may be confused due to the diverse areas within which they work. The historical subordination to medicine and the ever changing health and social care climate, leads to reconstructions of roles and identities of those therapists who work in new, emerging or changing contexts of practice. For some time the profession has been attempting to define its knowledge base and demonstrate its unique contribution and perspective to develop clear boundaries which, will help define the profession and enable clear occupational identities to be formed (Clouston and Whitcombe 2008, Mackey 2007). However is there such a thing as **an** occupational therapist? Can a collective definition be provided if personal attributes and values contribute to professional identity formation? As discussed regulatory bodies set out core competencies and behaviours required of professionals, but I would argue a definitive list of these attributes, skills and behaviours cannot be produced as there is no such thing as **an** occupational therapist (Stronach et al 2002)

The following excerpt is useful in considering the embodiment of professionalism and how a person’s values can influence their behaviour in work and out of work. Further discussions will be had later in the chapter with regards to values.

*“I say don’t mean I’m never off duty as an OT, but what I mean to say is, I see myself as a professional in-work, but **outside of work**, I’m someone who was family orientated before, my children come first, I am a family orientated person, I think I do have high **values** and of my children as well, and because I have those **values** going back to why I went on the course in the first place, that occupational therapy **seems to be that, that was a natural thing, it was a kind of profession that actually screamed it out to me really, you know, I really understand, it’s not something that I have to change, and conform to because that’s how I am,** (alignment of personal and professional values) *most of my family we sort of, er we are a respected family you know albeit religious, but at the same time we have very that high morals in our family and you don’t always get that in society, I can be totally myself without somebody thinking oh well that’s unusual that’s strange, in and outside of work because I am still totally the same person.*” (Interview 4 3 July 2009)*

The ‘habitus’ or state of being of an individual, objectively structured through practice and personal history impacts, Bourdieu would propose, on an individual’s perception of themselves in relation to others in their ‘field’. A ‘field’ is constructed through social relationships and dynamics (Harker et al., 1990) and is a fluid representation of the construct of that field, space or area of society. Individuals change or maintain their positions in the field by using capital, which may be cultural, symbolic or economic (Harker, 1990). Symbolic capital can be status or authority and this can be influenced by cultural capital such as education. The level of knowledge an individual holds can be used to inhibit access for others to experiences or situations, thus maintaining or increasing their symbolic capital in the field. Those involved in education become the ‘knowledge class’ and have higher perceived status than the ‘labour class’ in a field, culture or society for example (Webb et al., 2002).

The formation of a professional identity happens with a community of practice which for occupational therapy students involves both the university and practice environments. Their identity is neither singular nor fragmented in these roles but an individual may have a multiplicity of roles. The maps and the narrative that supports them attempt to indicate this.

Atkinson (2004:385) proposes that the “identity and subjectivities of the student (teacher) are formed within the ideological practices and discourses of ..education”. I find this useful, it supports my view that a professional identity develops through education in a professional field, be it in University or in practice. This links back to discussions regarding authenticity and its value and how teaching and learning experiences should exploit opportunities to be, or to be perceived to be, authentic. Exploring professional identity further may be useful here to consider the influences different settings or individuals may have on identity development.

There is clearly a tension in relation to professional identity and the concept is problematic. As discussed previously, the professional regulatory bodies set standards for conduct and proficiency (COT 2010, HCPC 2007). There is a set of attributes and skills required to be an occupational therapist and these come together to form an ideological professional identity. I feel this is problematic for a number of reasons. For one, I have already supported the view by Stronach et al (2002) that there is no such thing as **an** occupational therapist. What is not made explicit in these standards is an acknowledgment of a variance in the level of skill; these are minimum standards. If I revisit my discussion regarding competence, this problematises these standards further. Demonstration of competence against standards may be straightforward but feeling competent is internalised and individual. When an individual is forming a professional identity, ambiguity may occur by comparing this ideological identity to the reality of role models in practice, who it is hoped will surpass these standards, but to varying degrees. A professional’s scope of practice may mean that not all standards apply; a lecturer in occupational therapy may not need to meet all clinically related standards for example.

In University the ideal has to be taught, but often by the very nature of an academic’s shift from practice to teaching they rely on retrospective practice examples and their own retrospective identities (Sachs 2001) as a therapist in practice. Perhaps what practice educators on placement offer the student is a sense of prospective identity (Sachs 2001), a sense or vision of the future? Practice educators on placement not only model behaviours and skills, but test the knowledge and skills of the students in an authentic environment. This feedback may influence the professional development trajectory more as it is future focused and linked to assessment. Viewing the literature regarding professional identity development was a useful activity for me in

conceptualising the data in relation to both authenticity and the development of professionalism. I began to further understand what these role models in authentic settings offered, the ability to see a future self, something tangible to shape a student's practice. Again I genuinely feel that there are positive consequences of contaminating my data with literature. I engaged in reading the literature driven by my analysis of my data set, the categories from the data focused the literature search. The re-examination of data however in light of new understandings from literature has also been useful and has given me a wider perspective on the data than I would have had without this contamination.

Employability- A Short Term Construct?

The next stage in the student journey and what is noted as another critical experience is applying for a job. On the map for 'Employability' (see Figure 6) sub-categories reflect the practical aspect of employability, students discussed how prepared they felt about getting a job and how confident they felt in their skills. Again much of these discussions were strongly associated with placement experiences and authentic autonomous practice opportunities. One particular module, 'Into Employment' was discussed, this module focuses on skills such as curriculum vitae and personal statement writing, interview skills and focuses on guidance around legislation such as preceptorship and the Knowledge and Skills Framework (DoH 2004). What seemed most significant was that students felt they had to fit into teams and meet employer expectations, the sense that there was a specific set of skills and behaviours they would have to demonstrate but that that would vary from job to job. This reinforces some of the problematic aspects of universal standards codes and conceptualisations of professionalism. Students felt that there would be specific demands from employers to fit their requirements whilst also adhering to the universal requirements of **an** occupational therapist.

The term professionalism has already been considered and it's often individualised conceptualisation, married with the ill defined construct of employability make teaching and preparing students for the workplace a challenging task. Where attempts have been made to define employability, commonalities are, having skills for the job market that enable you to find a job and stay in a job or move to another should that be necessary in order to sustain employment. Employable graduates need to be self aware and be able to appraise their own attributes in relation to employer expectations (Clarke and Patrickson 2008, Hall 1996, Hillage and Pollard 1998, Saunders and de Grip 2004). Employability

is proffered as a viable alternative to job security and employers are being encouraged to maintain and / or develop employability skills in the workforce (Clarke and Patrickson 2008). The ability to deal with change and continuity are also considered important (Reid et al 2008). These themes are reflected in the sub-categories on the map where participants cited the need to meet employer expectations and proposed that they needed to fit or meet the requirements of a role in order to be employable. They discussed core professional skills as well as generic skills such as team working and advanced communication skills which, they felt would all be relevant in the workplace.

