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COVER PAGE

Title

A Bernsteinian view of learning and teaching undergraduate sociology-based social science

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Abstract

Taking a perspective drawn from Basil Bernstein, the paper locates itself at the boundary between teaching as transmitting disciplinary knowledge and teaching as a set of generic ‘good practice’ principles. It first discusses the value of undergraduate sociology-based social science knowledge to individuals and society. This discussion leads to highlighting the importance of pedagogical framing for realising the value of sociological knowledge. A longitudinal three-year study in four different status universities suggested that studying undergraduate sociology-based degrees can give students access to what Bernstein called ‘pedagogic rights’ of personal enhancement; social inclusion; and, political participation. Access to the rights is through the formation of a ‘specialised disciplinary identity’ whereby the student becomes a person who knows and understands specific content, which is applied to lives and society; and, who has developed the skills and dispositions of a social scientist. In pedagogical terms more evidence of equality than inequality was found: despite some subtle differences, whatever the status of the university attended, the same disciplinary identity was projected and students’ perceptions of the quality of their teaching strongly mediate the formation of a disciplinary identity and access to pedagogic rights.

Introduction

The goals of this paper are to convey what specific value the acquisition of sociology-related social science knowledge has for individual students and potentially for society; and, to discuss the central role of teaching in giving student access to the valuable beings and doings that such knowledge allows. In pursuing these goals, we position ourselves on a boundary between literature that considers the specific role of disciplines (and inter-disciplines) and literature that proposes that good quality teaching lies in grasping and putting into practice some generic principles.

Tony Becher’s *Academic Tribes and Territories* (1989) (with its second edition [Becher and Trowler, 2001]) is a seminal and popular work arguing that the knowledge structures of different disciplines shape the behaviour and value of academics. This view chimes with Bernstein’s notion that an ‘elitist identity’ (arguably that of an academic) comes of a ‘long and arduous apprenticeship’ (2000, p.76) resulting in ‘inner commitments and dedications’ (ibid. p.xviii). Yet, a new edition of ‘*Tribes and Territories*’ (Trowler et al, 2012) (in which Becher is not involved) argues for a qualitative break with the past in universities whereby the influence of the disciplines is constantly ‘shifting and changing’ (p.27) to the point that

the concepts of disciplinary culture and identity are no longer tenable. While recognising that disciplines are not fixed entities, we nonetheless align ourselves with work which shows the persistence of what Ylijoki (2000) calls the ‘moral ordering’ of disciplines by which members share not only characteristic problems and the theories and methods by which to solve them, but also, norms, values and beliefs. This position is suggested by our empirical work, which, as we shall show, suggests disciplinary tenacity and continuity, for example, in sociology the interest in the inter-relationship structure and agency is abiding, and the historical social and moral ambition is sustained (Halsey, 2004). A key finding of the longitudinal study we report on here was that the extent to which a degree is assessed by students as valuable and of a high quality depends on the extent to which they had engaged with academic knowledge, including content and processes (Ashwin et al, 2012).

At the boundary of work on disciplines and professional field, on the one hand, and pedagogy, on the other, lies Shulman’s (2005) work on ‘signature pedagogies’; Huber’s work on ‘disciplinary styles’ (Huber and Morreale, 2002); and, Meyer and Land’s work on ‘threshold concepts’(2006)¹. The oeuvres are empirically based and propose variously that disciplines both demand and display specific forms of teaching and learning. As we shall show, we found that to benefit from a sociology-based social science university education, students need to develop what we have called a ‘specialised pedagogic identity’ that relates to sociological knowledge and dispositions; at the same time, many of the pedagogical framings necessary to support the formation of such an identity can be described as generic, in particular strong framings which induce hard work on the part of students. This finding relates our work to a range of more generic work on what is often called ‘student engagement’, which here we define, following Becker et al. (1980), as the level and direction of students’ efforts when studying. Student engagement research in university settings focuses broadly on discovering the types of ‘learning environments’ that appear to foster interest and time spent on academic activities (Harper and Quaye, 2009). Moreover, for some the concept of student engagement has its basis in the body of work which identified different approaches to learning (‘surface’ or ‘deep’) depending on how students perceived what is being required of them (see Prosser and Trigwell, 1999 for an overview, and Mann, 2001 for a piece which reconfigures surface and deep learning in the light of the concepts of student ‘alienation’ and ‘engagement’).

