VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS: CONJOINT EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY

By

Gillian Best

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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Gillian Best

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ABSTRACT

The central focus of this thesis is an examination of the first-year university experience as seen through the eyes of students and their parents. Through the thick descriptions of conjoint interviews conducted in eight family homes on three different occasions during the students' first-year, the thesis offers a narrative of family lives of some Australian university students and thematically demonstrates how university and home life co-exist.

The thesis identifies two key narratives in the existing first-year experience literature: the Archetypal and the Alternative student experience narrative. These focus on students who are conventionally categorised respectively as traditional and first-generation students. However, neither of these fully reveals the experiences of the families in this study. In order to give voice to these otherwise silenced narratives, the author has identified two other key narratives present in the interview data: Metamorphosis and Continuity, and two sub-narratives of separation and connection. The significance of these newly identified narratives is threefold. First, they include parents of first-year university students as subjects of inquiry. Second, the narratives reveal the existence and importance of conjoint university experiences, that is, experiences which include both students and parents. Third, the narratives legitimate university students' decisions to live at home with their parents.

Underlying the research is a commitment to moving current analysis of university student experiences beyond a deficit model for university academics' understandings of first-generation students' and their parents' experiences of university and to an acknowledgement and more serious examination of the conjoint nature of students' and parents' lives.

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PROLOGUE

In July 2001 I visited my parents in the UK. Standing with my mother in my parents' upstairs bedroom looking out across the rooftops to the mixture of agricultural and industrial plains fifty miles away, I reminisced about how, when I came home for the holidays as a student, my parents and I used to look through the binoculars towards two prominent landmarks in the distance, close to where I was studying; the radio telescope at Joddrell Bank and the hill known as Mow Cop. My mother responded to my telling of this memory as follows:

> "Yes, you came home from college once and your Dad laughed and said, I can still keep an eye on you!"

I laughed, but Mum remained serious and said, with some pain in her voice:

> "You said, God I still can't get away from you!"

When I was an undergraduate in the UK, leaving home was the norm and part of what I thought I had to do in order to avoid a certain sort of life. Until this conversation took place I had no idea I had said such a thing. Had I been serious when I exclaimed in this way? The pain in my mother's voice nearly twenty years later suggested I had been.

What must it have been like to be on the receiving end of such an exclamation and what or who had influenced me to say it?

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One identifies students who live at home and the parents with whom they live as the subjects of inquiry and situates the motivations for this study within the context of my personal experiences of living away from home as a first-generation student. Through the examination of mainly North American and Australian higher education literature concerning students who live at home, the chapter also examines first-generation students as a 'marked category'. In doing so, I argue that the literature constructs parents and home lives of first-generation students in a negative way, resulting in clichéd, outmoded and thus unhelpful and inadequate ways of presenting and understanding the lived experiences of first-generation students and their families.

For the purposes of this study, first-generation student is defined as a student who is the first in their immediate family to attend university. Commuter student is defined as a student who does not live on campus and travels to the campus to attend classes. The terms college and university are used interchangeably, the former being a common term used by both UK and US undergraduates for university. Living at home is defined as living at home with parents and any siblings.

I recognise that there are important differences between the North American cultures of higher education and those of Australia, (such as the distinction between a community college which offers associate two-year degrees and a university which offers three or four-year degrees). However, there is sufficient similarity of concerns and interests in the literature concerning students in both types of institutions to inform debates on first-year university experiences and therefore community college literature has also been included.

Chapter Two describes the methodology for the study, including the type of interviews conducted and interview questions. The second part of this chapter is situated within an autobiographical framework to show how my own class and educational backgrounds have impacted on the study's assumptions and crucially framed the methodology and to illustrate the evolution and process of the writer as researcher. Two autobiographical accounts of being a first-generation student experiences are also examined as a way of comparing these experiences with my own and thus providing some triangulation. I then

develop the notion of narrative further and identify and describe two existing student experience narratives within the literature (which I have named the Archetypal and Alternative narratives). These two narratives demonstrate that the parents of first-generation students are marginalised and their experiences and opinions of university are ignored. The chapter also identifies and describes two new narratives as they emerged from the conjoint family interviews: referred to henceforth as Metamorphosis and Continuity. These narratives are significant in that they recognise, include and celebrate the voices, perspectives and experiences of the parents of the first-generation students as being an integral part of the students' experiences.

Chapter Three presents as 'thick descriptions' the experiences of eight families as they are interwoven throughout the first-year. Their experiences are discussed in relation to the four narratives previously described. The chapter shows how these narratives emerge, dominate, intertwine and disappear across a year. My commitment to maintaining the integrity of the voices and lived experiences of the eight families, means that the chapter is organised into eight separate family narratives with cross-referencing where appropriate.

Chapter Four further develops the ways that living at home for first-generation students is constructed as problematic within the literature. It focuses in particular on how specific notions of adulthood have been pivotal in this negative construction. The chapter also examines examples of the language currently used in university brochures and pamphlets and Internet sites written with parents in mind and suggests that the statements made within these encourage an unnecessary psychological and physical distancing from their student offspring.

Chapter Five reflects on my journey concerning my perceptions of students who live at home. I speculate on what higher education researchers and academics can learn from listening to and involving students' parents in the university in ways which move away from the current discourse of improvement. The chapter also signals theoretical and practical directions for future work in this area. Finally in the Conclusions I return to the prologue and the questions raised within it. I emphasise the importance of the personal in

the research process and the significance of the newly identified narratives in opening up other ways of understanding students' and parental experiences of university.

Motivations for the Study

The initial motivation for this study stemmed from my experiences as an undergraduate in the UK and specifically my belief that 'proper' university students left home. I believed that leaving home, a euphemism for leaving parents, would signify my own adulthood and independence and be part of my "linear progression from dependence to independence" (Wyn and White, 1997: 60). Indeed, Caldwell and Young argue that the shift to university forms the "unwritten credo justifying this separation of school and family at the university level (1992: 205).

So strong were my attitudes about leaving home that I felt strongly that those students who lived with their parents did not have a 'proper' college experience. To me, being a student and remaining at home were incompatible states, a sign to the world that the student had not yet 'grown up'. As this thesis reveals, I had, unwittingly, been influenced by society's apparent acceptance of Erikson's classic developmental theory (Erikson, 1963, 1980), an eight-stage theory of psychosocial development from infancy to old age. This theory is "one of the most widely known and widely quoted account of the life cycle in the social science literature" (Sugarman, 2001: 91) and one in which independence from parents is a worthy and essential goal for signifying adulthood.

Although I had accepted a physical separation from parents as a necessary part of displaying my own adult status, developmentalism and its assumptions have not gone unexamined by others. For example, the fact that developmentalists avoid being too specific about the ages at which developmental changes occur has resulted in a lack of specificity and the use of very loose categories to define when certain life stages occur (Morss, 1996). In his extended critique of developmentalism, Morss suggests that developmentalists' avoidance of specifics points to a underlying concern that developmental theories are problematic not least of which is their inability to take into account gender, race or sexuality as issues which might make different people's lives progress differently.

Constructions of Youth and Adulthood

Not only do people's lives vary, making it difficult to universalise life span development, a brief examination of the Australian government's web site concerning eligibility criteria for the Youth Allowance payment (Centrelink, 2002) demonstrates something of how youth and adulthood have rather flexible start and end points to suit varying political agendas.

For full-time students aged under 25 who earn no more than $236 per fortnight, Youth Allowance has replaced Austudy with the maximum rate being $190.90 for a student living at home. Parental income is means tested and 23.3% of students in 2000 received it (Australian Senate Committee, 2000). Full-time students aged twenty-five who earn no more than $236 per fortnight, receive an Austudy payment of up to $290.10 per fortnight. For students under age twenty-five, the Youth Allowance is paid to those students who are

- studying full-time
- aged 16-24,
- or aged 18-20 looking for work full-time
- combining part-time study and looking for work
- doing other approved activities (including voluntary work),
- ill
- studying full-time and were getting Youth Allowance before turning 25 and are still doing the same course
- 15 years old and have reached the school leaving age and are considered to be independent i.e. a homeless young person

(Centrelink, 2002)

Hence, a youth can be anywhere between the broad range of ages 15-24. A student between the ages 16 and 24 is considered a youth by the government but if a person decides to leave school at the legal leaving age of 15 (16 in Tasmania) and is dependent on their parents, then no Youth Allowance is paid. In this context therefore, a person is defined as a youth and is a youth for longer than if the same person studies. Not studying means they become an adult sooner meaning that students are constructed as an infantalised version of their non-student counterparts.

The reason for this distinction is unclear but seems to be related to independence being considered a central feature of western notions of adulthood as, despite the concept of *in loco-parentis* no longer applying at university as it does in earlier schooling (Dannells in Upcraft, Mullendore, Barefoot and Fidler, 1993), to receive the Youth Allowance, if a young person is studying, the student is thought to be still within the parent-like gaze of the academic institution. Or put another way, students' reliance on their parents for financial survival means that students are deemed 'dependent'. However, a person of the same age who is not a student is deemed 'independent' of parents, despite the fact that they might still be heavily reliant on their parents financially or in other ways. Furthermore, (and rather alarmingly given that homelessness is not always voluntary), in this governmental context one form of 'independence' is defined as homelessness. Living with parents is considered a signifier of dependence whereas not living with parents is a signifier of independence. Clearly, the fluidity of youth in this governmental context shows how acceptance of someone as a 'youth', depends on the government-perceived or constructed financial and residential circumstances of the person.

Picking up on these variable definitions of dependence and independence are Student Unions which have taken issue with the government's definition of independence from parents:

> One union categorised as 'absurd' the situation whereby students are not considered independent until they are 26 and yet other students could achieve 'independent' status while living free of charge in a parental property by virtue of the fact that they earned sufficient money through a summer internship. Mr Ben McMillan of the University of Queensland Student Union suggested that 18 was the preferred age for 'independence' for the purposes of Youth Allowance, on the grounds that at 18 students can vote, be conscripted and get into credit card debt. (Australian Senate Committee, 2001: 284)

Chapter Four examines these themes of students' perceived adulthood, dependence and independence more closely, but meanwhile, it is worth noting that when a student I also constructed and reconstructed adulthood to suit my own agenda. I returned each holiday to the parental home and considered this not as an act of dependence, but part of what a college student did. Parents, with the exception of holidays were not part of my student,

or my newly emerging, adult landscape. In the meantime I went to college, graduated and lived my life, giving little thought to my student days other than the typical reminiscences that tend to occur through rose-tinted spectacles. My attitudes regarding student-hood and adulthood would have remained this way had I not later in my working life migrated to Australia and become a lecturer at a university here. In Australia, I discovered that living at home while at university is the norm rather than the exception (see Chapter One).

The discovery that many students live with their parents in Australia coincided with another discovery: the labelling of students whose parents did not attend university as 'first-generation' students. I had been unaware both of the label and set of problems for the institution that it implied. It was a rude awakening, not least because, until that moment, I had felt equal to all the other students with whom I had studied and viewed the students I now taught as equal too. The discovery led me to ask new questions. What, if they had considered it at all, had the staff thought of us first-generation students? Had we been treated differently from other students? What personal judgements had the staff made of us? Had we matched or exceeded their expectations? Were we different from other students? In what ways? I also realised that I had labelled students who lived at home as negatively dependent in the same unconsidered way that I, and others, had been labelled as first-generation students. The combination of students living at home with their parents, the labelling of others, and the realisation of having been unknowingly labelled, provides the major motivations behind the thesis as a whole. The development of a personal voice and an acknowledgment of and respect for the personal voices of the participants is of major importance in this study which is therefore informed both in subject and method by personal interests and concerns.

CHAPTER ONE

Students Living at Home and Discursive Trends in Higher Education

> When we use the term 'system' we construct boundaries, arbitrary definitions of relevant actors and structures that fashion insiders and outsiders. (Clark, 1983: 4)

Leaving high school and attending university coincide with an expected shift from youth to adulthood. Both these transitions assume a particular sort of adulthood, one which encourages increased independence and autonomy from parents and is perhaps most obviously symbolised by the young adult leaving home (Flanagan, Schulenberg and Fuligini, 1993). Indeed, moving away from home has been considered crucial to 'integrating' the student into college life as it is said to improve the chances of a student finishing university (Tinto, 1988; Astin, 1975; Rong and Schipani, 1994). The need to consider the notion of integration into university has been brought about by the accepted and popular belief that going to university entails learning about another culture, another way of life into which students need to integrate and adapt.

The transition to university is considered so complex that various analogies and metaphors have been used to try to describe it. For example, the transition has been variously described as being similar to the experiences of minority groups (Farber, 1986; Horowitz, 1969; Smedley *et al*, 1993), organisational cultures (Banning, 1989), and as a rite of passage (Tinto, 1975). The concept of 'university as alien environment' is useful in that it can be used to explain why so many students find university uncomfortable to be in and why so many leave. In the UK the general attrition rate is said to be around 19% (Cook and Leckey, 1999) and in the US this number was higher than 40% (Tinto, 1987) with the average first year attrition rate for public universities being 24% (ACT, 2000). Attrition figures in Australia have been notoriously difficult to determine until recently. DETYA (2001) reported attrition rates for each university in Australia for 1999 and showed that the attrition rate for commencing students in 1999 was an average of 15%.

What remains is an approach to viewing student retention and attrition which views students as needing to be assimilated to the culture of university. In turn, this has encouraged the development of a discourse of migration within the US, in which first-generation students are constructed as being like a migrant in a new country (see Chaskes, 1996). Indeed, the symbolic placement of students straddling two cultures or having to completely sever themselves from a known culture is a common and popular narrative and image in the first-generation student experience literature (see for example, Chapter 2 and London, 1992; Schaper, 1993, Chaskes, 1996) and serves to perpetuate stereotyped and often inaccurate images about these students. For example, London assumes that first-generation students are aspiring to be like another class group:

> the very act of going to college indicates an interest in attaining a white-collar, middle-class position not previously attained by a family member, and this may take the student into unchartered territory. (1992: 10)

He argues that this shift to another culture requires a renegotiation of relationships with family and friends and inevitable struggles caused by their living

> on the margin of two cultures…these students live and share in the life and traditions of two distinct cultures, never quite wanting or willing to break with their past, even if permitted to do so, and never fully accepted, because of prejudice, in the culture in which they seek a place. (London, 1992: 6-7)

London comments that such students should be encouraged to cut their roots to their own culture otherwise they will not be successful. Their own culture is seen as negative. It 'draws back' rather than pushes forward.