*“You have got to match their **job specification** whatever that is anyway, I have to show that I have got those **skills** to demonstrate, all the **OT skills**, I am sure that when they are interviewing they are looking at, how **I’m fitting in...**” (Interview 3 14 May 2009)*

Only one participant cited that they felt unprepared and not yet ready for the job market, their interview took place before the ten week elective placement and they felt that this experience would rectify this situation. The data seems to indicate that participants had an understanding of employability; they recognised they need the skills to do the job. What was not discussed was how they would keep that job or move on to the next one, which the literature has indicated is also part of the overall employability picture. This perhaps reflects the stage they are at in their journey where the goal is likely to be to finish the programme, graduate and secure employment. This is a transitional stage and looking beyond is not of importance at present.

Transition- Managing Expectations and Change

A structured, formal way of managing transition into the National Health Service (NHS) is through a process called preceptorship. The ‘Preceptorship Framework’ (DoH 2010) originally for new registered nurses has now been extended to Midwives and Allied Health Professionals. Preceptorship is described as “a transition phase for newly registered practitioners when continuing their professional development, building their confidence and further developing competence to practice” (DoH 2010:10)

Newly qualified occupational therapists who secure work in the NHS are allocated a preceptor; this person provides guidance, support and feedback in relation to the area of practice. Goals are set to support clinical skill development, helping a practitioner develop competence and confidence. This is an additional initiation into professionalism

providing a role model in the service setting, someone who can help with the enactment of the symbolic mandate, who can welcome them into the community of practice and guide them in their transition. The scheme is again driven by externally set standards of competency and thresholds of achievement which demonstrate development and can aid promotion.

Many students graduating from the programme will not work in the NHS however and there is a growth of public, third sector and health related organisations employing occupational therapy graduates in what would be considered as non traditional settings. It will be important to teach the basic premise of preceptorship and the skills to manage this transition to students so they may look to establish similar support in any area in which they work, should they feel it would be useful and should it not be already established. The following excerpt represents this idea of transition well.

*“now I’m finding that you’re having **to shed a skin**, come out of that student person that I was kind of holding back before, because that was my frustration prior to is that having all this information and couldn’t actually put it into practice and then now it’s like I can take it off now and can go actually and do it and can clinically reason and I’m finding that I am an Occupational Therapist and I’ve never thought of myself as that before I’ve thought of myself as a student – as a student Occupational Therapist” (Interview 7 24 September 2009)*

It may also be worth considering again here the debate around notions of professionalism and received wisdoms as each preceptor will have their own conceptualisation of professionalism and their own experiences on which they have developed that. My situated claim here is that preparation for this transition is essential and should be a component of the programme of study. Participants appear to perceive employability as a short term construct, focusing on securing their first post and not looking beyond to career management and development. It was useful for me to see that transition also appeared relevant in the literature; it reinforced my consideration of it as a topic in this study and enhanced my understanding.

Reflexivity – Confessions of a Researcher

This thesis has been a confessional account which may have bordered on being overly reflective, to the point of screening the data. The purpose of this reflexivity has been to

situate myself and my suppositions in the research process and by doing this I have served a number of purposes. I have made explicit my role in the collection and analysis of data showing ethical integrity. I have developed deeper, richer insights into my data set by comparing to literature and to my experience and knowledge. I have highlighted possible limitations for public scrutiny by being overt about contamination and offering a detailed account of the methodological process. I have provided an account of life in the borderlands to show how my thinking influenced my actions. I have provided ongoing evaluation of myself, my data and literature in the context of this study (Finlay 2006). In this process I have been sensitive to the role of the researcher, evidenced an open and systematic approach to research and have been open and explicit about my analysis and interpretations.

Conclusion

This chapter has brought together significant literature and my data. The recontamination of the data set with literature and reconstructions of concepts and meanings, as part of a comparative process has been useful. I have conceptualised categories and relationships differently by enhancing and interrogating my knowledge and understanding through engagement with literature and data. The maps provide an overview of the data but I have woven in quotes from the transcripts to enrich and exemplify the sub-categories further. There are a number of problematic areas here with ill defined notions of professionalism and tensions with received wisdom. Changing and challenging political and economic climates make employability both more important and yet harder to define. The values of the individual appear to play a fundamental part in their professional identity and the embodiment of professional values, which often align with personal ones, and are developed over time. Role models and authenticity in practice have a fundamental impact enabling the testing out of skills and supporting prospective identity formation. Finally external regulation of professions challenges much of the historic self regulation and trust given to professional and defines generic standards of competence, conduct and development. This universal view creates an antithesis to the affective and individualised conceptions of professionalism that seem to be indicated in my data.

I propose that generally the participants' perceptions of employability and professionalism reflect themes in the literature. Participants struggled to clearly define what they meant by the terms employability or professionalism and these concepts

remain problematic. There are a number of important practical considerations to take forward for curriculum development and these include:-

- The consideration of authenticity in teaching and learning experiences, extending the use of role models to support the formation of a prospective identity and the modelling of professional behaviour and attitudes
- Review the support and development needs of the practice placement educators who facilitate and assess learning on placement
- The importance of mapping a personal and professional development trajectory across the programme to explicitly, show, track and assess professional development and to support identity formation
- The inclusion of a more explicit focus on professionalism, attempting to define and teach it and to support ethical identity formation
- The enhancement of employability activities and teaching including explicit preparation for transition / preceptorship.

In the final concluding chapter I shall summarise the pertinent points from my thesis, provide a clear overview of where I have made an original contribution to the field and make recommendations on how to take the outcomes of this study forward.

Chapter 8 - Concluding the Journey

In this chapter I shall draw together the key elements of this thesis, I shall focus on what I have learnt with regards to students' perceptions of employability and professionalism. Areas for curriculum development will be outlined based on my interpretations of the data and literature. I shall consider my methodological approach and the way this has supported me to collect, analyse and explore data. The intersection of methodology and data will also be a focus as I consider my data set and how it may be shared and understood by others. Finally, I shall map my development as a researcher by reflecting on my research journey.