Our position then connects the production and reproduction of disciplines with interest in how teaching engages students in accessing the knowledge and procedures of disciplines. The pedagogic subject that we conjure for the social science classroom requires attention both to the classification of the discipline (what counts as legitimate sociology-based social science knowledge) and to the framings of pedagogy (how students are given access to knowledge). In what follows, the argument for how teaching can mediate the construction of a stable specialised disciplinary identity is pursued by: first, introducing the aims and the theory and methods employed in /the research project which is the basis of the paper; secondly, by an exegesis of disciplinary identity formation and access to pedagogic rights, and; thirdly, by discussing the effects of discipline classification and pedagogical framings on disciplinary identity formation.

Investigating the equity of the distribution of sociology-based undergraduate knowledge

The ‘Pedagogic Quality and Inequality in Undergraduate First Degrees’ project was a three-year longitudinal ESRC-funded study (2008-2011) (ESRC RES Grant Number: RES-062-23-1438) of study of equity and quality in undergraduate sociology-based education in four

universities in England in different positions in published league tables. To signal these positions the universities are called ‘Community’, ‘Diversity’, (regularly rated in the bottom third of league tables) ‘Prestige’ and ‘Selective’ (regularly rated in the top third). The project employed the concepts of the educational sociologist Basil Bernsteinⁱⁱ (2000) to investigate in departments of different reputations how pedagogic discourses and disciplinary knowledges are constructed and sanctioned in the curriculum; what pedagogic identities are invoked in students; and, similarities and differences in the quality of education and the educational outcomes for students. These categories constituted a definition of the quality of the students’ experience of and engagement in teaching, learning and curricula.

The UK university system is hierarchically structured both materially and symbolically by way of: resource inequitiesⁱⁱⁱ; the different social positions of students in different status universities; and reputation reflected in league tables. The study aimed to question the widely-held assumption that lower-status universities offer a worse quality education than higher-status universities by investigating the relations between what students bring to university, their experiences of university education and what they gain from and value about these experiences.

Bernstein’s theory was relevant to the study’s aims because it concerns how unequal distribution of knowledge in formal education systems relays inequalities in society. The analysis of educational systems that Bernstein motivates is of biases in terms of ‘processes of transmission and acquisition [of knowledge] and their social assumptions.’ (Bernstein, 2000, p. xix). His theory explains how these biases shape who people are and what they think they can be and do. What a person learns, formally or informally, positions her between her own inner consciousness and the outside world of structures and systems. This position^{iv} opens up or closes down the possibilities for living.

The vehicles for positioning are, in Bernstein’s terms, ‘classification’ and ‘framing’. Generally, classification reflects power relations in society by establishing boundaries between categories (agents, agencies, discourses, practices) in terms of how strongly insulated they are from each other. (A relevant example here is the classification between ‘high-status’ and ‘low-status’ universities, in the UK ‘old’ and ‘new’ respectively.) Within education, the principle of classification regulates *what* knowledges, skills and discourses are taught by whom to whom, and we were interested in whether ‘sociology’ is classified similarly across universities. Framing is evident *within* classified categories and relays principles of control. In formal education, the principle of framing regulates *how* knowledge, skills, dispositions are taught and learned, and we looked for similarities and differences in pedagogic framings.

Three years’ intensive fieldwork in the universities Community, Diversity, Prestige and Selective produced rich data sets: life histories and interviews with first-year students (98); longitudinal student case studies (31); video recordings of teaching (12); interviews with staff (16); analysis of student work (examples from each year and a focus group with marking tutors); a survey analysed in SPSS (750); documentary analysis; and, a collection of statistical data^v. Qualitative data sets have been analysed using NVivo software and team members independently generated coding themes and used cross-validation processes and inter-coder reliability checks. Holistic narrative and case-study analyses have also been developed.