The notion of integration into college life has been perpetuated by Tinto whose widely accepted and popular social integrationist theory of student persistence has been used to inform studies on student persistence for over twenty years (Kraemer, 1997). The social integrationist approach is commonly used not only to explain why students stay or leave university but also to predict the likelihood of them staying or leaving (see for example

Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980; Getzlaf *et al*, 1984; Tinto and Goodsell-Love, 1993; Zea and Reisen, 1997; Heisserer and Parette, 2002).

Tinto (1975) argues that Durkheim's (1961) sociological theory, that people commit suicide if they do not feel part of the fabric of society, is similar to the experience of students who do not feel part of the university and who therefore leave or metaphorically 'commit suicide'. Similarly, Tinto (1975) claims that the rites of passage examined by Van Gennep are similar to those rites of passage found in a university and that students need to be initiated into them in order to feel part of the institution. Tinto argues that in order successfully to integrate into the university environment, students need to experience a 'rite of passage' that consists of three stages. These stages can be summarised as (1) separation (2) transition and (3) incorporation (Tinto, 1988). Significant, given the focus of the current study, is Tinto's explanation of what he means by separation, as his explanation has arguably informed attitudes and opinions about students and their families. For Tinto, separation involves separating from past associations and he suggests that in order to become integrated some students may have to reject the values of their families or peers when they start university (Tinto, 1988).

While acknowledging that not all separations have to be painful, he does claim that separation is necessary in order for the student to adopt "behaviours and norms appropriate to the college…and perhaps rejection of those of past communities." (page 443). The maintenance of friendships made in high school while at university and/or strong attachment to parents are considered problematic to Tinto and supporters of the social integration approach, as students who maintain links to their lives before university are thought to be less able or willing to become successfully 'integrated' into university life. Consequently, Tinto (1988) refers to the negative effects of students living at home and the so-called 'external forces' that "pull the person away from incorporation into the communities of the college" (Tinto, 1988: 444).

What then are the implications of social integration approach for those students who live at home with their parents and who therefore have not separated in the way Tinto argues

they should? The answer holds little hope for such students as, although Tinto considers that students who live at home may not suffer from the 'disassociation' that occurs to students who move away from home because they remain in their communities, he claims that they may find college less rewarding and "may not be able to reap the full social and intellectual rewards that social membership in college communities bring" (page 443). It is not, it seems, worth students trying to balance past and present associations for to do so is to make the university experience less rewarding. Tinto's social integration approach has, however, been critiqued and it is these critiques which offer an important alternative approach to understanding and responding to those students who live at home.

Specifically, social integrationists assert that an individual must adapt to the institution's values and attitudes. Tierney (1992) has argued the most vehemently against this, arguing that Tinto has wrongly appropriated both Durkheim's theory of suicide and Van Gennep's concept of a rite of passage to inform studies of student persistence. Tierney has two main concerns, that the term 'ritual' has been misinterpreted and that the integration framework has been relied upon too much. In terms of ritual, Tierney argues that the key misinterpretation lies in the fact that Van Gennep examined rituals within a particular culture whereas Tinto asserts that individuals in one culture need to undergo a ritual in another. In other words, Tinto "has developed an analytical tool that is dysfunctional: individuals from one culture, such as Apache, are to undergo a ritual in another culture, such as Anglo" (Tierney, 1992: 609). Tierney also argues that one cannot and should not "speak of ritual without first considering the cultural contexts in which that ritual is embedded and the dominant culture reflected therein" (page 608). He also takes issue with the interpretation of leave-taking in the ritual, pointing out that the terms 'departure', 'failure' and dropout' are cultural constructs, therefore the assumption that some people choose whether or not to take part in a rite of passage is flawed, as people in traditional cultures do not have choices about such participation, they simply take part. In other words, he argues that Tinto has failed to acknowledge that university students do have a choice about whether or not to go to university and that

student participation is a cultural construction. He has assumed that student departure is a universal concept rather than a cultural category developed by the society that utilizes the ritual." (Tierney, 1992: 609)

He cites Spindler and Spindler to highlight both the issue of compulsory participation and success in ritual:

> despite the onerous nature of the initiation…all of the young initiates survive the ordeal and are dedicated to seeing that the next class of initiates gets the same treatment. All of the initiates succeed, none fail…To fail would mean at least one could not be an Arunta, and usually this must mean death as well, but not death at the hands of another, but social death…The whole operation of the initiation school is managed to produce success. To fail to initiate the young successfully is unthinkable. The continuity of culture would be broken and the society would disintegrate. There are no dropouts. (Spindler and Spindler in Tierney, 1992: 609)

Also of particular concern to Tierney, and especially pertinent to the focus of the current study in examining and acknowledging a conjoint university experience, is Tinto's emphasis of an individualistic rather than collective response to attending university, a response which emphasises conformity, about which Brower (1992) has also expressed concern. Tierney describes the individualistic stance as follows:

> Individuals attend college, become integrated or not, graduate or depart. Conformity is the norm and it is the responsibility of the individual…Social integrationists assume that culture exists at a meta level – all cultures are similar and the institution merely reflects the culture of society. (page 610)

In contrast, he refers to various Native American authors who have argued that "tribal culture is crucial when thinking about the roots of student departure" (page 610). Although tribal culture is not an issue in the current study, a recognition of the collective as opposed to individualistic stance to understanding university experiences is important for opening up other ways of thinking and responding to students' and parental experiences of university.

Tierney also emphasises the need to reframe thinking about transition to university as moving from one culture to another to understanding transition that includes rather than excludes first-generation students' families:

> Rather than think of college as an abrupt transition from one world to another, we might try to conceptualize college life as reinforcing and incorporating what one has learned from one's extended family. (Tierney, 1992: 615)

Tierney also argues that a major problem with the social integrationist approach is its assumption that "all cultures are similar and the institution merely reflects the culture of society" (1992: 610). He argues that models of integration are problematic because they "merely insert minorities into a dominant cultural frame of reference that is transmitted within dominant cultural forms, leaving invisible cultural hierarchies intact." (page 611). In a similar vein, Giroux argues that "the notion of common culture is a central theoretical element used by conservatives in attacking multiculturalism." (1991: 4). In his critique of Diane Ravitch, he argues that she:

> dehistoricises and depoliticises the idea of culture (and) denies the necessity of either contesting existing configurations of power or transforming the deep-seated inequalities that characterise institutional and everyday life (Giroux, 1991:4).

The reference to 'everyday life' suggests there is one universal in which we all live or for which we all strive, and which is compartmentalised from work or other institutions. Such criticisms of the notion of a common culture are relevant to those who claim there exists, or who attempt to create, a particular kind of student culture or experience, particularly in universities with student populations from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

The prevalence and acceptance of the social integration approach is highlighted by Kraemer (1997) who, while acknowledging that there are difficulties in using a social integrationist framework to inform a non-traditional population, defends its use with the argument that

population differences may mean differences in the strength of influence of one factor or the other for some students, or one of the factors may have a negative rather than a positive relationship to other constructs in the model. (Kraemer, 1997: 164)

This dismissal of Tierney's important contribution to the debate on the student experience is disappointing but demonstrates the dominance of the approach and the resistance to finding an alternative paradigm.

Students Living at Home

An alternative paradigm through which to understand and respond to students' university experiences is also necessary in order to acknowledge two additional elements of an increasingly diverse student population which have been largely ignored, namely the tendency for students to live in the parental home longer and our understandings, or lack of understanding, of this phenomenon.

As far back as 1993, approximately half the full-time university student population in Australia lived at home (DEET, 1993) and the report commented that

little is known about what sorts of students inhabit various types of living accommodation, or of the effect that living conditions have on their academic performance. (DEET, 1993: 209)

By 1999, little had changed with 78% of full-time tertiary students aged 15-19 and 52% of full-time tertiary students aged 20-24 living at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000). However, in terms of interest in students' families, research continues to focus on how university students cope with separating from their families and how parents cope with the separation (see for example, Christie and Dinham, 1991; Olson, 1993; Van Steenhouse, 1998; Johnson and Schelhas-Miller, 2000). This is despite the large numbers of students who live at home and for longer than before (Hartley, 1990) and where a student lives being considered to make a difference (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

Supporting this observation are Johnson (1997) and Alford Schevaletta (2000) who point out that retention studies which focus on commuter students, students who live with their

families, are far fewer than those which focus on students who live on campus. Consequently, much less is known about the on-campus lives of such students and even less about their lives off campus. Nevertheless, a few studies have found that families are important to students (see for example Holmbeck and Wandrei, 1993; Lamothe *et al*, 1995 and Solberg and Villarreal, 1997). Kenny (1987a) asserted that attachment to parents can foster self-confidence and Tao and Dong (2000) found that support was a positive factor in students' adjustment to university and that different types of support showed distinctive patterns of change. In a study of first-year students at a highly selective urban university in the US, Kenny (1987b) found that attachment to parents did not result in negative results on the students' development or competence and that the students valued their parents' input.

In one of the few studies of students living at home, Flanagan *et al's* (1993) US study found that living at home had negative effects on the way students saw themselves and on their relationships with their parents. In their comparative study of fifty students who lived at home and fifty students who left home to attend university, Lafreniere and Ledgerwood (1997) found that male and female students were affected differently: that is, males who lived at home experienced less stress than females who lived at home. However, if family support was high then both males and females adjusted to university well, regardless of where they lived, thus supporting Kenny and Rice's (1995) assertion that, regardless of where students live, if a student has supportive links with parents they should be able to adapt better to stress.

When it comes to understanding students' relationships with their parents in a culturally diverse context, Kenny and Perez's (1996) findings are important in that they found that parental attachment is important for those African American students who are used to extended family involvement. Similarly, Alire (1997) argues for greater recognition of the importance of family in the lives of minority students in the US, suggesting that in the US, such students feel naked when they walk into a classroom at university, "with no towel or blanket in sight" (page 41).

Walker and Satterwhite (2002) conducted a comparative study which investigated parental support in relation to academic performance for Caucasian and African American undergraduate psychology students. They found that being from a single parent family and from either a Caucasian or African American background did not affect academic performance, although they did find that students who reported more parental support reported fewer withdrawals from their courses.

Blaxter's (1994) UK study is unusual in that it examines student relationships with parents and because it is a qualitative study which acknowledges parents of students as important, particularly to part-time students, something she states is overlooked. Blaxter also points to what she refers to as the 'underplaying' of the importance of parents in students' lives. She interviewed in depth, thirty-six mature age students in two part-time undergraduate programmes and found that although parents were sometimes considered obstacles in that some considered studying to be a selfish act which impacted on marital relationships, parents are important for providing moral support, housework and financial support.

Although largely ignored in terms of the studies conducted, particularly in Australia, living at home has become a notable phenomenon, so much so that the Australian Senate Committee (2001) commented that "Australian students appear, by and large, to have an aversion to studying far from home" (page 273). The committee also refers to Associate Professor Paul Adam's comment that this situation reflected "a culture of stasis" and both comments suggest an uneasiness with students living at home. Highlighting what might be described as their bewilderment with the situation are their thoughts on why it might be the case. They suggest timidly that finances and "also possibly…family and community support for the student" (page 273) could be factors. However, no further discussion is entered into, leaving the reader feeling as if the issue will forever remain a puzzle.

In place of a detailed examination of students' experiences of living at home in Australia, we are left with imagined scenarios such as the kind below described by Steven Knight,

former Professor of English at the University of Melbourne. Knight evokes a picture of the sort of lives he believes many students lead at home, and at the same time gently mocks the image, presenting students' parents and siblings as an impediment for university students:

> A surprising feature of Australian Universities from a world viewpoint is that most of the young people commute daily from home. They troop in from the suburbs, often with their school friends, clock out of the library at five, briefcases at the high port, and march back to the family home where study will somehow be inserted in the entrenched folds of domestic life. It is hardly surprising that many have difficulties, especially when parents and siblings have little patience or comprehension of study and its demands. Slogging through George Eliot as the television roars or as little brothers brawl is not how that weighty moralist can be gravely appreciated as most lecturers would expect, and as she would certainly demand. (Knight, 1990: 177)

Insights into the home lives of real, rather than imagined students, are described and discussed in Chapter Three.

Lack of Interest in Parents

Although the number of studies concerning students who live at home with their parents is minimal, interest in the socio-economic backgrounds of students, particularly since the Australian university student population has become increasingly diverse, has continued. Nevertheless, universities remain remarkably reluctant to engage with students' parents (Ramsay and Clarke, 1990) or to examine how students' adjustment to university is affected by parents (Kenny and Donaldson, 1992). Indeed, in more recent times, and demonstrating the importance of the current study, are the observations of Watkins (1999) and Wintre and Yaffe (2000) who have noted (1) the absence of parental voices in the literature, (2) parents' presence as merely a by-product of other issues and (3) parental voices being reinterpreted through the mouths of their student offspring.

One example of a reinterpretation of parental voices is Graham Little's (1970) Australian study of one hundred and twenty students at the University of Melbourne. Conducted in 1967, Little acknowledged the important part that parents played in students' lives and found that for the majority of the students interviewed, living at home was chosen not

merely for convenience or financial reasons but also for "the affectual bonds and parents' sense of responsibility" (page 129). Although Little stated that "It should be impossible to think of students without thinking of them in the context of their families" (page 147) he points out that not interviewing the parents themselves was a "special difficulty" (page 149) with his study:

> students' own *perceptions* of what has happened to them are the sole indicators of impact. (Little, 1970: 149)

As Chapter Two demonstrates, the inclusion of parental voices in this study was a crucial element of the study's design.

The Australian University System and Victoria University (VU)

I will now describe some of the broader contextual issues in which this study takes place because, as this thesis will demonstrate, acknowledging the wider context in which the study is situated and the specific institution which the students attend are both important for understanding the students' and parental responses in this study.