Considerations for Professional Practice

The categories and sub-categories that were shown on the maps helped to support my understanding of students' perceptions of professionalism and employability. The most common discussions in the interviews and focus group were around personal values and attributes, how these led to career choice and contributed to or aligned with professional values.

Professionalism and employability were hard to define from the data set and this is supported in the literature, but there were a number of factors that were frequently raised. In terms of professionalism and the formation of professional identity, clinical or practice based placements were significant, particularly for identity formation; role models were also significant. The authenticity of practice / learning experiences was a contributing factor to professional socialisation. Positive feelings about professional regulation were shared and a sense of belonging was created by being part of a profession tied to a body such as the College of Occupational Therapy. Codes of conduct and standards again were viewed positively and were not perceived to be constraining as some of the literature proposes. Skills acquired through engagement in teaching and learning activities were valued in the context of employability with team working, presentation and communication skills all being cited as relevant to feeling prepared and confident when obtaining a job.

Curriculum Development

The programme that I currently teach on has a five yearly review as part of institutional quality assurance procedures. If major changes are made to module content, programme structure, delivery or assessment then a re-accreditation is triggered by the professional

body the Health and Care Professions Council. The increased understandings gained from undertaking this study will be used to inform this programme review to enhance the student experience. In a National Union of Students Report, produced as part of a Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education project into enhancing student experience, hearing student voices and involving them in their programmes was considered to be important. More students wanted to be involved in shaping content, so as part of a re-accreditation process the use of these findings, which reflect student views, will be made explicit.

“52.1% of students said that they were involved or somewhat involved in helping to shape the content of their course, compared to 75% who would like to be. Around a fifth of students said they would like to be involved by either being a course rep or by being involved in setting the assessment criteria. Many students commented that they didn’t really understand how they could get involved in developing their course and that this was not made explicit to them when they started their course.”

(<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Student-Experience-Research-2012-Part-1.pdf> accessed 30 July 2012)

Modular and programme level data is frequently collected but the level of detail gained through the focus group and interviews has supported my understanding and has given me some inspiration for moving forwards. The areas that appear to be the most pertinent were concluded in the previous chapter and are as follows:-

- The consideration of authenticity in teaching and learning experiences, extending the use of role models to support the formation of a prospective identity
- To review the support and development needs of the Practice Placement Educators who facilitate and assess learning on placement
- The importance of mapping a personal and professional development trajectory across the programme to explicitly, show, track and assess professional development and to support identity formation
- The inclusion of a more direct focus on professionalism, attempting to define and teach it and to support ethical identity formation
- The enhancement of employability activities and teaching including preparation for transition / preceptorship.

Methodological Considerations

I feel the way I have critiqued and engaged in debates around methodological issues is original and may add to the field of qualitative research. I shall summarise the main points that I feel are significant in relation to this.

The discussions I have had in this thesis around the tensions between what I term contamination, the researchers' influence of the research process and the creativity that finally enabled me to truly engage in that process is the first important consideration. The guidance of grounded theory and some of my preconceived ideas, perhaps related to my allied health background where evidence-based approaches are considered good practice, had ingrained some ideas of 'proper' research being more closely related to positivism. My struggle with bias and objectivity initially reflected this I think (St Pierre and Roulston 2006). As the study progressed I allowed myself to be creative, to venture into the borderlands and understood that my influence on the process would be present despite the strategies I employed to constrain it. I made my own paradigm shift and felt liberated. The concept proposed by Luca (2009) of 'embodied bracketing' resonated and I was able to find a way of using my knowledge and experience, acknowledging its presence, using it as a data set in itself, as a point of reference and to support the collection and analysis process. My knowledge of the programme, my relationships with the participants, my understanding of literature in the field, itself another data set and my experiences of teaching for over 10 years could add to this project. I have attempted to be more explicit throughout the thesis about where I think this influence is evident, these sites of contamination and my consideration of possible sites of silence have added to the integrity of this research.

The Intersection between Methodology and Data

The use of situational and relational maps (Clarke 2005) were useful tools for me to develop a better relationship with my data. They provided a tool deal with my frustrations with modernist grounded theory whilst holding on to the aspects of it that suited this study and my approach. The coding practices outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) became mechanistic and awkward for me. I felt uncomfortable with the "decontextualisation and fragmentation of interview data" (Nespor and Barylske 1991 :810 in St Pierre and Roulston 2006:677). Although I still coded and categorised data, I used the maps to attempt to show my data, to demonstrate my assumptions with regards to the relationships between categories and sub-categories and to enable me to also put

in data which did not easily fit within a category rather than force it to fit or omit it. Complexity and difference is represented Clarke (2005), as far as is possible in this two dimensional structure.

This then enabled me to view the transcripts differently. I was able to revisit transcripts and access data and narratives to enrich the categories and sub-categories making them more detailed and more grounded in data. Categories and sub-categories are considered as examples, based on MacLure's (2010) ideas of theory as examples. The maps show my attempts to formulate a more coherent overview of the data, although by the nature of the 'capture' and the order imposed by drawing boundaries, the dynamic nature of the narrative is lost. The maps enabled a partial, temporal and situated reading to be made by both the map-maker and the map-reader.

The maps enabled the text / discourses / data to be viewed in context, the research focus of professionalism / employability could not be extrapolated from the context, as meaning would be lost. Foregrounding the context, as part of the analytical processes felt appropriate. The dynamics of the relationships between myself and the other people and categories on the map, the intersubjective spaces (Biesta 1998) where discourse happens between data and myself is visible on the relational maps.

I propose, after considering the work of Derrida (1978), Lacan (1977) and Zizek (1989) that meanings in the maps are temporarily fixed, deliberately quilted into the map with the acknowledgement that the map provides only a snapshot of the research area, which is situated in a dynamic context. The meaning will wander as soon as a different position on the map is taken, that is to say with each reading of the map. If the categories and narrative excerpts are the signifiers that link together the text on the map to make meaning, then the meaning is undoubtedly contaminated by me as the researcher as I have privileged and labelled data. My interpretation of meaning in the maps is somewhat clarified by seeing all the categories and sub-categories laid out on the page, the meaning behind the labels given is enhanced both by understanding what was not meant by the label, by comparison to others on the map and by the additional quotes and narratives that I was able to add to the discussion. This was also enhanced by comparison to existing themes in literature. The maps do not stand in isolation and should be viewed in an interconnected way but the separation of them into category maps makes the reading and sharing of my data easier and therefore accessible.