Bernstein distinguished between ‘internal languages of description’ which are the languages of theory or concepts; and ‘external languages of description’, rooted in the empirical world

(Bernstein 2000). He proposed a ‘potential discursive gap’ (*ibid*, p.30) between the two which reveals something new and interesting in the field of study rather than finding only what is expected theoretically, resulting in circularity in the internal language of description. We have aimed to generate a language of description that engages critically with Bernstein’s concepts in order to illuminate students’ experience of university education. The findings we report about the formation of a specific disciplinary identity and access to pedagogic rights and about the central role of pedagogic framings derive from combining data set analyses.

The value of acquiring of sociology-based knowledge

Understanding who social science students become: a specialised sociology-based pedagogic identity

Bernstein proposed that pedagogic identities are projected through the classifications of disciplinary content and the framings of pedagogy and curriculum which shape students’ ways of being, becoming, feeling, thinking, relating and desiring. Empirical data allowed us to construct a sociology-based specialised identity with three aspects: disciplinary, personal/social, and performative.

The disciplinary aspect of a specialised disciplinary identity

Acquiring the disciplinary knowledge of sociology which has been produced by professional sociologists is, in Bernstein’s term, ‘sacred’ knowledge and tutors are strongly committed to reproducing it in their students (Abbas and McLean, 2010). In the study all tutors expected students to engage with a range of theoretical, empirical and methodological knowledges which from Bernstein’s perspective are powerful because they offer high ground on the problems of life. Moreover, an analysis of curriculum in the four sites showed that the classification of sociology was similar across universities. While curricular emphases and choices differ, this is not systematically according to the status of the university and all students are offered some form of ‘political sociology’ (a focus on inequalities and social justice) and ‘critical’ ‘sociology’ (a focus on social identities and cultures).

The personal/social aspect of a specialised pedagogic identity

Tutors want students to see how sociological knowledge illuminates lives and allows them to envisage alternative ways of life. It is in, what Bernstein call ‘the discursive gap’ between the disciplinary (theoretical and conceptual), ‘sacred’ knowledge and personal/social (empirical) ‘mundane’ knowledge that relevant, new, interesting and engaging knowledge emerges. Tutors constantly encouraged students to locate themselves in this gap, for example:

‘One of the main [aims] is [to] get them to connect what we have been doing as historical, classical theory with their own life experiences. So week in and week out I am trying to make them make the connection themselves.’ (Seminar Tutor, Prestige, Year 1)

And, in Diversity, where a good proportion of students describe themselves as Muslim, a tutor describes: ‘Get[ting] the students to think about British Muslim identity.’ (Seminar Tutor, Diversity, Year 3), thereby relating theory to their own lives.

However, connecting sacred and everyday ‘mundane’ knowledge is not an easy pedagogical task, it is not possible without being able to ‘perform’ social science.

The performative aspect of a specialised sociology-based disciplinary identity

The underlying features that clarify what it is to form a fully-rounded specialised sociology-based disciplinary identity emerged as: (1) competence at performing the discipline by way of text work (reading and writing); discussion; and, research work (for example, analysing texts/images; interviewing; designing surveys) and; (2) possession of a set of dispositions: being questioning, critical, analytical, open-minded and challenging. The pedagogic processes or framings of knowledge offered to students by their teachers provide opportunities to develop a competent performance and critical dispositions.

Knowledge acquisition of all aspects of the disciplinary identity results in the possession of a social science ‘gaze’ and the access to pedagogic rights, which, theoretically, if distributed fairly potentially disrupt the hierarchies in society.

A specialised sociology-related disciplinary identity gives access to pedagogic rights

Bernstein (2000) proposed three ‘pedagogic rights’: enhancement in the personal realm; inclusion in the social realm; and, participation in the political realm.

The first pedagogic right, *individual enhancement* is ‘the means of critical understanding and to new possibilities’ and access to it expands personal horizons, resulting in ‘confidence’ (Bernstein, 2000, p. xx). The achievement of individual enhancement requires boundaries to be ‘experienced [as] tension points’ (*ibid.*). While starting at university can be conceptualised as a tense boundary crossing which is an opportunity for students to re-make themselves, we found students experiencing tension points in the boundaries between abstract disciplinary sacred knowledge and previously-held mundane knowledge about people and everyday life. The discursive gap which allowed students to see life differently, excited them and had the effect of making them see themselves as ‘specialised’. For example, Leanne from Diversity says ‘Not everybody walks around and thinks “That’s an example of othering or stigmatisation”’: The acquisition of undergraduate sociology-based social science knowledge. Generally, students repeatedly reported that having their minds ‘opened’ about themselves, others and society has changed them forever in ways that they value and are committed to:

‘University has opened my eyes too much. I’ve been too exposed to reading certain things that are happening around me (.), I can’t just shut my eyes and go back to normality. I don’t think I can do that now, I’d feel like I am betraying myself and what I think and what I believe in.’ (Martin, Community, Year 3)

For us, the personal transformation that students reported is a result of the processes of forming of a specialised disciplinary identity that sees the relevance of sociology-based knowledge to everyday life.

The second pedagogic right, *social inclusion*, is ‘to be included socially, intellectually, culturally and personally [including] the right [to be] autonomous.’ (Bernstein, 2000: xx.) and results in a sense of belonging. Social science knowledge illuminates the interaction between individuals and social systems or structure. This knowledge allows students to gain insight into and ask questions about why people, including themselves, are as they are. This knowledge, relates strongly to the personal/social facet of a sociology-based disciplinary identity. For example, Harry illustrates how social science knowledge has contributed both to his understanding of others and to his capacity to be critical about the *status quo*:

‘Some things that you hear and you think “That is racist”, but then you look at why people think that (.) Something that we were looking at that was interesting the other day was the statistic that if you’re a young black male, you’re more likely to be involved in crime and we looked at whether it’s just as simple as that, like you look at how policing can look out for these young black males to commit crimes, so they’re more likely to get caught.’ (Harry, Community, Year 1)

Our data suggests that sociology-based social science knowledge places students in two specific and related relationships to other people and to society in general: as those who empathise with, understand, are interested in and accept others, especially those who are designated ‘different’; and, as those who question and challenge what goes on the world around them.

The third pedagogic right is *political participation* ‘in the construction, maintenance and transformation of social order’ (*ibid.* xxi). Evidence in the interview data for any form of political participation is meagre: just a few students engage in political activity or do voluntary work, and of those who did most were inclined to do so from the beginning of their course. Nevertheless, the students we talked to often said that they could see ‘beneath the surface of things, or ‘think outside the box’; they thought about ways in which society might be differently arranged. Furthermore, when asked about future employment, most students envisaged public service work where they will use their knowledge, understanding and dispositions to contribute to society, examples are:

In summary, sociology-based social science knowledge enlightened the students in our study about themselves and others (individual enhancement); it located them in a loose group of people who have specialised understanding about how individuals and society interact (social inclusion); and, it will be of use -in or out of employment- to improve the social world (political participation).

We turn now to consider evidence about the role of pedagogy in the formation of a specialised pedagogic identity.

Pedagogic framing to realise the value of social science knowledge

Bernstein offers an apparently simple definition of pedagogy:

Pedagogy is a sustained process whereby somebody (s) acquires a new form or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria from

somebody(s) or something deemed to be an appropriate provider and evaluator—appropriate either from the point of view of the acquirer or by some other body(s) or both. (Bernstein 2000, p. 78)

Yet the term ‘acquisition’ encompasses a range of challenges for the acquirer and for the ‘provider and evaluator’ teacher. Moreover, a Bernsteinian analysis is one which unearths (in)equities in how the curriculum is framed, that is how the curriculum (hidden and overt) is transmitted, including organisation, selection, sequence, pacing, and timing, and student/staff relations. The university students we studied needed, in Bernstein’s terms, to ‘recognise’ both the discursive practices of a university and of sociology-based social science and then to ‘realise’ that recognition in texts and discourses that are judged as legitimate by the ‘provider’. The process which should result in a specialised disciplinary identity is long and arduous for both student and tutor. The questions for us were: Are students in different universities having access to different knowledge? And Are students in different universities getting different access to what counts as good quality teaching?