In Australia, almost one in four high school leavers enrols at a university (Marginson, 1993), thus it has been argued that rather than universities preparing a "social and cultural elite" (Marginson, 1993: 15), they are now seen as institutions of 'mass' higher education (McKenzie and Schweitzer, 2001). Massification has meant that 45% of today's teenagers are expected to participate in higher education (West, 1998). According to Smith (as cited in Esnault and Skilbeck, 1993: 25) the term 'mass' education was originated by Trow who argued that for a higher education system to be considered as a 'mass' system, it would have between 15 and 35% of the relevant age cohort, an elite system would have less than 15% and a universal system would have more than 35% of the relevant age cohort. The increase in diversity of student intake has led to discussions as to how institutions should respond: one method being through a "diversity of course offerings, teaching styles, modes of educational delivery and institutional environment". (Ngok as cited in Esnault and Skilbeck, 1993: 67)

If the goal is to create a higher education system which is diverse to match the diversity of students then "a diversity of high quality institutions requires differentiation of goals, not uniformity of ambition" (Ngok as cited in Esnault and Skilbeck, 1993: 67). Although differentiation of ambition seems to be a noble goal at first sight, there is a danger, and arguably this has already happened, that the differentiation will be constructed on an hierarchical scale, where particular institutional ambitions are seen as less desirable than others. Kitamura (as cited in Esnault and Skilbeck, 1993: 26) is also sceptical, stating that the élite forms of higher education systems can merely create new forms of élitism. It can be argued that this new form of élitism is already occurring within Australia where the newer institutions with their tendency to have more diverse student populations find themselves competing against the older, more established universities. Of course this in turn means that the staff in the institutions are themselves dealing with a transition from an élite to a diversified system (see Bella *et al*, 1993 and Bazeley, 1994).

Victoria University of Technology (VU) is one such new university with a diverse student population. For example, at VU, 24.5% of its students are from the most disadvantaged group of the population compared with 19.79% of the general Victorian population (van Moorst and Ballock, 1995: 12). Similarly, when examining figures for the ABS Education and Occupation Index, VU has a higher percentage of students (36%) in the bottom quintile than the state as a whole (29.25%) (van Moorst and Ballock, 1995: 15). Statistical information concerning how many VU students live at home or in other types of accommodation is not collected on the student enrolment forms. However, a study by McInnis and James (1995) found that of the 54.1% of VU first-year students (referred to as New University in the report) who responded to their survey, 73% lived with their families. It is suggested that the high percentage of students living in the family home is due to VU catering to a specific urban region (McInnis and James, 1995: 84).

Class and Higher Education in Australia
Despite the increasing diversity of the student population, Australian higher education enrolments still remain a mainly middle-class affair (Connell, 1993) with Moodie (1996)

arguing that as Australian society has become less egalitarian, Australian higher education has done little to counter this.

Various Australian studies have examined the relationship between aspirations to higher education and social class (for example Anderson and Vervoorn, 1983; Williams *et al*, 1993; Ramsay *et al*, 1998 and James *et al* 1999) with Connell et al (1991) noting that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds often have a strong desire for their children to further their education. The reporting of Bob Birrell's unpublished Education Department findings (Milburn, 2002) concerning university entrance in Australia caused some controversy as Birrell claimed that students from private schools take the majority of university places, with Melbourne and Monash University being reported as "virtual private school enclaves". Birrell (2002) stated that access to university is based on parental resources and claims that government schools lack a competitive learning environment, lack a focus on academic excellence and a curriculum that makes it more possible to achieve a high university entrance score. However, Teese (2000) takes a different approach to the standards debate, pointing to systemic problems within the construction of the Year 12 curriculum as a major impact on achievement and failure between sectors and regions of Melbourne and therefore on access to higher education courses.

First-Generation Students and Discourses of Élitism

Writing within the US context, London (1992) defines a typical first-generation student as someone whose

> grandparents did not finish high school and held blue-collar jobs; their parents, who also may not have finished high school, now hold either blue-collar or lower-level white-collar positions (pages 5-6).

University being mainly a middle-class affair has meant that such students who are 'working-class' are often considered to be "not as well equipped" as those from groups which had traditionally accessed higher education (Terry, 1995: 24). Because they lack a university education themselves and/or because of poorer economic circumstances, the

parents of these students are considered incapable of giving the type of support to their students sons or daughters considered appropriate to negotiate successfully a higher education course. This support is identified by Bower as "moral, financial or intellectual" (1996: 14). However, in Australia, where in 1999, seventy eight per cent of full-time tertiary students aged 15-19 and 52% of full-time tertiary students aged 20-24 lived at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000), to distance oneself from one's family may not be possible or desirable. (For further discussion about the tendency of young people, whether students or not, to remain at home for longer, see Chapter Four).

It seems that if working-class, 'first-generation students' as they have been defined, are to succeed at all in a 'system' that was originally created without them in mind, then they are expected to turn their backs on the very people who have probably helped them to get as far as they have in their education, that is, their families. Clark has referred to the term 'system' as problematic, describing it as a 'murky' term but one that

> we can hardly do without even when plagued by its ambiguity and shifting meanings. When we use the term we construct boundaries, arbitrary definitions of relevant actors and structures that fashion insiders and outsiders. (1983: 4)

In reviewing the literature and taking into account personal experience, I make the assumption in the rest of this chapter that these boundaries do indeed exist and that their construction serves to distance 'the system' from those students it categorises as problematic, specifically those who are referred to in the student experience literature as 'first-generation' students. This chapter also argues that, despite the rhetoric of access and equity, which has run parallel with the massification of university student populations, the continual construction and marking of certain students, who prior to mass higher education had little or no opportunity to access higher education, maintains an institutional gate-keeping authority and élitist higher education systems both in Australia and overseas. The élitism is supported by the popular acceptance and use of specific student experience discourses which have come to dominate the student

experience literature and have served to pathologise particular students and, significantly, their parents.

Attitudes Towards Students

Central to the construction of the dominant discourses are the observations of some academics who spend time talking to, observing and listening to students in attempts to try to understand them. Formalised, this observation becomes research, with students often being academics' research subjects. The Australian journal HERDSA is one such example of this type of research. The motivations for such studies about students are as varied as students themselves but they often share a general concern that students are not 'properly' experiencing university. Academics can become frustrated, a frustration that McInnis and James (1995) argue "can be linked to a notion of an ideal 'client' that bears little relationship to reality" (1995: 124)**.** Exactly what comprises this ideal is not clear but assumptions can be made based on the prevailing dominant discourses, namely that the ideal student is independent in body and mind and requires little input from others to succeed (for more analysis of this ideal student and the associated ideal student experience see Chapter Four).

Frustration or anger sometimes emerge in academics' discussions and descriptions about students, regardless of whether or not they are first-generation students. For example, Helen Horowitz in the preface to her book Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present describes her motivations for writing the book:

> I got angry, angry enough to begin this book. Students were refusing to grow up, I thought, holding themselves in because they had to get A's not only on tests but on deans' reports and recommendations. What had gone wrong in college? I set out to interview students, read their college newspapers, and find out. Because I am a historian I had to go back in a systematic way to beginnings. I found that these beginnings were not in the 1960's as I had anticipated, but in the late eighteenth century. And I found that anger had been the characteristic mode of college professors for just that long a time. (1987: xi)

A similar anger, seemingly caused by students' experiences varying from a much lauded ideal, is evident in William Willimon and Thomas Naylor's book, titled *The Abandoned Generation*:

> During the waning hours of this night I have talked with a number of students, many of whom were inebriated. I accompanied an officer as he broke up two fraternity parties for violating noise restrictions. We escorted four football players out of a party where they were not wanted. We interviewed a student who had been chased back to his room by lead-pipe-swinging community hooligans. Then we answered an anonymous complaint that someone was "beating up his girlfriend in the room next door." By the time we arrived noone wanted to talk. We left…A short time before I had been summoned to the office of the president, who told me he was increasingly concerned about student life at our school – about alcohol abuse, residential life, students' personal safety, social activities, fraternities and sports, particularly as these aspects of student life helped or hindered the school's academic mission. Perceiving a gap between students' academic pursuits and their life after dark and on weekends, the president and the provost asked me to listen to students, to gather information on the relation between academic and social activities, and to report my findings. (1995: 3)

This concern and fascination with what students and universities once were, what they have become and their apparent differences and similarities, continues to spark researchers' curiosity. An interest in and concern for students is perhaps manifested most clearly in the US with the creation of the University of South Carolina's National Center for the Freshman Experience & Students in Transition. The 1990s also saw the emergence of international Email discussion lists for discussion of specific groups of students such as 'first-year students', 'second year students' and 'commuter students'. In Australia, specific interest in first-year students has arisen in a formal context only recently, with the introduction of the inaugural Pacific Rim First-year Experience Conference in 1995.

Gazing on the 'At-Risk' Student

The concern shown for students in this era of massification through the literature, the related interventions which attempt to increase students' success and institutionalised forms of enquiry about them, all demonstrate that there is much interest and concern about Australia's diverse student population. However, examined more sceptically, this

international heightened curiousity about students, particularly those populations new to higher education, can be claimed as a surveillant gaze (Foucault, 1973), a gaze which shows no signs of waning (the current study being, of course, one such example). Foucault's (1973) concept of a disciplinary gaze can be related to different categories of students in a way similar to his analysis of the medical fraternity's infatuation with the body and subsequent construction of medical discourses invested with power.

The characteristic academic stance of critically scrutinising students seems to stem from a non-self-reflexive anxiety of the teacher faced daily with undergraduates who seem different from themselves as undergraduates. As they gaze on their students, academics might variously ponder why students are politically active or inactive, why they are enthusiastic or apathetic, or vocationally or intellectually oriented (for examples of these types of inquiries see Horowitz, 1987 and Willimon and Naylor, 1995). Arising from this frustration and concern is a way of viewing the diverse student population which focuses on students' weaknesses, so much so that the phrase 'at-risk student' has been coined to summarise the perceived weaknesses of those students deemed to be problematic by the institutions.

The prevalence of deficit theory in which to frame the 'at-risk' student is evidence of what Williams refers to as a 'discourse of derision' in which "the norm and the ideal…must be protected from alternatives, the non-standard, lower alternatives" (1997: 26). The derision is made all the more acute by the students rarely being informed of their own problematised status. Meanwhile, the institution proffers the various labels such as 'first-generation' which, in sociological terms, 'marks' them as problematic by virtue of their parents' educational backgrounds (for an extended discussion of this term see later in this chapter, page). In this way, "the very practices of requiring marks by bureaucratic institutions and other agents of society reproduces and intensifies the marking" (Damarin, 2000: 3).

Placing students' ethnicity and/or students' parents educational backgrounds as the source of their sons and daughters' difficulties at university would perhaps be defendable

and acceptable if it were related to a tangible issue such as poor economic circumstances creating fewer opportunities and therefore different family priorities. However, for their putative difficulties to be blamed on something as intangible and socially constructed as ethnicity or class, locates the students irrevocably within a biological, hereditary framework which at best is limiting, situating the students and their parents as passive and only able to receive gratefully whatever help is offered. At worst, such marking is insulting, suggesting that not only one person is a problem to the institution but potentially a whole family, and community.

In Australia, the federal government's publication *A Fair Chance for All* (DEET, 1990) represented the beginnings of a different approach to disadvantage in higher education, with Ramsey *et al* (1998) arguing that the setting of equity objectives for so-called equity groups marked the shift from a deficit to an institutional model for dealing with inequities in the student population. The six equity groups are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People with disabilities
- People from low socio-economic backgrounds
- People from rural and isolated areas
- People from non-English speaking background
- Women in non-traditional areas

This identification of equity groups allowed nationally consistent equity data to be collected for the first time (Wheelahan, 2000). DETYA's (2001) report shows that the number of women in non-traditional areas has increased as has the number of students from rural areas and low socio-economic status (DETYA 2001). However, in their 2001-2002 report, DETYA reports that between 1991 and 1999, the proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds participating in higher education in Australia has stayed at around fifteen per cent, with only twenty-five per cent of students whose parents have unskilled manual backgrounds commencing higher education (Marks *et al*, 2000). Such contradictions in data are probably related to determining socio-economic

data based on post code data. For example, Birrell *et al* (1999) and McMillan and Western (2000) have pointed out that some students with low socio-economic backgrounds might live in more affluent areas meaning that their participation rates could be worse.

DETYA (1999) suggests that the problems of equity in higher education are related to access not outcomes, in other words that once within the university system their success and retention rates are similar to students from non-equity groups. However, Wheelahan (2000) makes the important point that

> DETYA's claim is counter-intuitive if membership of an equity group is understood to reflect real advantage and not just statistical representation. (page 14)

Whatever the reason for the fluid statistics, James *et al* point out, there is still "discomforting evidence…that an individual's chance of going to university in Australia (is) still determined by their geographical location and the social stratum to which their family belong" (1994: 4). For those students from low socio-economic backgrounds and rural areas far from a university campus, the inequities are compounded.

Terminologies to Describe Students

The massification of the university system in Australia and overseas has resulted in a plethora of terminologies and categories to describe the perceived changes and differences in the student population. These categories are constructed not as perceived student sub-cultures as in Lefkowitz Horowitz's (1987) study but as comparison categories. While the creation of terminologies to describe different sectors of the student population might seem to be a reasonable response to understanding the student population's diversity, the use of comparison categories has been critiqued so as to lead one to question their use and usefulness. For example, Urciuoli (1999) refers to the use of racial categories in the US context stating they are used

> as an important point of comparison among colleges competing for students in tight markets organized around peer institutions. America's best colleges,

published by U.S News & World Report, is a useful index of this market structure, sorting schools into "national" and "regional" markets, ranking them, and providing abundant information about each school for prospective students and parents, including the percentage of the student body in each race category." (page 287)

So feasible is it to use the various categories to suit the aims of an institution at any point in time that Urciuoli (1999) refers to racial categories used to describe students as "strategically deployable shifters" or SDSs (page 289). As will be shown below, the various categories or SDSs, whether or not based on race or some other factor, also highlight perceived differences between the 'new' students who, prior to massification of the university population, had no or little access to the higher education system and 'traditional' students, whose parents had a university education.