Use of the maps and reflection on the process led to me question how a research object comes into being, if I support the notion of the wandering of meaning and the re-reading or re-drawing of maps. Harvey (1989) questions notions of privileging time over space in relation to social change processes and he suggests that we assume a pre-existing spacial order within which, temporal aspects operate. The notion that time is privileged over space is challenged by the maps; time is stuttered through the capture / reading of the map where temporarily meaning is fixed. The space however remains explicit and fundamental to the reading of the map.

The categories and sub-categories serve as examples, their meaning may be temporarily fixed, yet deferred by a reader who will come with their own conceptual spectacles and experiences and may associate with a particular position on the map, influencing the reading of it. The boundaries on the map are to help representation but are porous and there are leakages out of categories on to other categories and other maps. By foregrounding context the meaning again will be in flux reflecting the dynamic background the context provides. The maps cannot truly represent the experiences of the participants but may offer some insights which, combined with my professional knowledge and experience, can support me to formulate examples which can influence practice and policy.

Contribution to Methodology

To summarise I feel my unique contribution to methodology comes through my transgression of classical grounded theory and my reappropriation of the methodology. I have told the story of becoming a researcher and how research data become situated in context, where meaning may be temporarily fixed in space and time. My development of situational analysis proposing more fluid three dimensional maps, more complex relationships between categories, a more spherical and porous boundaries with leakages, develops thinking in the field of data analysis in grounded theory. My engagement with modernist and postmodern ideas is original and creative. In mapping my journey as a researcher I have been able to further explore the role of the researcher in the research process and have provided exemplars of how I engaged in activities in the borderlands attempting to be creative whilst holding on to structure, struggling with representation of participants voices and strategies to maintain accessibility of the data. This thesis is a methodological thesis, but throughout I have narrated the empirical components of this study.

The diversity of qualitative research generally and differences in grounded theory studies specifically, leads to difficulties in defining the criteria against which this study is judged to be credible and of value (Freeman et al 2007). I have demonstrated awareness of these issues throughout this thesis and outline my own criteria against which I believe the study can be judged. These are authenticity, rigour and ethical integrity.

In terms of authenticity my study can be deemed to be persuasive. The narrative excerpts, maps and literature combine together for illustrative purposes. Depth is provided by being able to link map to map and categories and sub-categories to each other and to the narratives on the transcripts. They form examples around which the exploration of professionalism unfolds. My claims bound in data exemplify my interpretations.

In terms of rigour and ethical integrity, I have been critically reflective and have accounted for my research decisions regarding collection, analysis and representation throughout this thesis. I have been clear about my role and struggles as a researcher and have highlighted limitations. These relate to possible sites of contamination, the way in which I influence data collection, analysis and reconstruct it and in terms of sites of silence, issues of power, inequality, oppression and praxis (Lather 1991, 2004) as a researcher researching the students who I teach.

The qualities or characteristics I have outlined to demonstrate my consideration of rigour and authenticity will also be subject to reinterpretation and reconstruction by the readers of this thesis and will be framed by political, contextual, academic and social factors which are subject to change (Smith and Deemer 2000).

Professionalism and Employability

I also feel I have made an original contribution in the field of occupational therapy by further understanding the areas of professionalism and employability. The recommendations I have made perhaps over simplify complex and problematic concepts. There is no clear agreement in literature or from my data, regarding teaching strategies and methods of assessment for professionalism or what definitive skills, attributes or behaviours an employable occupational therapy graduate might display.

The examples created in my study however do give some insights into the formative and significant teaching and learning experiences that have enhanced feelings of competence, professionalism and preparedness for employment. One of the most interesting areas revolves around competence and identity, it is clear that role models play a part and authentic communities of practice help shape professional identity. The notion of a prospective identity was new to me and viewing a trajectory along which development could be mapped and an individual's prospective identity created and moulded is something which I hope to translate into the curriculum. My situated claim around the alignment of personal and professional values has also been significant. If possessing or developing these values correlates with a sense of professionalism then selecting future occupational therapists in relation to their values, or at least a commitment to the development of those values, could be an interesting project to move forward with.

One of the most contentious areas perhaps is in relation to notions of professionalism versus external regulation and standards. How do we teach individual therapists who will have varying attributes, competencies, experiences and interests and encourage these individuals to flourish whilst also meeting uniform standards set by professional bodies and statutory organisations? This will be an issue for ongoing discussion, it is clear that the attainment of standards of proficiency is essential as a threshold into the workforce. Individualised and monitored personal development planning that enables the attainment of these set standards and supports students to use their experience and interests to enrich their overall teaching and learning experience will be one suggestion to resolve these tensions.

Contribution to Practice

This thesis has used narrative and situational mapping to explore the complex construct of professionalism for the participants in the study. Through this employability, competence, professional identity and professional development have also been explored. Understanding the dynamics of these factors and the critical experiences for participants will as I have outlined, impact on curriculum development. These issues will influence the pedagogy of occupational therapy. It has become clear that students value role models; staff are both occupational therapists and teachers, given the importance of role models students may place more value on the former and as teaching professionals we need to make our practice based roles and experience more overt. The

participant's narrative and the narrative of myself, as an occupational therapist and teacher are situated in a meta-narrative of professionalism. Narratives are personalised and reconstructed by experience, audience and context. Understanding that the grand narrative of professionalism needs to be learnt, through explicit teaching and assessment activities, whilst also valuing and guiding the development of personal narratives, through individualised and one to one development activities, is important. The unique contribution to practice is in relation to the development of this new pedagogy for occupational therapy.

Reflections on my Development

The themes that resonate throughout this thesis include contamination, liberation and creativity; these themes I feel are closely linked to my development as a researcher from novice to experienced, this thesis tells that tale of becoming a researcher. The shift from rigid observance of guidance regarding tools for collection and analysis to a more mature and reasoned approach where I have been able to appraise the value of tools, guidance and theory to ascertain their value and usefulness to me in the context of my study. I am now able to make decisions and judgements with more confidence. I am able to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity. Some of that confidence also correlates with practical nature of doing the research, the more activities I have undertaken as part of the research process, the more convinced I became regarding my ability to complete the thesis. I started from a position where I felt completely out of my depth and almost debilitated by choices and literature (regarding ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects) to a position where I can engage more critically with the research process and move towards completion of this thesis.