Evidence about the distribution of (perceptions of) ‘good’ teaching

From the perspectives we employed in our study, good teaching is teaching which engages students in disciplinary knowledge. Phenomenographic research in higher education teaches us that what influences approach to learning (‘deep’ or ‘surface’) is students’ perception of teaching (and other aspects of the ‘learning environment’) (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). Our study found students’ perceptions of teaching strongly mediating their capacity to engage with disciplinary knowledge and to form a confident, competent identity that allowed them to recognise and realise social science. Moreover, the results of the survey show that student in all four universities perceived their teaching to be good, with the lower-status universities ranking significantly higher than the higher status universities.

Table 1: ‘Good Teaching’ Scale from the ‘Pedagogic quality and inequality in university first degrees’ final-year survey

Good Teaching	Diversity, Community, Selective, <i>Prestige</i>^{vi}
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An analysis of qualitative data reveals more or less the same pattern of satisfaction with teaching (we point to a few anomalies below). While it is difficult to establish whether or not it contributes to the enhanced satisfaction in lower-status universities, pedagogical framing is different from in higher-status universities. Community and Diversity have approximately a third more contact hours than Prestige and Selective^{vii}; Diversity’s group size is larger than the other universities^{viii}; and there are far more varied assessment tasks at Community and Diversity than at Prestige and Selective^{ix}. Furthermore, Diversity describes its sociology course as ‘innovative’ in presentation of content and pedagogical processes.

Yet, despite the overall picture of rather more satisfaction with teaching at the lower-status universities, there were differences in framing that might point to inequities. While qualitative data indicated that perceptions of disinterested teachers and dull teaching might act as obstacles to knowledge acquisition in Prestige, at Diversity expectations of behaviour were weakly framed so we observed that it was not remarked upon that students arrived late for workshops, used mobile phones or had not prepared, nor did the students themselves report working as hard over the degree as a whole as students at the other three universities. We know that a higher proportion of upper-second class and, particularly, first-class degrees

are awarded at higher-status universities, what is difficult to ascertain is whether the discrepancy is an unavoidable effect of the starting point of the students at lower-status universities (that is, with lower entry qualifications) or whether subtle differences in framing might be operating systematically to result in the underachievement of some students.

There were few significant differences in perceptions of teaching in different groups of students, which suggests that good teaching is defined similarly by all students. Yet there were some subtle differences for different groups of students that are worth unpicking. For example, older students were more likely to perceive teaching as better than younger students, take a 'deeper' approach and are more engaged with and interested in academic knowledge, supporting, at least some, previous studies (Richardson 1995). This finding is supported by analysis of interview data which reveals that students with turbulent past lives, who are usually older, use social science knowledge to gain insight into their own lives. For example, at Diversity, both Lucia and Lemar had disabilities, had suffered physical and psychological abuse from families, had experienced poverty, and suffered physical hardships. Both claimed to have been transformed by sociology giving them a language for understanding their pasts, for why they feel different ('stigmatisation') and for articulating different possible futures for themselves and other disadvantaged groups.

The constitution of good teaching

Our project confirmed much of what we already know from previous research and practical experience about what constitutes generic principles of good teaching^x. In brief, courses should be coherently designed with clearly articulated goals. Tutors should: make the subject interesting by relating it to real-life examples; show enthusiasm/passion while teaching (not be boring); use varied methods; and, students should be asked to take on authentic/research-like tasks. Lectures should be interactive and have a clear structure; the lecturer should try to make material accessible to students with 'stories', examples, anecdotes; and, should not read out dense powerpoint slides. Good teaching, then, is multidimensional and what seems to matter to students is that all dimensions are 'good enough'^{xi}.

Similarly, it is widely acknowledged that whatever the discipline assessment sends strong messages to students about academic expectations, and that there is a tricky tight-rope to traverse between over and under-specification of what is expected from students^{xii}. The tutors in the four departments we studied appeared to agree on what counts as good quality student work -both content and standard-in sociology-based subjects^{xiii}. What emerged was that assessment works well for students when it provides opportunities to practise and demonstrate the three aspects of a specialised disciplinary identity: knowledge acquisition; the application of knowledge to instances peoples' lives; and, the critical and investigatory skills with which to 'perform' the subject (final year projects are particularly powerful, and so it might be considered a form of inequity that Community students did not all get the opportunity to undertake one). The National Student Survey (NSS) has ensured that feedback is a widely discussed issue in the UK, and the students we talked to focus on improvement regardless of how high or low their mark: they want to understand what counts as good quality work and how to achieve it both in written comments and in (preferably, one-to-one) discussions.