Commonly used categories in the student experience and higher education literature in the US, Canada, UK and Australia since the advent of massification, demonstrate the preoccupations of the researchers in these countries as they attempt to manage their diverse student populations. They include:

- 'first-generation' students (being the first in the immediate family to have a university education)
- 'commuter' students (a North American term used to describe students who live at home for the duration of their course and travel to university to attend classes)
- 'part-time' students
- 'minority' students (a North American term pertaining to North American racial minorities, specifically Hispanics, Native-American, African–Americans and Asian-Americans).
- 'ethnic minority' (a UK term used to describe students from migrant families)
- 'traditional' students (a North American term used to describe white school-leavers and also a term commonly used to describe students whose parents are university educated)

- 'non-traditional' students (a North American term used to describe older students and also a term commonly used to describe students who have enrolled at universities since the advent of mass education)

In summary, North American students are constructed according to race, residential status and age and UK students are constructed according to age and ethnicity. In Australia, similar categories or SDSs of students exist, for example the term 'mature age' is used to describe someone who is not a school-leaver aged 17/18. However, in an interesting contrast, the vast majority of Australian students are constructed according to language background. As such, the majority of students in Australia are variously referred to as:

- 'LOTE' (pronounced as a word rather than an acronym, this means from a language background other than English)
- 'ESL' (pronounced as an acronym and standing for English as a second language)
- 'NESB' (pronounced as a word or an acronym and standing for Non-English speaking background).
- 'International' (student whose primary residence is overseas who is studying in Australia and sometimes referred to as 'overseas' student)

In the numerous categories applied to particular students as exemplified by the categories above, the students' experiences are notably lacking but so embedded are they in the discourses and practices of higher education, that the terms themselves have become commonly used in the Australian higher education system as adjectives. For example, phrases as "She is ESL" or "He is NESB" are commonly heard.

Still further sub-categories have been constructed to describe a student whose first language is not English and to distinguish:

> those students who were born overseas in a non-English speaking country, speak a LOTE at home and have been in Australia for less than ten years (defined as NewNESB) from other students (Established). The NewNESB

group is a subset of the LBOTE group. The Established group includes ESB students and some LBOTE students. (Borland and Pearce, 1999: 5)

'International' students, while they could be from an English-speaking country, are commonly treated as one common category and as such these students are usually referred to as 'ESL' because of their accent or visual features rather than as a consequence of their language background. However, arguably less anxiety appears to be present in the context of 'International' students because of their existence in the higher education system as primarily money-making ventures for the various institutions.

Indigenous Australians are subject to a different type of categorisation from other Australian students, being categorised in terms of race. Being categorised differently in this way highlights and perpetuates indigenous Australians' marginalised position in Australian society and in the higher education system and mirrors experiences of African Americans (see for example Artiles, 1998 and Gossett and Cuyjet, 1998).

While I only discovered my own categorised status as a 'first-generation' student many years after graduation, Richard Rodriguez discovered his as a 'racial minority', i.e Hispanic, while still a student (for more detail about Rodriguez see Chapter Two). His surprise and anger in discovering he had been categorised is a pertinent reminder of how those who are categorised do not necessarily feel they need to be:

> In college one day a professor of English returned my term paper with the comment penciled just under the grade: 'Maybe the reason you feel Dickens's sense of alienation so acutely is because you are a minority student.' Minority student. It was the first time I had seen the expression; I remember sensing that it somehow referred to my race. Never before had a teacher suggested that my academic performance was linked to my racial identity. (1982: 144)

The common feature of the increasing number of categories to describe students from different backgrounds is that the students they refer to are perceived as different from an implied mainstream student cohort with the implication of a resulting deficit. Furthermore, whatever the sub-category a student is marked by (e.g socio-economic, language background, racial background), first-generation students are said to have in

common particular characteristics. For example, major findings from a longitudinal study in the US, compared the experiences and outcomes of first-generation students to their contemporaries and found that first-generation students are more likely to study part-time, be on lower incomes, be older, married and have lower levels of persistence and attainment (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Other characteristics of US first-generation students, which mirror the Australian situation, are their tendencies to have fewer academic skills, have responsibilities outside their studies such as part-time work and/or children. In the US they also are more likely to be Latino and female and "need more support than other students". (Pascarella, 1997: 8)

The complex terminology and increasing number of acronyms associated with student populations arguably reflect underlying anxieties felt towards a diverse student population and the strongly felt need to 'mark' or label them. The terminology and associated acronyms also enable university staff to explain difficulties in educating marked students. Hill Collins (1991) discusses how the use of what she refers to as "the construct of dichotomous oppositional difference" is an act of power over others:

> One fundamental characteristic of this construct is the categorization of people, things, and ideas in terms of their difference from one another…Another fundamental characteristic of this contruct is that the halves of the dichotomy do not enhance each other. Rather the dichotomous halves are different and inherently opposed to one another. A third and more important characteristic is that these oppositional relationships are intrinsically unstable. Since such dualities rarely represent different but equal relationships, the inherently unstable relationship is resolved by subordinating one half of each pair to the other. Thus, whites rule Blacks, males dominate females, reason is evaluating knowledge, and subjects rule objects. Dichotomous oppositional differences invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical relationships that mesh with political economics of domination and subordination. (1991: 42)

Similarly, Damarin's discussion of 'marked categories' in the context of the mathematically able, highlights how such categories: "reflect principles and common beliefs which are spread through its popular media and mass culture organisations and

thus permeate the society" (2000: 4). She argues that there are specific characteristics of marked groups and that people within these groups are:

- ridiculed and maligned
- frequently portrayed as incompetent in dealing with daily life
- deferred in terms of their needs while the needs of the unmarked are met
- feared as powerful even as they are marked as powerless

Further, she argues that people within marked groups:

- often come to function as communities in their own right…being doubly marked or multiply marked places individuals at the margins of each marked community of membership
- the study of a marked category...eventually produces the complementary class of individuals (men, whites) and the application of constructs first developed in the study of the marked category to the unmarked . (Men have gender too! Whites have race too!) and that
- in comparison to the unmarked category and in general (though not always) the unmarked category is larger than the marked category. Even when this is not the case, such as with women and with people of color…the marked category is not recognised as the major or majority category, but as a 'special interest group' or a group whose 'membership' claims are suspect (page 4).

Damarin's analysis raises the questions, what are the principles and common beliefs of the people who work within the 'mass culture organisations', in the case of this study, universities, and how useful are the above characteristics in explaining academics' responses to marked categories of students?

Blaming and Improving Students

First, are the students in a massified system of higher education ridiculed and maligned? It is tempting to suggest that they are not. After all, these students are admitted to

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universities and, often in the name of access and equity, numerous programs, tests and other interventions are implemented with a view to increasing these students' chances of success. Depending on the country and the institution, these interventions are variously referred to as developmental, access, learning support, adjunct programs and so on. Through these programs, students can receive help with their reading and writing skills and can access qualified psychologists for help with emotional difficulties, time management and money management issues. The concern for students manifested in the provision of such interventions or services have become part of what Gilbert *et al* (1997) have described as an observable **"**movement" concerning students' needs. In addition, many institutions have adapted their traditional ways of operating to make it easier for part-time and students who live off campus to access services.

The provision of services to these new students has brought about new educational 'industries' and personnel both to provide the services and justify their existence through related research and literature. Higher education, it seems, is bending over backwards to accommodate their 'new' students and therefore rather than students being ridiculed and maligned, it might seem that everything that can be done for those students who are deemed academically, socially and culturally under-prepared to succeed in university, is being done. However, the plethora of research and interventions to help students obscure the reality. That is, they obscure the underlying attitudes that marked categories of students are considered a problem, the solution to which is to be found by changing individuals to fit the organisation's desires.

Situating the perceived problem within the student is a hangover from theories of youth development which, as Wyn and White (1997) have argued, emphasise problems with individuals and their families rather than identifying structural problems within the wider society and issues of power. Further obscuring issues of power, or what Connell refers to as "the mystery in broad daylight" (Connell cited in Wyn and White, 1997), is the often well-intentioned desire of the academy to help 'at-risk' students. From this desire arises a parallel discourse of institutional improvement, both of students and teaching staff (Gardner, 1986; McInnis and James 1995). Within this discourse is the perceived need to

run remedial and other 'improvement' programs to ensure the quality of graduate outcomes (for my own positioning in relation to such programs see Chapter Two). Improvement of students is justified within an equity discourse in which students are seen as needy with Gale (2002) stating that students' difficulties are commonly said to arise from

- Student differences in physical and sensory abilities
- Student differences in emotional responses
- Student differences in environmental and cultural experiences
- Student differences in educational opportunities (Gale, 2002: 65)

Higher education institutions insert special programs for this population to help them adjust to university. Such programs, commonly referred to in Australia as language and academic skills programs, are relatively new in Australia, having grown as a result of mass higher education (Garner *et al*, 1995) and have been summarised by McInnis and James as "compensatory, foundational and enrichment" (1995: 113).

The 'At-Risk' Student

The term 'at-risk' highlights institutions' and individuals' desires to help 'marked categories' of students. Students' 'at- risk' status is highlighted by Roueche and Roueche who characterise them as:

> students who possess a collage of academic, social, and economic problems that challenge their success in college-for example, family employment responsibilities, financial needs, poor academic back-grounds, low self-concepts, limited world views, and an absence of role models or mentors for the college experience. (Usually 'at-risk' students are first-generation college attendees). (1994: 3)

Thus, the term 'at-risk' has itself become an overarching category of the other constructed sub-categories.

A problem with the discourse of improvement is the construction of marked categories of students as almost charitable causes who are seen to be in need of programs from which the recipients will hopefully benefit. In turn, universities and academics construct themselves as the saviours of the working-class who have the opportunity to release the otherwise untapped potentials of these students. Terenzini *et al* typify this approach:

> Because of their family and educational backgrounds, going to college often constituted a significant and intimidating cultural transition…for many…the decision to go to college was a conscious decision to escape the occupational dead-ends and hopelessness their life courses otherwise promised (Terenzini *et al*, 1994: 63).

Similarly, Roueche and Roueche, writing in the US community college context, state:

> Entire institutions must work hard in changing times to respond to all of their students, and the fact that an increasing majority of their students can now be characterized as 'at-risk' is special cause for heightened concern. (1994: 10)

They summarise ten key recommendations to aid 'at-risk' students:

- Pre-enrolment activities should be pro-active
- Orientation should be required of entering students
- Late registration should be abolished
- Basic skills assessment and placement should be mandatory
- Eliminate dual enrolment in basic skill and regular academic courses
- Working students should be strongly encouraged to reduce academic loads
- Provide more comprehensive financial aid programs
- Establish safety nets with faculty mentors and peer support
- Require problem solving and literacy activities in all courses
- Evaluate student and program outcomes regularly and disseminate the findings

That these recommendations are not related to all students but to "the majority of their new registrants" (Roueche and Roueche, 1994: 6) reflects a massified student population

but also is indicative of the unproblematised status that those students *not* marked as 'at-risk' have within the literature.

The wide-ranging concern felt about students in general is clear, with research conducted on a variety of issues such as student character development (Whiteley and Yokota, 1988), student adjustment (Garbarino and Strange, 1993; Christie and Dinham, 1991; Gerdes and Mallinckrodt, 1994) persistence (Tinto, 1988, Astin, 1975; Rong and Schipani, 1994) attrition (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975, 1988) college life in general (Moffat, 1991) and residential college life (Smith, 1993). Orientation (Schaffer, 1962; Groseth and Brigham, 1984, Simmons, 1990; Pascarella *et al*, 1986; White, 1998) and commuter students (Jacoby, 1989; Wilmes, 1993; Davis, 1999; McDaniel and Graham, 2001) have also become subjects for some researchers.

In addition to special programs for 'at-risk' students, there has been a call for a focus on teaching staff to make adjustments to their curricula and teaching styles in order to compensate for or respond to (depending on one's philosophical and political orientation) the changes in the student population resulting from massification (see James and McInnis, 1995 and Gilbert *et al*, 1997). This shift has occurred, on the surface at least, to help students "reap the rewards that a college degree affords" (Tierney, 1992: 604). However, this shift is not necessarily motivated by altruism, disguising as it does an economic imperative "to maintain the income that derives from the students' attendance" (Tierney, 1992: 604). Here then is a central question and dilemma within a massified higher education system: how to increase funds in a time of decreased funding to higher education and how to do so in ways which attract students - but not those students who might be *too* problematic for the institution?

The focus on the potential services or curriculum changes that can be made available to 'at-risk' students is generally characterised by a lack of consideration or even acknowledgement of academics' own biases and prejudices regarding those students who are considered to be problematic. In turn this masks underlying shock and anxiety often felt by academics about these students. For example, while Roueche and Roueche (1994)

argue for a commitment to meeting the needs of 'at-risk' students, their descriptions indicate both their underlying concern and their shock about the new students, so much so that they describe the perceived deficits in similar terms to an epidemiologist speaking of a disease sweeping a nation. In referring to their own and others' concerns about the gap between the small numbers of educated people and large numbers of uneducated people, they quote the chancellor of Los Angeles Community College District: "If you think you are safe because you are in the suburbs, or because you are far from a large metropolitan center, you may simply not be paying attention" (page 3). Also quoted in the article is a comment made by Tessa Tagle, provost of the Medical Center Campus of Miami-Dade Community College: "Diversity and pluralism are here to stay - and they migrate. What is happening in Miami today will be in your community tomorrow" (Tagle, 1991 cited in Roueche and Roueche, 1994: 3). The sense of feeling threatened by this new population is not dissimilar to the sense of fear, ignorance and threat felt by xenophobics.