Intervening as a Professional

There were issues with regards to intervening as a professional which relate to professional knowledge and the power imbalance associated with researching students that I teach. The whole contamination issue arose from an anxiety that my professional knowledge and experience had to be distanced or separated from the research. In the early parts of the study a huge amount of time and energy was spent worrying about how I was influencing the process and how I could shelve my preconceived ideas. This was an issue which, not only used a great deal of time but which impacted on methods and strategies developed for data collection. The pilot data was of limited use because it gave me so little insight into the perceptions of the students. The rigidity I imposed in

terms of the process left a limited and sterile list of characteristics of employability with little essence of how participants actually felt. However I was eventually able to move forward and was satisfied with the data I collected via the focus group and interviews. Strategies were employed to try and manage inequality but power issues are outlined as a potential site of silence in this study.

Reflecting on Theory

I have also had a complex relationship with theory, viewing it initially as something separate from my study and looking for ways to shoe horn it in to show I could work at doctoral level, this view was naïve and again I developed my relationships to theory as I progressed. I finally moved to a position of seeing the usefulness of theory and considered how to appraise and understand the value in terms of questioning and gaining new viewpoints. I could utilise theory by examples, the data I had could generate examples which could represent a view of an individual and those views could come together to create a contextualised story, based on this I could make some suggestions and claims based on what I had found out and what I may do in the future as a consequence of the study. Not ‘theory’, with a capital ‘T’, but perhaps theory as MacLure (2010) might suggest.

There are aspects of grounded theory which kept their appeal, I did not run over the border and leave modernist ideas behind completely, the constant comparative method, theoretical sampling and the delayed literature review, using literature later as a data set in itself were used. The difficulties I had with distance and contamination I resolved, I allowed the sensitizing to be a creative process where I could explicitly use my knowledge and experience in a creative way to the benefit of the data collection and analysis. I found myself in the borderlands in a creative space and I moved around this landscape exploring and developing my understanding. Noting sites of contamination and being reflexive about my influence, making sure the data codes and categories were grounded in the transcripts was useful. My interpretation and creativity was made more overt through my analysis of categories, sub-categories and narrative on the maps.

The ‘theory’ in grounded theory gives the methodological approach a standing in research and although I refute the theory claim of theory here, I do feel it has enabled me to gain insights into perceptions of professionalism and employability. I have been able to make situated, temporal claims.

Contribution to Theory

This thesis has not produced theory, I have rejected modernist notions of truth and classic grounded theory ideas of discovery and formal theory. This has been documented clearly in terms of my relationship to theory and in terms of the theory as an outcome of grounded theory. What is original is the use of theorising through the use of the situational mapping process and constant comparison of data from transcripts and data from literature to make situated contextual claims and explore the perceptions of participants. The ideas of MacLure (2010) that the awkwardness of theory stutters practice has been used as a concept to engage with theory or received wisdom from the literature which has been compared to the analysed data on the maps and in the transcripts to question, disrupt, illuminate, reconstruct and explore professionalism. I hope that on dissemination of my work others will question and review their own practice that this work stutters and makes awkward the repetition of practice without thought or reflection on their knowledge and actions.

The End of a Journey (or perhaps only the beginning of one....)

I have thoroughly enjoyed undertaking my Doctorate in Education. I have undoubtedly found it difficult, challenging and have on many occasions considered my ability and motivation to complete this. As I come to the end of this process I have found a passion for learning more about research and for engaging with others to help understand things better. I have become more comfortable with reasoning and decision making and will continue to be critical of the positions or stances I take as a researcher. There are numerous things I could have done differently, I have learned on the job and by my mistakes, but I think the journey has been a valuable one. When I started this journey I imagined endless evenings of reading and writing and weekends filled with intellectual endeavour...then I got married, gained two lovely step daughters, had two wonderful children, moved house and got a cat! In many ways my personal circumstances made this journey more difficult but the time I did have to focus on this became all the more valuable. I hope I can take my learning and passion for research forward now into new projects.

(63,893 including tables and references)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Ideal *** Inventory

The Ideal Employability Inventory – Individual

Please list the what you think constitutes the ideal / not ideal characteristics or qualities of employability in the columns below, opposites do not have to be literal opposites, it is how you choose to describe them that is important. Once you have listed up to 6, please rank them in order of priority with 1 being most important. An example for an Ideal Lecturer is provided

Rank	Ideal.....	Not Ideal...
Example	Conveys own enthusiasm for the subject	Checks knowledge and understanding
Example	Is a facilitator of student learning	Is a subject expert who imparts knowledge

The Ideal Employability Inventory - Composite

Following a group discussion, please agree and list what you think constitutes the ideal / not ideal characteristics or qualities of employability in the columns below, once you have listed up to 6, please rank them in order to priority with 1 being most important

Rank	Ideal.....	Not Ideal...

The Employability Inventory Rating Scale

Please transfer the agreed statements from the composite on to this grid, in the order you ranked them in, the most important being first. Once complete please rate yourself by circling the point that you feel represents your skill / competence level presently

	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	
	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	
	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	
	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	
	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	
	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	
	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆	

Appendix 2: Information Sheets and Consent Forms

Pilot Consent

Dear Level III Student

I am undertaking an evaluation of teaching and learning in relation to employability in order to inform my practice, enhance the evidence base and contribute to programme development. I am looking for Level III students to participate in an activity in order to provide data for the above. Your views are important to professional and programme development.

The evaluation is part of a Doctorate in Education I am undertaking at MMU; therefore data will be used in my thesis and may be used in presentations and papers in the future. Your details will remain confidential and your contributions anonymous.

You do not have to participate in this evaluation / research but if you choose to you can withdraw at any time without consequence. If you do participate I will need an hour of your time to complete an activity and may wish to follow up with an interview, of no more than an hour. Interviews will be arranged at your convenience.

The activity will take place on 11th June at 11am, prior to your final tutorial. I hope to randomly select 5 participants for the activity but this will be dependent on the number of positive responses. Interviewees will be selected following initial data collection and analysis; it is possible that you may be contacted for interview even if you have not been involved in the activity.

If you are willing to participate please email your name and contact details and a statement saying you are happy to participate, I will need a completed consent form (below) from you when you next come in to University.

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 0161 295 2394 or v.halliwell@salford.ac.uk.

I agree to participate in the evaluation activity

Name and date _____

I agree to be contacted after the activity to be involved in an interview

Name and date _____

Contact number(s) _____

Student Evaluation – Employability

Information Sheet

Dear Level III Student

As you know the job market is competitive and the political climate is impacting on employment. I am undertaking a study to look at employability and students perceptions of it, in order to evaluate the programme and the opportunities provided to students to prepare them for gaining employment in this context. I aim to enhance the evidence base and contribute to programme development.