Following these general comments, in the sub-sections sections below we select for discussion the elements of teaching which emerged as major themes: attention to the relationship between students and tutors; facilitating high quality discussion; and, challenging

students. These themes highlight the intensity and hard work, for both students and tutors, of the identity work we describe.

The relationship between students and tutors

Tutors and students from all the universities recognised that the quality of the relationship between them is fundamentally important. Relationships are an element of pedagogical framing embedded in different forms of interaction: face to face, virtual and paper based. Whatever the interaction, the qualities of tutors were critical to students: they should be friendly, take an interest, and be available for questioning and dialogue. A comfortable personal relationship with just one or two tutors was enough for those we interviewed to feel supported.

We note the context of declining resource and that relationship-formation is labour intensive, yet, a close analysis of interviews and our own observations during fieldwork reveals more satisfaction with relationships at the lower-status universities where students had a high degree of access to hard-pressed tutors, especially if students themselves take the initiative and approach tutors:

In the first semester I was close to one of the seminar leaders because of the way she behaved (.) she was really helpful to me, I felt that I could go back to her if I wanted to (.), it was just that she made me feel really comfortable (.), so I felt closer to her so(.) I feel I can go to her if I need to speak about anything.
(Leena, Diversity, Year 1)

This student illustrates how detrimental to learning poor relationships with tutors can be:

There is no form of personal communication and you don't feel like you can talk to them (.) I feel really cut off and I don't know how to work like that. And another thing that I was used to in my education was teachers used to encourage me and they said: 'you can do this'. But I don't have that here so I find myself really down and I've cried so much in the last weeks because I can't do it and there is nobody that will encourage me at all. I feel quite alone and socially I don't go out that much because I read as much as I can in the library or in my room. (Faith, Year 1, Prestige)

Students sometimes thought that feedback on assignments indicated that tutors were unaware of their goals, aspirations and difficulties, yet they did not have the confidence to ask for a face-to-face discussion. Similarly, some students felt unable to approach tutors to clarify matters that arose in seminars: for example, a student at Selective describes asking for tutor support as going with 'her begging bowl' (Elma-Louise, Selective, Year 1)

The way tutor-student and student-student relationships facilitate the work that goes on in seminars, to which we now turn, is central to students' developing all aspects of a specialised pedagogic identity.

Facilitating high quality discussion

Seminars (or workshops) are sites for practicing the performance and developing the dispositions of social science. It is evident in video recordings how relationships with tutors and other students facilitated or hindered the verbal engagement with the discipline in which students apply what they have read (often classic texts and/or key theories) to understanding their own lives and society more broadly. Seminars are an important forum for enjoyment and understanding:

I really enjoy the seminars because they're interactive, I love interaction you know asking questions and raising a topic and then someone challenging you- it's just really interesting and insightful (.) because someone could raise something and you think 'I didn't know that, I didn't really understand that' (Lucia, Diversity, Year 2)

It is in the seminar that tutors can model the nature of academic discussion:

And now if I think about something, I say it, because now I realise that one good thing about our teachers is they don't dismiss what you say. They don't just say: 'Oh no that is wrong'. They say: 'You can say that, but ...' and then they give another point of view. But you never think: 'Oh I should have not said anything', which is very helpful. (Elmira, Selective, Year 3).

It is evident though that often the potential of seminars is not realised. Students expect their fellow students to be prepared and make high quality contributions. Silence in seminars is one of the most often repeated complaints, especially in the higher-status universities in the first year especially:

At the seminars you are in one of the best universities in the country and no one says anything. And she [the tutor] asks a question and then there is an atmosphere and in the end I have to say something as no one else says anything [...] it is a little frustrating [...] A lot of people sit there the whole time and they don't say anything [and] I [...] dunno if it's because they're shy or lazy or if they haven't done the work, but sometimes that's really irritating- when no one else speaks. (Fleur, Prestige Year 1).