The use of the term 'at-risk' has been criticised by Mary Finley who states that the term has been borrowed from medicine and is being overused and hence rendering it meaningless:

> One can easily show, for instance, that all children (indeed all people) are at risk. Life inevitably entails threats, after all, no matter how comfortable one's circumstances. (Finley, 1994: 1)

Wyn and White also point to the borrowed nature of the term 'at-risk'. They point to it as being a term central to the concept of 'youth development' whereby the young people considered to be 'at-risk' are those who are deemed not to be part of

> the notion of a mainstream…The young people who do not conform to the standards of this mainstream are identified as those at risk, requiring specific attention to bring them into line with the mainstream. (1997: 51-52)

The failure of many academics to examine and reflect on their own biases and prejudices (for a more detailed examination of this see Artiles, 1998) when discussing those students

labelled as 'at-risk', has led to these students being ridiculed or maligned and academics' own biases and prejudices being unquestioned or even unidentified. This is most clearly demonstrated in the culture and discourse of blame distancing of the blame for the students' difficulties. Attributing causes for student difficulties to their 'background' is a veiled term for blaming students' parents.

The rise in interest in students and their family backgrounds coincides with the emergence of social reproduction theories which attempt to explain the reproduction of class structure from generation to generation (for an early example, see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). A whole body of research looks for and establishes a correlation between parental education levels and attrition. This research has served as a release valve for anxious academics who find comfort in and are relieved to be able to turn to findings which indicate the source of their students' problems being in something seemingly so intangible and distanced as their students' family backgrounds, itself a double marking (see below).

Hierarchies of Marking

Damarin (2000) highlights how marked categories of people can be doubly marked through their "family history, their friends and associates, their political views, and other relationships and ideas" (page 2). 'At-risk' students are doubly marked in this way, first by being blamed for not being like those students whose parents have a university background and second, through having parents who are considered unable or unwilling to pass on the correct attitudes and values to enable their sons and daughters to succeed at university. For example, Bower, in referring to minority students within the community college system in the US states:

> Those who work with community college minority freshmen must realize that many minority families are unable to provide the support - moral, financial or intellectual- that the student will need to survive in college. (1996: 14)

Specifically, their anticipated failure is said to have its source in families "where conditions and values are not in line with those desirable for success at the university"

(Anderson as cited in Wheelwright, 1965: 149). The disciplinary language evident in the phrases 'moral, financial and intellectual' and 'not in line with' indicates the levels of anxiety felt by academics about people with whom many feel they have little in common and the differences they feel exist between them. Further, such culturally biased statements have been discredited by authors such as Sheryl Greenwood Gowen (1992) who, through her exploration of the experiences of working-class African-Americans in the workforce, found that language and literary practices rather than the family's values were the critical issues for understanding educational outcomes.

Within the Australian context, similar debates have occurred, with Borland and Pearce (1999) pointing out what they refer to as the "two contrasting positions: NESB as high participators and /or achievers or NESB as low participators and/or achievers" (page 14). Dobson *et al* (1996) have argued that NESB students excel their non-NESB counterparts in terms of their participation in higher education. However, their focus on access as opposed to outcomes has tended to hide whether or not this group achieves successful outcomes as well as access to higher education. Borland and Pearce point to how forming a single category for students under the general NESB category "can mask very different outcomes" (page 14), for example, whether or not the student was mature age, a school leaver or a TAFE articulator. Further, they point to a lack of literature which examines in detail students from different language groups in different courses. Extending the debate further, Biggs (1997) has argued that the experiences of students from other cultures be reconceptualised so that a "contextual" rather than deficit approach is used. To achieve this, he argues for an approach to teaching which, instead of focussing on perceived or actual differences between students, focuses on the "universals of good learning" (page 12). Similarly, Gale (2002) suggests that learning environments be "differently constructed" (page 66) to avoid what he refers to as the "disabling of students' learning experiences" (page 66).

Capitalising on Culture

The concept of cultural capital has been used to explain the apparent maintenance of the class system and particularly for explaining how families unconsciously or otherwise

perpetuate it. The theory is that a child is merely " a bundle of abilities, knowledges and attitudes furnished by their parents" (Connell *et al*, 1982: 188) and that these come from the family's particular class status. The resulting "cultural capital" is said to pass on from generation to generation resulting in a status quo whereby the ruling class perpetually rules and the working-classes are continuously ruled (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979; Connell *et al*, 1982). The result of this process is that the school system gives children the appropriate attitudes and skills for validating and/or devaluing what they have (Connell *et al*, 1982). For example, middle-class children's attitudes and values are validated by the education system but working-class children are told explicitly or implicitly that they are lacking in some way.

Although the theory of cultural capital is an attractive one for providing an explanation of class inequalities, a major argument used against it, is that it fails to take account for how people take control of their own lives and make their own sense and meaning from them (Connell *et al*, 1982). Instead a picture is presented of voiceless, powerless pawns in a bigger system over which they have no control.

If the theory of cultural capital is applied to first-generation students from working-class backgrounds, then it would seem that the cards are stacked against the success of working-class students at university. Theoretically, working-class first-generation students will be more likely to fail because they are not suitably equipped with the correct attitudes and values to enable them to succeed. Indeed, it is a commonly held belief that some students are simply not equipped to cope adequately with a university education. Such a deficit in a student's knowledge or background is usually blamed on a student's family (Connell *et al*, 1982). This 'deficit theory' is often used to help understand the problems students from 'disadvantaged' homes face in the education system and seems to link usefully with the notion of cultural capital. Deficit theory operates on the assumption that the home circumstances of the 'disadvantaged' need to be "improved, enriched, or compensated for" (Connell *et al*, 1982: 26) and is often used as the basis to deal with issues of inequality in education. In deficit theory the focus (or blame) is on the student and how s/he needs to change and be changed in order to 'make the grade'. As Freire

states, such people are seen by some as "the pathology of the healthy society which must therefore adjust these 'incompetent and lazy' folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality" (1972: 48).

Reproduction theory and the theory of cultural capital and its critique have permeated much educational theory in the 1980s and has significantly influenced many current university educators and commentators and higher education literature. Both reproduction theory and cultural capital are used to explain the low representation of particular student cohorts, specifically the low numbers of working-class students in higher education (see for example Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979; Anderson and Vervoorn, 1983; Teese, 2000). Specifically, cultural capital is used to explain how families unconsciously or otherwise contribute to a perpetuation of the maintenance of the class system (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979; Connell *et al*, 1982). In turn, a lack of cultural capital is attributed to a deficit within the family and is then used to explain why students from so-called disadvantaged homes (yet another marked category) struggle in the education system.

Fascinated by the 'Other'

In addition to the concern and derision related to first-generation and other categories of students, is a basic fascination with them, a phenomenon that Walkerdine has observed as occurring with working-class people and which she describes as the pathologising of the working-class, "the fantasized Other" (Walkerdine, 1990: 163). She claims it is a common tendency of researchers who themselves are usually middle-class (for a more detailed discussion of my own class position, see Chapter Two). She highlights the fascination of others with the working-class through a personal anecdote. The event took place while she and a friend were walking through a seaside town in England. Her friend remarked on the many working-class families inside the seaside cafés eating fish and chips. She said in a shocked voice: "How can they do it?" (Walkerdine, 1990: 163). At the time, Walkerdine's embarrassment was so palpable that she remained silent, unable to say that she had once taken part in the same holiday ritual. Reflecting on the experience, she realised that her friend was fascinated by what it was like to 'be like that', to be 'the other'.

In a similar way, the othering of marked students exemplifies the power relations within universities and, arguably, the biases and prejudices many university staff have towards certain categories of students. For example, in a study in which he conducted over two hundred interviews about academics' perceptions of Native American students, Tierney (1992) heard comments that were remarkably similar to those I hear in my professional life in Australia about first-generation students, regardless of racial background, such as:

- They grow up without competition, and when they come here to university whose ethic is achievement and competition, it's tough
- They have a terrible problem with acculturation
- The major problem is they have a foot in each culture that draws them back to their roots.
- They are drawn back to their culture and it's a difficult transition to make

(pages 613-614)

Tierney points out the assumptions behind these comments and, in doing so, demonstrates how entrenched and unquestioned they are. For example, rather than seeing lack of competitiveness as a problem he suggests that the institution should instead make its core an ethic of cooperation. Stating that Native American students have a terrible problem with acculturation implies that the Native American student must "learn the ways of the white world" (Tierney, 1992: 613), a phenomenon not dissimilar to middle-class academics expecting working-class first-generation students to take on middle-class values (see, for example, London, 1992).

The categoriser's ability to view others' behaviours, attitudes and to define them according to their own world view is clearly "an act of power" (Lather, 1991: 125) from which is constructed "descriptors of who should or should not be let into what sort of academia and on what terms" (Williams, 1997: 25). Referring to Lennon (1995) Williams argues that

the ideological content of forms of categorizations has material effects on the lives of those subject to them, and we need ways of explaining the distinctive consequences of being inserted into key discourses in particular ways (1997: 44).

Williams highlights the simplistic polarising discourses arising from the 'icon words' in higher education and lists them as follows:

- elite v. mass
- standard v. non-standard
- traditional v. non-traditional
- quality v. access
- academic v. vocational
- qualified v. unqualified
- academic freedom v. government control
- research v. teaching (page 25)

Williams further argues that:

> by using one or two key words, the unacceptability of the opposite, the alternative, is assumed and arising from these polarising discourses is a specific discourse used to legitimise…the normal, the worthy student and the acceptable processes of admission are legitimized by reference to the abnormal, the unworthy, the unacceptable. (Williams, 1997: 25-26)

The marking of particular students as 'other' serves to separate them from 'normal' students and places them under intense scrutiny. Marked categories of students are thus marked precisely because of their 'otherness', their contrast to the idealized group of students whose parent(s) did attend university or what Williams (1997) refers to as the construction of normal versus abnormal students. Artiles develops the notion of otherness by demonstrating that, treating students both as the same and as different only serves to reaffirm difference. Specifically he compares the use of special programs for improving particular students' English with university admissions criteria for ethnic minority groups where the students are treated the same and argues that both only serve to

affirm difference…Thus it appears that to acknowledge difference in any way creates a dilemma that poses seemingly insurmountable choices between similar or preferential treatment, between neutrality or accommodation, or between integration or separation. (1998: 32)

The act of marking categories of students suggests opposing categories, for example the opposing category for first-generation student might be expected to be second or third generation student. In reality, the closest to an opposing category is 'traditional student', which significantly has no further sub-categories extracted from it. These students' unmarked, yet known, position within the discourses of the first-year experience and the lack of further categorisation, highlights their normed and idealised position within the academy. It also highlights the lack of scrutiny under which 'traditional', 'normal' students are placed and serves to accentuate any perceived differences in comparative student groups. In contrast to marked categories of students, these students are born of families who are assumed to have been busily grooming their offspring throughout their early years for a university place and as such for their expected position and rewards in society. These images have a strong tradition in anglo-culture and are constructed not only around privileged people in society but apparently by those who want to achieve the same goals and hold the same values. The unmarked category of students has been in existence for a long time. For example, compare the nineteenth century writer Cobbett's reminiscences with those of Roueche and Roueche in the twentieth century. Cobbett reflects on his values in bringing up his own family:

> Children naturally want to be like their parents, and do what they do; and as I was always writing or reading, mine naturally desired to do something in the same way. Fond of book learning…I naturally wished them to possess it too; but never did I impose it upon any one of them. I accomplished my purpose indirectly…A large strong table in the middle of the room, their mother sitting at her work, used to be surrounded with them, the baby, if big enough, set up in a high chair. Here were inkstands, pens, pencils, indiarubber, and paper, all in abundance and everyone scrabbled about as he or she pleased…One would be trying to imitate a bit of my writing, another drawing the pictures of some of our horses and dogs, a third poking over Bewick's 'Quadrapeds', and picking out what he said about them (Cobbett in Cameron, 1978: 11).

With some minor changes in register, the values embedded here remain common in the late twentieth and early twentieth centuries. Labelling of students has been defended by Roueche and Roueche who argue that labels are unfair but necessary in order to prevent some sort of social chaos and moral disorder:

> present situations demand that institutions identify students who need special attention before they disappear from educational institutions, only to reappear on welfare rolls, in prisons, or in low paying unproductive jobs. Using terms that most clearly identify an array of conditions that threaten student success and thereby most clearly focus on potential improvements of these conditions appears to be an appropriate strategy. (1996: 78)

Perceived Competency of First-Generation Students

Damarin's second characteristic of a marked category is that they are portrayed as incompetent in daily life. In the context of first-generation university students this suggests an incompetence with a daily life that is bound to be different from the sort that academics would perhaps want their students to live or even know about.

The area in which they are seen as incompetent is related to something seemingly quite specific and separate from the rest of their daily lives: that is, primarily and most obviously, to their perceived lack of academic skills and understandings of university. A euphemistic term commonly used to explain this perceived incompetence is 'underprepared' (see for example Roueche and Roueche, 1996) and as mentioned previously, many programs have been developed to try to compensate for these perceived deficits of the 'underprepared'.

Needs Deferral

Damarin's third definition of marked categories is that they have their needs deferred, while the unmarked category's needs are met. On first examination it seems that this is not the case for marked categories of students as universities seemingly do as much as resources and time will allow to provide services and programs for them. For example, many institutions in the US have changed their hours of operation to meet the practical needs of commuter students who require services to be open and accessible later and/or earlier in the day. In the US, the National Clearing House for Commuter Programs (NCCP) indicates the growing interest in supporting students who do not live on campus, as does associated literature such as Jacoby (1989) and Wilmes (1993). However, in Australia, such responses to a massified and mobile student population have been rare. Furthermore, while their perceived needs might be met by the provision of various services, this does not mean that the students themselves feel their needs are being either identified or met. A key issue in provision of services for perceived needs is that the students are usually unaware of their problematised status and are therefore less likely to identify themselves as potential clients of these services. As Gale (2002) has noted, student voices are frequently absent from discussions about student needs.