I am looking for Level III students to participate in **a focus group on Monday 16 March 2009 12-1pm, lunch will be provided.**

The evaluation is part of a Doctorate in Education I am undertaking at MMU; therefore data will be used in my thesis and may be used in presentations and papers in the future. Your details will remain confidential and your contributions anonymous.

You do not have to participate in this evaluation / research but if you choose to you can withdraw at any time without consequence. If you do participate I will need up to an hour of your time to complete the focus group and may wish to follow up with an interview, of no more than an hour. Interviews will be arranged at your convenience from May onwards.

I realise that your time is precious at the moment as you are nearing the end of your studies, however I hope you will find by engaging in the focus group and discussing employability, your learning and understanding of this area may be enhanced, which will support your professional development.

If you are willing to participate, please **complete consent form** (attached) and **pass it to Ellen in the session or return it to me by putting it in the envelope outside my office (C402) by Wednesday 11 March 2009.**

If you require further information or have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 0161 295 2394 or V.Halliwell@salford.ac.uk.

Thanks

Vicky

Student Evaluation – Employability

Consent Form – Focus Group

I have read the information sheet and I agree to participate in the evaluation activity

Name and date _____

I agree to be contacted after the activity to be involved in an interview

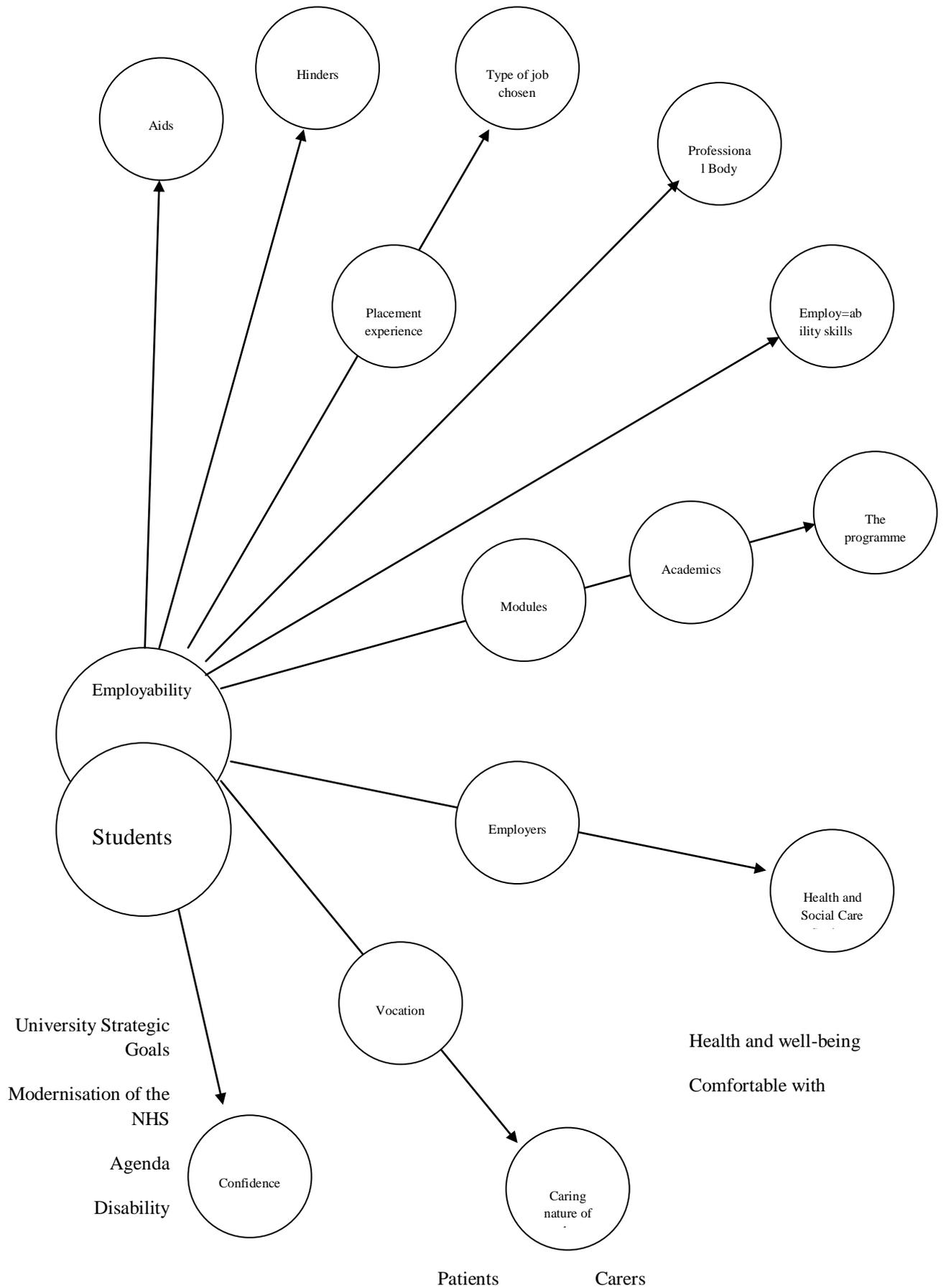
Name and date _____

Contact number(s) _____

Email address (University and other as interviews will be arranged at later date)

I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Appendix 3 - Focus Group Relational Map using Situational analysis (Clarke 2005)



Appendix 4: Examples of Transcripts

Excerpt for transcript Interview 4 3 July 2009

... What makes you an OT when you're working what makes you an OT you know feel different and if so how

I think um, I think from the point of view that, you know I have always been a really insightful and inquisitive person, at the minute I feel that I can look holistically at a person at the environment and pick up pieces of that person and the environment together to understand what it is that person may have difficulties, so many different areas without being in an abstract way which is probably what I might have thought, oh yeah that person is poorly, but could be put in place, that would have been just one aspect whereas now, naturally I will be looking holistically and asking more questions around, oh what is it that you have problems there, and I will look at whatever it is and how does that work and how does that function and how do you interact with them and then looking at social network and family contacts, all those building blocks of that person, I look holistically at that person and then before I think it would have been a different aspect of that point of view, what I was saying before with training of this placement, there are all different levels of working and its Ok but being an occupational therapist makes me a part would say the way that they work and not incomplete not just a part of the job.

When you went for your first job, I went to a job all the time in a transitional period.

Unfortunately but fortunately for me I bring back to being a very open minded person of the situation, suss out the personalities of the interviewers and to adapt what I'd do but at the same time when I say that I'm going to change for that um organisation to fit in there, I'm just going to adapt, I know how to adapt what I say to fit something almost to meet the criteria really, the personality and everything will come through.