The students who are not talking can be struggling with identity change, especially the performative aspect:

You have to be talkative, you need to contribute some ideas, comments in the seminar. You need to get involved in the discussion, you need to be critical, but I couldn't talk because I was not used to being talkative in my class, we just listened (.) I tried quite a few times, I tried to change, it feels like I'm changing my personality from a very passive person to a very talkative person, but it didn't work (.) it's just who I am, it's my personality, so I couldn't change unless the seminar leader asked me some questions, so I had to answer (Esther, Selective, Year 1)

On the whole, the quality of seminars is perceived as improving as students progress through their degree and tutors can create a climate in which discussion flows:

In the first year everyone was shy and nervous and didn't want to speak out of turn, so the lecturers were sort of trying to encourage us on and build up our confidence to talk. But this year we've all been a lot more involved (.) And I feel that the lecturers, the tutors [are] getting us going, I feel that they're taking in our arguments and respecting our opinions as well. (.) but she won't care that you've sort of said her argument's rubbish and I think that's good. (Maurice, Community, Year 1)

However, in Diversity by the third year the self-selected case study students we interviewed complained more than in other universities about other students' lack of preparation which lowers the quality of discussion.

The problem with the seminars are not actually the lecturers, the people that are giving, it's the people that are part of the seminar with you. Because they don't do their reading, they don't really know what they're talking about and then you can just see because they ask things that, you know, have you done your reading? If you had done your reading you would know what that means, they wouldn't have to take my time and the lecturer's time. (Lauren, Diversity, Year3) ^{xiv}

And many students thought that it is tutors' responsibility to demand hard work.

Encouraging Hard Work

Achieving a specialised pedagogic identity takes commitment and effort outside formal contact hours. And pedagogic framing can support the level and direction of student effort. We did not expect to find as persistently as we did that students want their tutors to convey the message that they expect hard work and seriousness, even if they themselves struggle to respond:

I guess the motivational process has had its curves, a lot of curves 'cos I don't really feel motivated all the time. I know that if I don't come to classes for three weeks, nothing's gonna happen, I have to push myself, I mean, I could get lazy and if you're not being challenged, you just kind of let it go and then three weeks down the line you're like "Oh, I haven't done anything, let's put in a couple of days hard work at the library" and then you go back again. (Lorenzo, Diversity, Year 2)

At Diversity the case study students reported that not working hard is dealt with too leniently. At Selective and Community students said that not reading for seminars is ignored by tutors, yet there are many complaints from students and tutors at all institutions about how not preparing spoils seminars. From the student's perspective, the capacity for hard work is mediated by teaching which encourages and rewards effort. They understand that their tutors want them to pursue their study independently; yet, at the same time, many, particularly in the first year, would like to be more 'pushed' or, at least, feel that their tutors care about their progress.

A student doing insufficient preparatory work for discussion or for assessment, causes a range of problems: s/he does not undertake 'the long and arduous apprenticeship' (Bernstein, 2000, p.76) necessary to form a specialised pedagogic identity; tutors cannot effectively support the development of the three aspects of the identity; and, other students are disadvantaged because opportunities to perform the discipline are removed. Taken seriously, acquiring disciplinary knowledge poses challenges for most; for many, learning the discipline of solitary study is difficult (one working-class politically active student left Selective because he was disappointed by the lack of the 'cut and thrust' of seminar discussion and did not like the amount of solitary reading expected). The recordings of teaching and interviews provide examples of particular tasks, styles and attitudes that tutors use to force or encourage students to work, for example:

He addresses the class as a whole and he actively gets involved. He'll give us feedback and then we'll all discuss it afterwards so we can all share ideas. He has a good way of explaining things and he makes it seem really simple and he's easy to get on with (.) It's not easy to just sit there and not say anything because he will ask you directly. If you don't know then you don't know, but he will ask you directly and even if you say something that is wrong he won't say: 'That's wrong!' but he'll say: 'Ok, but have you considered this argument?' So he always tries to hear what we have to say. (Linda, Diversity, Year 3)

One of my teachers(.) she is (.) very passionate and (.) we're all saying something and then she'll translate everything that we're saying into (.) proper terms and explain to us how to(.) get the vocabulary just right in sociological terms, so, I think that's really good. (Faizah, Prestige, Year 3)

Forming a specialised pedagogic identity is hard work for students; and, a similar effort is required of tutors to balance discipline, encouragement, enthusiasm and good relationships, as well as planning teaching which provides opportunities for students to practice thinking, reading, discussing and writing like social scientists.