The Power of the Marked

According to Damarin, "marked categories are feared as powerful even as they are marked as powerless"(page 4). It is not immediately obvious how this can relate to marked characteristics of students. Further, considering I have so far argued they are ridiculed and maligned how can it be said that marked categories of students can be regarded as powerful? With some exceptions, such as the student union and a few student places on academic committees and boards, students have remarkably little power within universities. Scott suggests two main reasons for students' lack of power:

> Because student tuition fees cover only a relatively small share of instructional costs, students possess only limited power in effecting university response to their desires…In addition academics are not only service providers…their individual fates are still determined largely by research, so it is not surprising that research remains a priority for their endeavours. (1999: 4)

The key to finding students' perceived power therefore is in the phrase 'regarded as' which suggests that the students themselves may not see themselves as powerful but that others see them in this way. Having larger numbers of marked categories of students than ever before within universities means that their presence is itself a potential challenge to the institutions and the academics within them who, prior to their admittance, could largely rely on a sink or swim approach to their students' progress. Many of the newer student cohorts are not as accepting or as understanding of the ways in which universities operate and thus sometimes question the status quo, which, even if welcomed warmly, is an unsettling event for the academy. Potentially therefore, and in the context of new and increased government and institutional demands, academics are now encouraged to reflect on their operations and their teaching in order to reassess their methods so as to increase the students' chances of success. However, in their attempts to maintain their privilege, comfort and security and to render the new cohorts powerless, such reflection is couched within a quality improvement discourse (Williams, 1997). That is, *an increase in student numbers is argued to lead inevitably to a decrease in student quality* (yet another discursive polarisation). Far from being celebrated for their presence, these new student cohorts are blamed for a perceived lowering of standards. The diverse student population is therefore considered a threat not only to individual academics and institutions but to those governments who wish to maintain an élite university system and retain what Williams (1997) refers to as agenda control.

The 'Community' of First-Generation Students

Damarin's (2000) fourth characteristic of marked categories is that they are a community in their own right. The word community is problematic here as it suggests an intentional grouping of the members therein and while students often see similarities between themselves and other students (such as speaking a language other than English), the extent to which they form a community is debatable. However, in the sense that they are constructed as a category in the literature through use of the term first-generation, this is certainly the case. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that being "doubly marked or multiply marked places individuals at the margins of each marked community of

membership" (page 5). For example, if one is an ESL student and female and the first in the family to enrol at a university, one might be referred to as a 'female, ESL first-generation student' and as such is situated at the margins of the general community known as students by virtue of being given problematised status three times over. Imagine a student being physically disabled and/or Aboriginal in addition to the three markers already mentioned and the marginalised status of such an individual is starkly and unnervingly distanced from the unmarked 'normal' student.

Marking the Unmarked

The fifth of Damarin's (2000) summary of marked characteristics is that: "the study of a marked category...eventually produces the complementary class of individuals (men, whites) and the application of constructs first developed in the study of the marked category to the unmarked (Men have gender too! Whites have race too!)". This is a newly emerging phenomenon in the context of marked students which, over the last few years within my own institutional context, has increased. To give a specific example, students whose first language is not English and who fit various criteria, can apply to have a dictionary in the examination hall and can have half an hour longer in the exam than students whose first language is English. This is based on the argument that it takes these students longer to read and understand English than other students. I used to hear little or no comment about this. However, more recently I have heard some students and academics complain about this 'advantage', with some students claiming use of a dictionary and extra time as inequitable and a 'privilege'.

Shifting the Marking

Damarin's (2000) final characteristic of marked categories is: "In general (though not always) the unmarked category is larger than the marked category. Even when this is not the case, such as with women and with people of color…the marked category is not recognised as the major or majority category, but as a 'special interest group' or a group whose 'membership' claims are suspect" (page 4). For university students in the Australian context, this seems to depend on the institution and its enrolment philosophy. That is, some universities pay lip-service to the admission of students from what are

referred to as low socio-economic backgrounds, whereas others admit more socially, economically and ethnically diverse students than others (the university in the current study is one such example). Certainly, at-risk students or first-generation students have 'suspect' membership by virtue of not being traditional students.

Dominant Narratives

Narrative theory suggests that some narratives are given predominance while others are silenced, either consciously or otherwise. The silencing of other narratives within a student experience context is raised by Williams (1997) who, in describing the typology of the access movement in the UK, states that, even when placed within a positive discursive position, students can be constructed as different and problematic. In the UK, access courses provide alternative routes to higher education other than three high grade A levels, (in the Victorian, Australian context, a good pass at VCE). However, even in this positive framework, mature age students are constructed as problematic because they are not young! Furthermore, initial categorisation can result in the maintenance of a single category to encompass a variety of experiences. For example, the mature age students referred to by Williams (1997) remain as 'mature age' with no further categorisation that might take into account, for example, the students' race, class, gender or sexuality. That mature-age narratives are silenced means that presumably other narratives can be silenced too. As Artiles *et al*, (as cited in Artiles, 1998) have argued when referring to minority students in the US,

> researchers have not paid attention to investigators' subjective worlds, have ignored issues related to their own racial/ethnic backgrounds, have ignored cultural and language barriers, have disregarded within-ethnic-group variability, and have seen people as possessing monolithic identities. (page 34)

Somers and Gibson state that the sorts of narratives that will predominate:

> will depend in large part on the distribution of power…It is essential, in other words, that we explicate, rather than assume or take for granted, the narratives of groups and persons. (1994: 73)

To argue that we should seek, be aware of, listen to and act upon knowledge derived from other student narratives, does not mean that many students are not struggling in universities but rather that there should be a shift in thinking to reconceptualise the issue. For example, McInnis and James argue that "assumptions and expectations about the nature of the undergraduate university experience need to be addressed" (McInnis and James, 1995: 4). Specifically, they request an examination of "the effectiveness of the learning experience and the broader factors that contribute to student satisfaction or to learning outcomes" (McInnis and James, 1995: 6). McInnis and James' work is arguably a landmark study for Australia in terms of its attempt to explore a broad range of institutions, staff and students and merits further discussion. Of these authors' six main aims, two are especially pertinent to the current discussion, the first being:

> to provide a rich description and analysis of the student experience and the social context of learning in the first-year…to describe and analyse the nature and extent of responses of universities to the impact of diversity on the first-year experience. (1995: 9)

They identify the diversity of the student population both as a challenge and a problem, both for students and those who teach them. Indeed they directly point to the mismatch of expectations and performance for both academics and students, finding that first-year students are dissatisfied and uninterested in their first-year subjects. Their research focuses "around the concept of the first-year as a process of socialisation into the role of a university student" and they are quick to point out that the student is active rather than passive in the process of his or her first-year experience (McInnis and James, 1995: 9). Indeed, the report is refreshing in its attempts to avoid traditional ways of viewing students and in acknowledging changes and shifts in student life and referring to these as changes rather than problems per se. However, their perhaps unconscious bias to an albeit implied but clear categorisation and hierarchy of students is highlighted in their creation and application of the use of three student 'types' which they define as making up "the full range of students" (page 10). These are "successful students with a strong sense of institutional belongingness', those who experience alienation in their first-year, and the group somewhere in between" (page 10). These rather vague typologies demonstrate the

authors' own assumptions about that which makes a successful student, shown particularly by their use of the term 'institutional belongingness' and its social integration feel. Nevertheless, an attempt to shift the debate and the blame away from students to teaching and the institution is clear.

Similar shifts have been occurring in the Canadian and US contexts. For example, Gilbert *et al* writing in the Canadian context state:

> The emphasis is gradually shifting from a "sink or swim" mentality, which blames the student for failing to survive in an unfamiliar setting to providing students with the tools and support that are necessary in both college/university and life. (1997: 13)

However, although well-intentioned, this is another conservative response with the role of the institution being to provide the necessary 'tools' in the same way that a charitable institution may provide food or money to deserving causes and, once more, students are rarely aware that they are considered deserving of such charity. It is worth taking seriously McGrath's call for a different way of looking at non-traditional students:

> Students don't simply act out 'deficiencies' or 'demographic characteristics'. Instead, they, like all social actors, act in to a situation which is already structured and meaningfully configured by others. A cultural analysis may be helpful in disclosing the unacknowledged background conditions of teaching and learning so that we may interpret student difficulties not as simple failures or lacks, but as meaningful responses to social situations (McGrath, 1996: 106).

Rather than relying mainly on demographic characteristics to inform our understandings of first-generation students, Chapter Two demonstrates how researching the lived experiences of students and their parents is one way to shift current thinking and our understanding of a diverse and mass student population.

CHAPTER TWO

Contextual and Methodological Issues of the Study

> The stories we bring as researchers are also set within the institutions within which we work, the social narratives of which we are a part, the landscape on which we live. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 64)

Richard James (2001) and Leslie and Beckham (1996) have each criticised higher education research with James referring to it as "benign" and Leslie and Beckham describing it as "conventional" (page 124). James (2001) also points out that Australian higher education research in particular is largely

> practically oriented and motivated primarily by the goal of improving the services and support that universities offer to incoming students. Higher education studies are therefore evaluative in character and locally focussed. (Introduction)

Moreover, McInnis (2001) states that Australia has "no major tradition of curiousity-driven research or substantial reflective work on higher education." (page 111) So predictable does James (2001) consider Australian higher education research that he argues that a point has been reached whereby "new and provocative analyses of the nature of the student experience, both socially and academically, would be highly valuable" (Introduction). Similar criticisms have been made about North American higher education research, with Keller (1998), Watkins (1999) and Gardner (2000) pointing to its emphasis on quantitative studies with only a few qualitative studies to provide different sorts of insights into students' experiences.

While qualitative methods are an accepted part of teacher education in which earlier experiences as students are used to inform current teaching practice (see for example Alvine, 2001) this is not the case with other higher education research. Thus Keller considers the emphasis on quantitative studies to be problematic because it encourages a conservative approach to understanding students. This conservatism has led Conrad

(cited in Keller, 1998) to claim that a focus on quantitative methods is a political response to maintaining, justifying and explaining the status quo in higher education. Keller argues that quantitative methodologies' inherent conservatism causes

> errors in judgement, and generat(es) utopian proposals because it assumes that persons are independent, unsocialized actors and not shaped conditioned creatures as well. Researchers regard choice as free and rational when it is often fenced in and propelled. (1998:268)

As well as a criticism of higher education research being its focus on individuals' psyches at a single point in time rather than examining issues across time, Keller's other concern is that many variables in higher education cannot easily be expressed within a quantitative framework and hence "the current preoccupation with quantification condemns higher education research to fringe findings and severely limits powers of analysis" (1998: 268). Indeed, so pervasive are quantitative methods that Conrad has argued that higher education research has become

> lifeless and pedestrian, inward-looking, and parochial, the product of assembly-line research that has generated few new findings or challenging ideas (cited in Keller 1998: 270)

I found these criticisms of higher education research persuasive and was reluctant to contribute yet another statistical study to the many already in existence. I felt a general need for more qualitative Australian studies, but a particular impetus to document and give voice to parental as well as students' experiences. In the following pages, I offer a narrative account of this impetus and the development of a methodology for this study.

As indicated at the beginning of this thesis, one experience which heavily influenced and formed the initial motivation for this study was the contrast between my own undergraduate experience in the UK of living away from home and the tendency for Australian undergraduates to live at home with their parents. Even though the college I attended was only fifty miles away, as an undergraduate in the UK, I lived away from my parents. I lived in lodgings in the first year and halls of residence for the remaining years and returned home to see my parents in the summer, Easter and Christmas holidays.

Many of my peers visited home more frequently, some returning each weekend, and others chose to return home only on rare occasions. This contrasted starkly with my observations of students' living arrangements in Australia when, at the end of each working day as a university lecturer, I would often find myself seated on the train home next to a student I had taught earlier in the day or week. I found it strange that the students were returning home to their families each night in a way I had never done and I wondered what it would have been like for me to have done the same.

It was this contrast in living arrangements that motivated me to look more closely at the experiences of students who return home each night and live with their parents in a way that I had not. Having lived in Australia for only four years at the start of this study and finding Australian cultures different from my own, I was also curious to know where the students lived and what their homes were like. At a more specific level I was interested in the daily rhythms of first-year undergraduate lives, which I assumed, because they lived with their parents, would be different from what mine had been as a student. In thinking of the freedoms that I had experienced living away from my parents and the independence I felt this had given me, I was also curious to know about studenthood under the parental gaze. Remembering my own parents' mixture of feelings when I left home and their physical and emotional distance from my everyday undergraduate experiences, I was also keen to know what it was like for parents to be closer to the day to day goings on of an undergraduate son or daughter.

The In-Depth, Conjoint Interviews

In summary, this study examined the lived experiences of eight families (defined as mother, father and student) in the student's first year of university. The inclusion of parents in the study was a conscious decision based upon the absence of parental voices in the literature.

At the study's outset I had anticipated conducting individual interviews with each family member. However, each family expressed a preference to be interviewed together rather than separately. In hindsight this was perhaps not surprising for, as Daly (1992) states, "parenthood is usually contingent on a *shared* construction of reality" (page 107). In

addition, as the study progressed, the lack of parental voices heard alongside student voices in the higher education literature increased my interest in hearing shared family accounts of one member of the family being at university.

Interviewing couples together does, however, have certain disadvantages. Goffman (as cited in Daly, 1992) points out that such an interview creates the "potential for conflictual and embarrassing issues not to emerge" (page 107) and protection of their "backstage behaviour" (page 107). He also argues that "conjoint interviews may result in some unanticipated disclosures by one spouse that violate the privacy or consent of the other spouse" (Daly, 1992: 108).

Nevertheless, conducting conjoint family interviews offered five key advantages that individual interviews did not. The first advantage relates to what Sandelowski *et al* (1992:306) refer to as "a climate of openness and trust essential to a family study" and the second refers to the encouragement of spouses to "clarify, confirm, amend or refute each others' descriptions of events" (1992: 306). Third, Bennet and McAvity (1985) point out that an advantage of interviewing couples together is that the approach generates "expanded information" which in turn can lead to "validation of agreement between husband and wife or result in the clarification of differences" (page 82). They also argue that the interviewer "is under considerably less pressure to 'pull out' pertinent information than he (sic) is in individual session". Finally they argue that "the presence of the other spouse can stimulate greater involvement subtly or by demand." (page 84). As I was also interested in how much or how little parents were involved in their son's or daughter's life and vice versa, the conjoint interview, defined for this study's purposes as student, mother and father, had the additional benefit of revealing the family members' relationships and attitudes towards each other.