So you don't have any worries about going for a job, do you know what kind of job you want.

I think from the off what I would really like to work in the community, ideally I'd quite like the place that I am working at the moment, and I know going back to this whole interview of employability, I know I have got that experience that some of the other team members don't have. For a lot of people the thought of that is horrendous, at the time I am ? so because I don't believe you have anything to lose or ?

You know you haven't changed kind of your perspective on your abilities or your confidence or ..

I think my, I think I've always been a confident person and my confidence has carried me through, I've never sort of applied for a position that I wasn't qualified for

Oh yes

More qualifications and experience than I had and I'd only had that experience than I had, I think that my experience has grown, I've always been a confident person but as my experience has grown, and my skills have grown throughout the training, my confidence has grown it doesn't mean to say that I know I've got a huge ego or head and get anything, I'm realistic of what I can do, but I'm also realistic going back to previous conversation the work people panic, panic, looking for jobs, which I think always comes through not only on the application, but it may not come through on the application, but it will come through at the interview stage, it may be seen by some people that I am a bit laid back but think, the next one comes and the right position comes, a module I know where I'm up to with my CV and application I've got the feedback from management and I am a highly employable person, I've always in jobs studied and now I've got up to a higher level, so from that point of view I do actually feel quite confident.

Um What do you think if anything the programme in terms of teaching and learning has contributed to your kind of professional identity or your philosophy, or things that stand out you have talked about the employment module or and talk about how it's really impacted on and understanding what it is to be an OT Yes

Yes, I think it is the fact that we are registered to the college of occupational therapists, I don't think that that is ingrained to us you know from the forefront. I think from my point of view I actually felt quite honoured to be member of the college or OT and working towards that honours degree and thought progress and I thought being whether I am, I am representing the college of occupational therapy, that really even as a social kind of thing, it would make you think differently about your how outlook about how to be professional and when I'm outside of work, not that I wasn't before, you know that are going to still have a certain presence about you, and it's definitely made a big difference in regards to you know

Professionalism is an interesting one in the sense of duty or how you think you are describing it.

Yes

It's not just about when you are here at work, but it's definitely

Yes definitely

it is why like you are not able to ever be off duty as an OT

Yeah, but I think yeah, when I say don't mean I'm never off duty as an OT, but what I mean to say is, I see myself as a professional in-work, but outside of work, I'm someone who is family orientated before, my children come first, I am a family orientated person, I think I do have high values and of my children as well, and because I have those values going back to why I went on the course in the first place, that occupational therapy seems to be that that was a natural thing, it was a kind of profession that actually screamed it out to be really, you know, I really understand, it's not something that I have to change, and conform to because that's how I am, most of my family we sort of, er we are a respected family you know albeit religious, but at the

same time we have very that high morals in our family and you don't always get that in society, I can be totally myself without somebody thinking oh well that's unusual that's strange, in and outside of work because I am still totally the same person.

Excerpt from transcript Interview 6 10 August 2009

There we are that should be right more nearer you than me if that's alright.

No problem

Ok so what I'm trying to kind of tease out is how you felt at the end of the programme. How you felt as an OT and how you felt in terms of being ready for work

OK

and kind of what experiences along the way might have helped or hindered that.

Right

So

OK

(laugh)

Er, right how did I feel when I'd finished . . . erm, I felt ready to finish.

Right

I felt like I'd got to the point where I knew in theory what I had to do and I wanted to test myself and not as a student anymore, actually go out and try it and not have to check with somebody before I did things all the time, actually go and do it and see how I got on without anybody watching me.

Right, so you felt ready to do that autonomous kind of ...

Yes, I was really itching to go out and do it for myself.

Right, so presumably you felt confident enough to go and do it on your own

Yes, erm, there's lots of things that I don't know about as well and I didn't feel like I can go out and just walk into a job and just do it, just, it sounds like I contradicting myself . . . (sigh) . . . er

If I don't know

go on

On a scale of 1 to 10

Yes

... in terms of feeling confident

Yes

... and thinking I can do the job, where were you at the beginning of level 3 and where were you at the end of level 3.

At the beginning of level 3 I'd say about 6, 6 or 7

Right

And at the end 7-8

Right

To 9 in some settings. If I had gone into ... my last placement was neuro rehab and if my job had been in neuro rehab I would definitely have been 8 or 9, like I can go and do this at band 5 level no problem

Right

...as a newly qualified

OK

But to go into a different setting, considering what that setting would be it more sort of 7ish

Right

Like I know, I know I can go in there and I know I won't do anything wrong, but I might need help doing something new, but I can get in there, I can manage and cope until I got supervision

Right

That's how I felt

OK, and when you were going for interviews and things, how did you feel, how prepared for that sort of context did you feel do you think

Erm quite prepared actually, erm, because they write some advice that was being aware of government policies and guidelines and things, things like that, I did a lot of swotting up on that sort of thing before I went for interview,

so I felt like I had that to fall back on if anyone asked me a question that I didn't know, I always felt that I could say well maybe I don't know the specific answer but I would look on the NSF or I would look on NICE guidelines so I felt like would always be a really good thing to fall back on in interview.

Am I right in thinking that you've got your first job offer before you'd done into employment.

Yes

So it wasn't necessarily about interim employment the module that prepared you for that situation then, you kind of prepared yourself.

Yes I suppose, yes you're right probably yes.

Because lots of people you know that's a significant module in terms of how we can get ready for work, but you'd sorted that before.

But I think it was with that specific interview they'd ask me to do a presentation

Right

...and that's what made me look at the NSF and all of the people for that specific job. If they'd hadn't asked me to do a presentation, I probably wouldn't have looked at all that sort of thing, I would have looked more about showing you my OT models and that sort of thing.

OK, in terms of doing your presentation

Yes

Did that phase you or were you OK with that and ...

It phased me at first when I first started to do it, I thought it was really good, because one of my problems is that when I feel put on the spot, everything goes out of my head and I can't think of what to say and even though I know it. So doing a presentation it was good because it just prompted me all the way through because it was already prepared.

Right, OK, and do you think that there are any sort of experiences, is it more related to work or more related to uni that's got you to the point where you feel comfortable, I don't know doing presentations or doing interviews or you know going and starting the day to day job.

It's a proper mixture, it's a mixture, I feel much better about presentations from uni definitely, that's really made me feel confident in that because we had to do so many.

Yes

Work, working made me feel better because I felt like I knew some of the sort of the buzz-words I suppose you'd call them, but I could talk about, em, key performance indicators and things like that, which I would never have learnt at uni but because I was at work I had heard all these words banded around and learnt what they meant so I could just throw them in.