Conclusion

Regardless of the type of university, we have found university lecturers in sociology-based social science subjects expressing markedly similar aspirations for students: broadly, individual transformation through critical self-reflective thinking and in the transformation of society through students' understanding of societal injustices and the workings of power. Students respond to these aspirations and develop a specialised social science identity which places them as graduates in a group of people whose acquired knowledge enables them to question and challenge; to see themselves and others in a complex, interesting and compassionate lights; and, to imagine and work for 'possible futures' (Bernstein, 2000, p.) for everyone, including themselves.

The sturdiness of individual students' sociology-based identities varies, and so the capabilities accruing from 'pedagogic rights', of personal confidence, a sense of belonging in society, and, the means of political participation are concomitantly variably accessed. We

found that the extent to which students benefit in the ways we have outlined from their university education relates to the extent to which they engage in academic disciplinary knowledge and processes. It is worth noting here that policy documents dealing with the improvement of teaching or with the achievements of students rarely identify disciplinary knowledge as of key importance^{xv}. Of crucial importance in supporting students' engagement is a well-informed and thoughtful framing of pedagogy, particularly that which encourages a serious and reflective attitude to study.

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ⁱ All have spawned a plethora of useful studies.

ⁱⁱ When he died in 2000, Bernstein was Karl Mannheim Chair Emeritus in the Sociology of Education, at the Institute of Education, University of London

ⁱⁱⁱ There are huge disparities of wealth in the four universities we studied.

^{iv} In Bernstein's theory the position is elaborated as the concept of 'code' which is similar to Bourdieu's 'habitus', that is, embedded dispositions, values, outlooks and so on, which puts restraints on thinking, feeling and action.

^v We have also collaborated with social science lecturers to produce a collection of papers about using biographical methods in teaching which shed theoretical and practical light on issues relating to the teaching of social sciences McLean, M. and Abbas, A. (eds) (2011) *Teaching sociology through students' biographies: new pedagogies for the 'oppressed' or oppressive technologies of the self*, *Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences (Eliss)*. <http://www.eliss.org.uk/CurrentIssueVol3No3/Biographicalmethods/tabid/336/Default.aspx>

^{vi} Institutions in **bold** have scores that are significantly higher than those in *italics*

^{vii} While students in all the universities attend for 2-3 hours a week for each module (that is c. 8 hours weekly), Community and Diversity have longer teaching semesters and extra sessions (over the first year contact hours are approximately 201 and 206 respectively; while those for Prestige and Selective are 122 hrs. and 184 hrs. respectively).

^{viii} Diversity's group size stands out at 25 (for the workshops), the others are between 8 and 20 for seminars with Community at the high end, but it also has 5 tutorials each semester with 8 students.

^{ix} Prestige and Selective have 50% essay coursework and 50% examination for each module (strong framing); while, between them Community and Diversity have 13 different forms of assignment (and one exam), including group work; portfolios; class tests, and reading journals (weak framing).

^x See for example: Brennan et al, 2010; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Entwistle, 2009; Gibbs, 2010; Ramsden, 2003.

^{xi} A concept developed by the psycho-analyst Donald Winnicott (1957) to describe how an ordinary mother adapts so that her baby can become increasingly independent. Applied to teaching, it can be used to counter discourse of excellence (Readings, 2006) to suggest that good teaching is enough to ensure students' independence.

^{xii} A plethora of papers on the subject can be found in such journals as: *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*; *Assessment in Education*; and, *Teaching in Higher Education*. For example, see Knight (2002) on the 'disarray' and Sadler (2007) on the 'perils' of assessment in higher education.

^{xiii} We designed an 'marking exercise' with a lecturer from each of the four universities whereby they and the research team allocated marks and made comments on essays from across the universities, without knowing where they came from. The group discussion that followed was recorded and shows the high degree of consensus about 'quality'.

^{xiv} During project feedback to the department, the problem was well recognised and since then a student contract of behaviour has been introduced.

^{xv} See for example the recent 'Milburn Report' on social mobility and higher education' (Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility and Child Poverty, 2012)