Timing of Interviews

Kerry Daly states that "being conscious of the past, present, and future is part of lived experience and is fundamental to our experience of change and growth" (1996: 47).

Clandinin and Connelly also argue that 'temporality' is a key term for their narrative studies:

> What we may be able to say now about a person or school or some other is given meaning in terms of the larger context, and this meaning will change as time passes. Our social science knowledge is, like the things we study, something "in passing". (2000: 19)

This temporality was something I wanted to explore and therefore I considered it crucial to the success of the study that the families were not only interviewed once but were tracked through their first-year at different stages. Each family was therefore interviewed three times through their son or daughter's first-year at university in July, October and December. Although this meant that the experiences of the first few weeks of university could not be ascertained until the end of the semester, this was considered a reasonable limitation to the study as, prior to the HECS cut-off date, students have the option to leave without losing financially, thus potential participants might have been lost. By the time the first interview took place in July, the HECS cut-off date had passed and it was therefore anticipated that students would have decided to remain at university at least for the first-year because of the emotional and monetary investment committed. It was also considered preferable to allow the participants to experience those first few weeks with as few distractions as possible and to ask them to reflect on those weeks when they were over. By this time I considered that students would have completed first semester and could reflect on their experiences, while at the same time the university was still relatively new to them. The second interview took place in October in the middle point of second semester, by which time students knew their results from first semester plus a change in timetable and lecturers meant that their experiences may have changed. The final interview took place in December. By this time the whole first year had been completed, including exams, which allowed the students and their parents to reflect on the year as a whole.

Unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted with each family in their own homes, three times across the student's first-year at university. Each interview was conducted

with the mother and father and student present. On some occasions, siblings were also present leading to interactive "busyness" (Gilgun, 1992: 239) in the interviews. That is, there were interactions between the student and mother, student and father, the mother and father, the interviewer and father, interviewer and mother and interviewer and student. The interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours and were conducted in the participants' homes in either their kitchens or lounge rooms. Prior to each interview, participants completed a consent form and were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. All the interviews were tape-recorded and the tapes were transcribed verbatim.

Initial Assumptions

The following set of assumptions underpinned the study at its outset:

- that much of the first-year university experience literature is not necessarily applicable to Australia or to specific Australian institutions
- that first-year students find the transition from high school to university difficult
- that many parents are trying very hard to make sense of what their sons and daughters are trying to achieve by attending university and that they care very much about what happens to their sons and daughters
- that parents want to know as much as possible about what university is and what it claims to stand for
- that conflicts occur between parents and students in terms of their expectations of each other

Acknowledging and Referring to 'the Personal': Narratives of the Self

Although my focus is not specifically feminist in this study, feminist methodology literature also gave me 'permission' to acknowledge my own feelings and responses towards my research topic and the people I researched. As such, my "conscious partiality" (DeVault, 1990) and revealing rather than hiding "the personal" (Stanley and Wise, 1983:194) became integral components of the methodology for this study and helped to make sense of the myriad of complex emotions and responses I experienced

throughout the process of researching and writing up this thesis, including my responses to the individual participants in this study. As such, the thesis intertwines personal experiences with the research data because, as Stanley and Wise argue, I have not found it possible to separate experience from theory and research:

> (I)t is inevitable that the researcher's own experiences and consciousness will be involved in the research process as much as they are in life…the researcher's self (including her values, likes and dislikes) is inevitably involved in the research process…It should not simply be taken-for-granted as its backcloth, because it isn't any 'backcloth' but instead the absolutely and totally central feature of any research process…The kind of person that we are, and how we experience the research, all have a crucial impact on what we see, what we do, and how we interpret and construct what is going on. (1993:58-60)

Various authors (Berg and Smith, 1988; Atkinson in Burgess, 1984a; McCormack Steinmetz, in Ely *et al*, 1991) argue that including and making use of personal feelings and attitudes helps the researcher to monitor the research process "so that we know about the trade-offs being made as we apply the methods we have chosen" (Berg and Smith, 1988:9) and to "conjure up and confront...personal and methodological failings (Atkinson, in Burgess, 1984b: 182). As such, including the personal is an "an inherent imperative and a strength of the methodology" (McCormack Steinmetz, 1991 in Ely *et al*, 1991). Connelly and Clandinin, writing within the context of narrative inquiry, take the issue of including the personal still further, arguing that it strengthens the validity of the research:

> Discovering a researcher's presence in a research text has traditionally been sufficient justification to dismiss the text as inappropriately subjective. But the reverse applies in narrative inquiry: a text written as if the author had no autobiographical presence would constitute a deception about the epistemological status of the research. Such a study lacks validity. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:138)

The thesis draws upon the descriptions of narrative inquiry given in Connelly and Clandinin (2001) specifically that narrative inquiry is "both phenomena under study and method of study" (page 4) and "stories lived and told" (page 20). Described as "a

collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Connelly and Clandinin, 2001: 20), narrative inquiry allows for a focus on stories and how they shift or otherwise overtime. These are both elements of higher education research which I felt needed development and which are the focus of this study (see page 90 below). Narrative inquiry also proved particularly useful in helping to reveal the experiences of students and parents living together and in revealing how these experiences of living at home change or do not, over time.

In contributing an anthropological perspective and critique to methodological processes in research, Tierney (1992) calls for the researcher to "come to terms not only with their preconceived notions of reality and the phenomena under study but also with those of the individuals who partake in the ritual" (page 611). In so doing, he argues that a major weakness with Tinto's research (see Chapter One) about students is that he considers the "assumptions and beliefs of both the researcher and the researched are irrelevant" (page 611). Therefore, in addition to exploring the complexities and power relationships within and around student and parental experiences, it seems consistent also to reveal insights into the research process itself, a key factor being to reveal my relationship with the participants and any power issues arising from this relationship. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates the importance and significance of 'the personal', including the researcher's family and educational history in developing this study's epistemological framework and methodology. At the same time it will explore how including the personal is a difficult methodological path to walk:

> The dilemma of how lively our signature should be: too vivid a signature runs
> the risk of obscuring the field and its participants; too subtle a signature runs
> the risk of the deception that the research text speaks from the point of view
> of the participant. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:148)

My position as a first-generation student who became an academic has placed me in a position to critique the literature's assumptions about first-generation students and their parents and to document and account for their stories in the hope that they will be acted upon in terms of education policies and practices. I am also aware of my "conscious

partiality" to the participants (DeVault, 1990). In this sense therefore, this thesis is written from the perspective of what Patricia Hill Collins describes as an outsider within. Such a perspective conserves

> the creative tension of outsider within status by encouraging and institutionalizing outsider within ways of seeing…where intellectuals learn to trust their own personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge…At its best, outsider within status seems to offer its occupants a powerful balance between the strengths of their sociological training and the offerings of their personal and cultural experiences. Neither is subordinated to the other. Rather, experienced reality is used as a valid source of knowledge for critiquing sociological facts and theories, while sociological thought offers new ways of seeing that experienced reality. (Hill Collins, 1991:53)

Selection of the Participants

University procedures meant that letters of invitation were sent under the auspices of Student Administration to all first-year students who had left high school in 1995 and 1996 and were enrolled in a degree at the university in 1996 and 1997. The letters were addressed to the students *and* the parents, and the letter explained the research in general terms. A reply slip for those who were interested in participating was included. Interested families were then telephoned to confirm their interest in participating in the study. Most families were happy to complete a questionnaire but declined to participate on discovering they would need to be interviewed. Overall, eight families agreed to participate in the study. Three families participated in the study in 1996 and five families in 1997.

The table shows that all faculties of the university and both sexes were represented in the study overall. Two of the eight families were from a language background other than English (Italian and Maltese).

	Campus A	Campus B	Campus C	Campus D	Campus E
Faculty 1	1 female	1 male			

Faculty 2	1 female				
Faculty 3	1 female		1 female		
Faculty 4				1 male 1 female	1 female

Student Participants as First-Generation Students

One mother in the study had attended teacher-training college and trained to be a primary school teacher and two fathers had studied for diplomas part-time at night school, they did not consider themselves to be educated to the same level as their offspring. One student had a sister who had attended university a couple of years previously. However, she had left after two years. The participants' own reluctance to consider themselves equally or closely as educated as their student offspring led to a decision to define each student as a 'first-generation' student. (For discussion of my unease regarding such labelling see Chapter One).

Anonymity of Participants

Participants' names have been changed for inclusion in this thesis in order to protect their identities. With a small number of exceptions, the students' parents have been referred to as mother and father. Occasionally first names of parents are used and these are pseudonyms. The students' pseudonyms are John, Steve, Christine, Karen, Louise, Francesca and Sarah. Where quotations from the parents are used, the mother or father is identified by their relationship to the student and the specific interview from which the quotation is taken is also identified. For example, John's father, Interview 1. When quoting comments made by myself in the interviews, this is indicated through the use of my initials GB.

Journal Use

Minichiello *et al* (1991) comment on the importance of documenting research settings, people's visual appearance and attitudes and the researcher's own behaviour and thoughts in the research process in a journal. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that "journals are a powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience" (page 102). They

also point out that the type of field note entries in a journal are affected by the type of relationship the researcher has with the participants.

Throughout the research process I kept a journal which documented issues such as my responses to and relationships with the families and described where they lived and the look and feel of their homes. I also used the journal to document or expand on situations not captured on the interview tapes and to document specific concerns, thoughts or ideas about the research process. While some journal notes have been referred to in Chapter Three, below is an example of how one conversation documented in the journal led me to think more carefully about campus location:

> Three students were talking with me today about how students in the western suburbs look different from other students they knew, "more grunge" they said, "more Australiana". They found it difficult to explain what they meant other than people looked different. So not only are students dealing with university in terms of its internal workings they are also dealing with its location in a different place, a different culture from what they are used to. One student commented on how there aren't as many Italians and Greeks in comparison to where she lives (a northern suburb) and another commented on how worried she was about travelling from the country (she lives in an outer northern suburb). These comments raise all sorts of issues about 'the local' and students' negotiations of it. (13/5/98)

Participants' Places of Residence

As my personal narrative history later in this chapter demonstrates, the geographical location in which experiences occur can be important in understanding a person's response to issues and events. The participants in this study were no exception. The stories in Chapter Three have a very specific location which imbues them with numerous spoken and unspoken implications. A well-known local geographical marker for the participants in this study and for myself is the West Gate Bridge which spans the Yarra River. As far as possible without revealing participants' identities, Chapter Three indicates in a general sense where the families lived in relation to this bridge and therefore the city of Melbourne. The specific suburbs or towns in which each family lived have been omitted to protect the participants' identities. However, given the significance of regionality in Melbourne (see below) a general indication of whether or not the

families lived to the east or west of the city of Melbourne has been indicated. For further discussion of the significance of the local see below.

Locating the 'Local': The West Gate Bridge

The attitudes I have noticed since my migration here in 1991 towards the eastern, western and northern suburbs and the participants' comments about them mean that an acknowledgement of where campuses are located and the makeup of the local populations around them are important in understanding students' and parents' responses to the individual campuses and the university as a whole. Chapter Three reveals some of the preoccupations of the participants in this regard.

The polarisations of opinion and contrasts concerning Melbourne's regions are perhaps symbolised most strongly by the West Gate Bridge. Prior to the opening of the West Gate Bridge in Melbourne in 1978, the western suburbs were geographically isolated from the rest of Melbourne due to the separation of the city by the Yarra River (Hitchings, 1979). The West Gate Bridge was meant to connect a previously separated city and this it did, at least physically. Psychologically, socially and economically however, for many the bridge still stands as a symbol of division.

Before the bridge, the west was not well known or visited by people from 'the other side of town'. That Melbourne is split into two parts by the Yarra river, referred to as the eastern and western suburbs, is important when discussing higher education in Melbourne, for inequities continue to exist between the populations.

An insight into how the west was perceived at the time its construction was being planned and built can be gleaned from Mr Len Frazer, an engineer and planner at the time. Coining the future bridge as a "West Side Success Story" he said of the western suburbs themselves:

> Give us a front door through which we can bring new life to the western sector of Melbourne. Although there are at present stigmas to living in the west, we must overcome them (Hitchings, 1979: 25).

Bill Hitchings, in his historical commentary on the building of the West Gate Bridge and its impacts on Melbourne, painted a similar but more defensive and protective picture of the west:

> The industrialists' move to provide a more direct and quicker route, however, merely brought to a head the growing antagonism the people of the west had felt for the planners and politicians in the city. Across the river, just 200 yards away, they could see the magnificent park-lands, the plush office blocks and the highway stretching out from the city so that city folk could get home to their well-planned suburbs while the inner suburban western suburbs like Footscray, almost by intent, had been allowed to become a virtual slum, and Williamstown, the city's original port, although it still had its yacht basins and colourful shoreline, was in the shadow of smoke belching factories. The "easterners" could see it, and it was a quaint place to visit (if you had a few spare hours) but who on earth would want to live there? (Hitchings, 1979: 8)

The revulsion felt by those in the eastern suburbs towards the western suburbs is still felt today although arguably less so. For example, over twenty years later, Richard Teese's (2000) important discussion of the impact of the secondary school curriculum on achievement and failure between sectors and regions of Melbourne evokes a similar and strikingly sad and moribund picture of the west of Melbourne:

> At the core of the school system are secure sites, scarcely touched by failure. On the periphery are exposed sites whose inhabitants defend themselves against the demands of the curriculum only with difficulty, and often with heavy losses. In the outer reaches of Melbourne, on the great basalt plains to the west, extending from the old quarter of noxious riverside industry to the empty shells of 1940's and 1950's factories and the silent railway yards, from the Ascot Vale and Kensington that were English working-class to the outer suburbs populated by Italians, Greeks, Croatians, Turks, Lebanese, Vietnamese, displaced and displacing, mortality at school rises to extremes and ravages this vast treeless expanse like the scorching sun of the southern summer. (page 208)

If it is not exactly revulsion that people feel, then many people speak of how they "do not know the west", itself a way of expressing the west as an unknown, unexplored area and one that, given a choice in the matter, will remain so. My own feeling of being happy in a

place from which others thought I should be trying to leave, highlights something of the complexity in interpreting people's lives and attitudes towards where they live.