OK, yes.

Sort of have a better dimension to what I was talking about.

So what do you think they were looking for when you were going for interviews and they were looking to recruit a band 5, what is it that they were looking for do you think, and what is that they saw in you that fulfilled that.

I think they wanted, because it was band 5 I think they understood that I wouldn't able to just walk in and do everything no problems, I think they wanted to know that I would know what to do even if I didn't know what to do, if that makes sense.

OK

I think they wanted to know that I wouldn't walk in there and think I know everything, I am going to plough through regardless of my knowledge and make a big mess of it, I think they were looking for somebody who said actually I'm a bit stuck here so I am going to go look this up I am going to look up the guidelines I am going to seek supervision and know where to look and be able to look independently as well.

Right OK ... so they were looking for you to be able to use your initiative but knowing your boundaries and using the support mechanisms and seeing it

Definitely

... as part of your ongoing development.

Definitely, yes.

Right, yes OK. And from your experience of from work and placement what do you think makes an OT different from other members, are there er not just the obvious they're doing a different job, but are there do you think characteristics or skills that OTs have that other people don't.

Just from what I've noticed empathy in patients.

Right

Which surprised me a bit because I just thought, I didn't really think of that as being a special OTs sort of thing really, but it does seem to be.

Yes, and is that something you learn or something you bring with you when you want to be an OT.

... I think you are probably predisposed to it but definitely learn it more.

Do you see it as a vocation.

I think maybe it is for me I never really thought it was, it was always a practical thing when I first started.

Right

But its turned into more of a vocation, I think because, especially your mental health which is what I've ended up going into, I've been on mental health placements, I've seen other professionals treating patients in what I think is quite a horrible way really, and it always seemed to be OTs that have a bit more understanding.

Right

And it's surprised me because it made me feel quite passionate that I want to carry on with that and build on that.

Yes, OK, so picking up on that why did you want to be an OT in the first place, how did you kind of decide to go on the course and do it and even before that, how did you get sort of your job.

OK Erm I did psychology degree.

Right

Which I really enjoyed considered being a clinical psychologist but always felt that there was an element of something missing which I could never really put my finger on.

OK

When I'd finished my degree I would have to do more training if I did want to become a clinical psychologist. At the time I just couldn't afford it so I signed up with a temping agency and said to them I've got this idea that I want to work in healthcare any assignment that come up in a hospital that would be really useful for me and they were very amenable to that. So I just did loads of admin temping jobs in hospitals all round Stockport, urm, clinics that sort of thing and came across OT that way, and that's how I saw the link really between what I liked about psychology and also this missing bit where I wanted to do something more practical as well, and I was really lucky that I got put on a placement that wheelchair service just as they were starting to advertise about technical instructor and I got on really well with

the manager, didn't always get on really well with her but on the whole I got on really well with her and she was happy to second me to do OT.

Right

So it just worked out really well, it was really good timing.

Right, yes, yes. OK well that's good yes. So in terms of having a professional identity as an OT at what stage do you get that and have you got it and what's it about do you get a sense of who you are as an OT.

Its developing, I think it's, it comes on in leaps when you are on placements and then seems to stall for a bit and then you go on another placement, I think because doing a part time course you have gaps between placements, so you do a placement then it's a year before your next one, and I always felt that it stalled a bit in the year in between placements and it came on loads again once I got out there doing it.

OK so it's directly related to actually doing the job.

Yes

Not directly related to knowing the theory about the job.

No, I didn't feel that it was which is strange, but although . . . you sort of I always felt that you didn't know how useful the theory would be until I got on placement and then it all came together really really quickly and for those few weeks everything would seemed to change really fast.

Right

And then it would slow down again.

Yes, OK. So what does, what helps form your special identity, what's that about do you think, does it look like or . . .

That's really hard (laugh) that's really hard to answer, um.

I know, I'm still struggling with it myself and I've been an OT for . . . sixteen years.

Yes, I've been thinking about myself that quite a lot because this place where I've started at I'm the only OT there and I feel like the very minute I walked in the door I had to be very assertive because the nurses I felt have tried to rope me into doing other things, and I was told by one of the nurses that all the nursing staff support were OTs because they do activities, so I feel I've had to really think about how I'm going to say why I'm different.

Yes

I've had to go away and think about it.

OK

Because I feel I need to explain it in a way that can be understood without being patronizing but without just alienating people by using all the OT terminology.

Yes

So it is something that I'm struggling a bit.

Right

It's quite intangible.

Yes, it's hard and do you think when you started the course that people said Oh what's OT that you kind of had a fairly simple answer.

Yes, and now it's got more complex.

And now more complex.

Yes definitely

Because I remember you know someone saying Oh what's occupational therapy when I was going off to uni and I would just say oh you know it is this, and it was this snappy kind of explanation and now people say, so what is it that you do and I think do you have half an hour to talk about all sorts of, and I don't know whether that's my understanding that's developed or theory or all of it you know, it's the whole kind of stuff about occupational deprivation and occupational apartheid and injustice, all that makes perfect sense to me now, but you know they weren't terms that we used when I was training, and so some of it I think the theory has evolved to make it more complicated, I also think that I understand the job so much more that it can't be really defined in a simple sentence.

Definitely, I used to have a stock sentence that I learnt off by heart that I could reel off to people when they asked and now it's inadequate.

Yes OK. Do you think you kind of know you know what professionalism is and have you learnt that or is that something you kind of ...

That's something I've learned, definitely.

Right what is it do you think

Urm, that's really hard to define as well, I feel like I'm going to work and putting my professional hat and I become a different person in a way and it's how I behave to other people, its how I speak and how I dress.

OK

Urm, I've got a little commentary all the time in my head saying is this what a competent OT would do, would a competent OT say that, would a competent OT wear those shoes to work and that's always in the back of my head and I don't know why, but I've always found it really helpful.

OK, ok so it's a reflective thing then I suppose but it's.

Yes

Reflecting inaction

Yes

Rather than taking time out afterwards but actually constantly monitoring what you do to check

Yes

... that it's the right thing, and what, and what's your sort of benchmark or your role model for that then.

Probably to a certain extent other OTs that I know in the department and I will watch them and see how they behave and see how they speak to people and one thing that I struggled with when I first started was that I'd go on placement and I'd want to be everybody's friend, staff, patients, everybody and I would talk to them as I would talk to my friends and I would see another OT wouldn't do that, and at first I thought she was very stand-offish then I saw the respect that she had.