I experienced the extent of the divide between east and west in my first few weeks of being in Australia in 1991. When I told colleagues I was looking for a house to rent, I was advised by all those who lived elsewhere, not to live 'in the west', a suggestion I found hard to understand at the time. Considering the university where I worked was in the west I was confused about why people would not want to live nearby and I was slow to realise the innate snobbery in the advice. Being without what Clandinin and Connelly refer to as a "pre-narrative" (2000: 64) of Melbourne's urban planning, I failed to recognise the strength of feeling about the west, instead interpreting my impressions of the area through my northern English, post- industrial revolution perspective. I was used to industry and people living and working close to it and I was used to seeing people queue for their unemployment benefit. I was also used to a multicultural population. All these elements made up at least part of the picture of the western suburbs in front of me. However, in the same way that I felt comfortable in the west's industrial heartland, I felt unsettled when I visited the eastern suburbs. I was confronted by great expanses of housing and seemingly nothing else. I had never seen anything quite like it and they taught me the true meaning of the term 'suburb', which until then had simply been a synonym for the word 'town'. In these suburbs, where others saw neatness and safety, I saw sterility and mono-culture. In short, the sort of place to live that my advisers tried to steer me towards were the very things that made me feel insecure and alien.

Background to Question Selection

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that letters are field texts. "In letters we try to give an account of ourselves, make meaning of our experiences, and attempt to establish and maintain relationships among ourselves, our experience, and the experience of others" (page 106). A letter from my father which documented my parents' feelings on me going to college was used early in the research process to sensitize myself to parental feelings about separation. (See below for more details about this letter).

On applying to go to college and study for a degree, I was aware that neither my parents, or I, knew what doing a degree or going to college involved. In developing the methodology for this study, I anticipated that this might be the case for the parents I would interview. As a researcher I looked for literature as grounding for my own research but was surprised to find literature which focussed primarily on educating parents (see for example Hinni and Eison, 1990) rather than listening to what they had to say. In order to inform myself of parental experiences which in turn would inform the sorts of questions and concepts I developed throughout this study, I therefore used my own parents' experiences as initial sensitisers to potential issues. In March 1995 I wrote to my parents in England asking them to tell me of their feelings about me going to college in 1983. Highlighting once more the importance of the personal in this study, their reply proved highly significant in developing my research approach.

I had always known that my parents and grandparents valued education very highly but I had never known that their support of my studies was so radically different from the dominant ethos of the people around them. For example, in the letter, they told me of the phrase they had been brought up with, "Never educate a child because you will only lose them". This shocked me. I had known that I was different from all but one of my school friends in going on to further my education but I had not realised what a radical departure from the norm it was for my parents to encourage me to do so. Having little knowledge of higher education, my father had asked the men he worked with, many of whom were tertiary educated, about what doing a degree involved. In the letter he wrote that he,

> was helped by working with people of the same academic background, and coming from all parts of the world, helped me to get an insight into what you were about to meet.

Whereas Rodriguez (1982) recognised that the more educated he became the more he "must move between environments, his home and the classroom, which are at cultural extremes, opposed" (1982: 46), it was my parents rather than me who preempted potential problems related to class that I might face in going to college. For example, my father wrote:

> The first change you would have to face was to be moving to what is loosely called 'Middle Class Values' from 'Working-class Values' and meeting people with backgrounds so different, we worried if you would find it 'off-putting.'

Oblivious to the soul-searching occurring around me, and unlike Rodriguez and my parents, these issues had been of no concern to me when I was a student. Instead I had been more concerned with whether or not I would enjoy the course and make friends.

My father also wrote of his concern that going to college might transform his daughter to the point where he might not recognise or understand her. He wrote:

> I think the first thing that one thinks about is will the 'child' change into an Adult with which you will have nothing in common, due to living in an environment which is foreign to most parents, and a very strange world in which to enter.

My father's apostrophising of the word 'child' and capitalisation of Adult, highlighted his acute awareness of my legal adult status and his fear that we might no longer have anything in common. In a manner which echoes those authors such as Chaskes (196) and London (1992), his use of the word 'foreign' to describe a college environment further emphasised how different they felt the college world I was about to enter would be. Back in 1983 when I choose a degree course, my choice was based on what I was 'good at', English Literature, but later I became uneasy at my choice, feeling that I might become bored. One teacher suggested a new course at a college of higher education as opposed to a university, a course he felt would suit me very well, a degree in Drama and Writing, an unusual course offering in the early 1980s. I agreed that I would probably enjoy this course far more, exploring subjects that had always interested me and in which I had always been involved. Here was a chance to obtain an honours degree doing what I loved. I went on to enjoy three years as an undergraduate and one year at another institution studying for a post graduate certificate in education in Drama in Education. However, choosing an institution and a course that was not considered mainstream I encountered anxieties about my choices. Specifically, I was not going to attend a university and therefore was I being sensible in attending an institution that would be considered 'less than'? The anxieties articulated by those around me were not dissimilar

to the ones heard today in Australia's mass system of higher education, where hierarchies have been created to distinguish the 'sandstones' from the 'new' or 'greystone' universities and in turn to distinguish between students (see Chapter One).

From a financial viewpoint, I was very fortunate to attend college in the days in the UK when students received mandatory, means-tested, student-grants provided by councils, with even unemployment benefit being provided during the holidays. However, parents were still expected to top-up the grant to the full cost of an undergraduate education. Many parents I knew either could not or would not top-up the grant in this way. My parents did so, on the proviso that I asked for no extra money. It was not until a few years later that I realised the extent of the financial sacrifices my parents made in those years to ensure I received the full grant. One can therefore imagine the concern my father felt in being told by someone he worked with that college "is not all about study." In the letter my father wrote:

> This freedom has a price, and that is, are you going to use it wisely or have a
> good time at someone's expense?

Both the literature and my parents' reflections on the process of having a daughter go to college led me to want to know more about the lived experiences of parents of first-generation students. I was particularly interested in how, if it was the first time a member of their family had attended university, how could they be expected to know or understand the unwritten and unspoken rules of that institution? Importantly, how did they deal with this situation?

Key Questions at the Study's Outset

The questions and assumptions described so far led to the design of this study which examined the conjoint experiences of eight families in the students' first-year of university. Key questions were:

- Was entering higher education seen as a shift from one class to another?

- Did parents feel separated from their son or daughter in any way because of their entry into higher education?

- Was the age of the son or daughter a significant factor in the first-year?

- Were parents concerned about how their son or daughter spent their time?

- Did parents feel that money invested in their son or daughter's education was significant and in what way?

- What were parents' and students' perceptions of universities and degrees and the people who study and work in them?

Questioning Techniques

The interviews were unstructured and a variety of question types were used during the interviews including what Minichiello *et al* (1991) refer to as descriptive questions, contrast questions, opinion/value questions, feeling questions, background demographic questions, knowledge, hypothetical, clearing house and closing questions. Probing questions usually followed these questions. I also asked what I have referred to as reflective questions. Examples of the types of questions asked and the reasons for asking them are given below.

As a way of settling the participants, particularly at the beginning of the first interviews, and explaining or reminding them of the topic I was interviewing them about, the Funnelling question technique was used to frame the beginning of each interview. For example:

> Basically what I'd like to know from each of you, from different perspectives is what has it been like since Sarah started university, for you Sarah, for you as parents, what impact has it had?

Simple Descriptive questions were also asked, particularly in the first interviews as a way of settling the participants and gaining basic information. Examples included, "How do you travel to university?" and "What subjects are you doing?" Background demographic questions were asked to find out about school level attained, language background, country of birth and so on. For example, "So is your daughter the first in your family to

go to university? What was the highest level of education you attained?" and "What are your own educational backgrounds and experiences?"

Comparison questions were useful at the beginning of the second interviews for finding out if things had changed much over a number of weeks such as "So how was second semester in comparison to first?" and "have things been different or the same at home since she started university?" Taylor and Bogdan (1998) assert that knowing when and how to probe further is an crucial part of in-depth interviewing and probing questions were certainly a recurring feature of the interviews with the eight families such as "Why do you feel so strongly about that?" and "how long was ages?" When it seemed that still further elaboration would be beneficial, Nudging probe questions were asked such as "Tell me in what way it's more fun?", "How do you define 'tough subject?" "So what would make you feel it was like uni?" and "How do you know that?" "How does it manifest itself?" "Tell me about it" and "In what way?"

Opinion/value questions were asked such as "What do you think of the fact that the lecturer didn't want to talk to you?" and 'What do you think of alcohol being available to students?" and "What role do you see your family playing now you're at university?" Feeling questions were asked to elicit how students and parents felt about particular events or experiences such as "How did you feel when you saw you were the only parent there?" "How do you feel about your daughter being able to defer if she wants to?" "How did you feel when you find out your daughter's results?" and "So now you see your eldest daughter at university how does it make you feel?" and "How do mum and dad feel about this?"

Knowledge questions were asked to find out what students and parents thought were reasons behind certain things. For example, I asked "Why do you think there are such long holidays?" and "Why do you think the course is structured that way?" As a way of encouraging the families to think about using their knowledge of the first-year to pass on to others, I asked Reflective questions such as, "Based on your experiences this year what advice would you give to a parent whose son or daughter is about to go to university?"

and "What advice would you give to a student in year 12 who is thinking about going to university?" I also asked Hypothetical questions to elicit their responses based on their year of experiences such as "Imagine I'm the parent of a year 12 student. What advice would you give me about parenting a university student?"

Clearing house questions were asked when it seemed that the interview was coming to a natural close but when I needed to be sure the participants had nothing else to say. For example, "Well I think that's it unless there's anything else you're burning to tell this machine?" and "OK if you have nothing else to say I'll turn off this machine" Closing statements were made to indicate the end of the interview such as "I think that might be it for this time round", "I think that's it, I think we've finished".

Approaches to the Interviews

According to Spradley, in the first stages of an interview

> Apprehension usually gives way quickly to *exploration*. In this stage of the rapport process, both ethnographer and informant begin trying out the new relationship. Together they seek to discover what the other person is like, what the other person really wants from the relationship. (1979: 80)

My main objective in the first interview with each family was to establish an atmosphere of informality and relaxation or 'establishing rapport'. I did this by referring to how cosy the fire was or how good their directions were or by saying that it was "nice to put a face to the name at last". Sometimes (always a mother) someone would say that they felt that they had nothing to tell me or that they were very nervous. I would respond to this by stating that I was sure they had more to tell me than they realised, that what they think is unimportant, I would find interesting. I would also tell them that I was nervous too. For families who lived a long way from my own home I entered the home saying how pleased I was to have 'found them' and congratulated them on their directions. This in itself established a kind of quest narrative to the research process. Often tea or coffee were then offered and I would be seated while the student or parent made a drink and I would be quizzed a little by whoever remained. All the interviewees wanted to know where I lived and, emphasising once more Melbourne residents' preoccupation with

geographic location, house prices and how suburbs had changed over the years were major topics of conversation with every family when the tape recorder was not running. The way in which Christine's mother showed interest in where I lived was particularly striking. Before the start of the second interview she informed that she had looked in the telephone directory to find out where I lived. I wondered why she hadn't simply asked me where I lived as the other families had. Her follow-up comment of "I always do that" made me wonder if she was trying to place me on a social scale in relation to herself. Certainly on discovering I lived in the western suburbs she seemed to be pleased.

An openness and flexible approach to the interview procedure was integral to developing my research methodology, especially in dealing with issues of power in the research relationship. Feminist pioneer Ann Oakley says of the qualitative open interview that

> the relationship of the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical (and) when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship. (1981: 41)

Two words are especially important in this statement: 'non-hierarchical' and 'relationship'. I wanted the families to feel at ease and in control of the process and felt that this would not be possible if I tried to behave with an obvious professional detachment. It was crucial for me to build meaningful relationships with each family and with each individual in the families if they were to want to talk to me. In the end, the families became so much part of my life that I referred to them as 'my families' indicating both my affection for them and my sense of responsibility for them, particularly the students. To a greater or lesser extent I think this sense of having a relationship was evident for the families too, who fed me tea, coffee, biscuits and cake and occasionally a whole meal and who, at the end of the final interviews, sometimes were visibly upset as I walked away.

The sharing of experiences was particularly poignant with one family (John's) when, after the first interview, we shared our experiences of migration and the mother showed me photographs of her father who had died a couple of years before. When the interview

was over and we all stood together at the door saying goodbye, John's mother stretched out to hug me. She seemed to sense my discomfort with this display of emotion and instead she took my hand and shook it for a long time, covering my hand with both of hers. I knew that for the mother at least in this family we had reached a significant level of comfort in each other's company.

Oakley (1981) and Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994) point out that interviewing is a two way process in which learning occurs for all parties including the researcher. I certainly felt this with the families in this study who, after overcoming nervous beginnings, chose not to stand on ceremony for me. For example, when I arrived for the second or third interview, sometimes meals had not been finished and so I was invited to join them at the table before the interview began. I always accepted their offers. They had cleared time for me but it was clear that they expected me to be flexible with my time. Another time on arriving for a final interview, Sarah's parents informed me that their daughter would not be present as she had just been offered some paid work. This had taken precedence over being interviewed but the parents were happy to be interviewed without her. This was the only interview of the twenty four where one family member was absent throughout an entire interview.

Balancing the Roles of Researcher and University Employee

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that "researchers need to be aware of where they and their participants are placed at any particular moment - temporally, spatially, and in terms of the personal and the social" (page 95). As indicated earlier, this study is very clearly positioned as one in which the subjectivities of both researcher and researched are legitimated in the interest of providing thick descriptions of a local situation and writing in hitherto unvoiced stories. One aspect of my subjectivity was dealing with being an employee of the university at which the students in this study attended.

In Chapter One I discussed institutional responses to first-generation students which McInnis and James have summarised as "compensatory, foundational and enrichment" (1995:113). My professional role as a learning support lecturer means that I am very

much part of this 'industry' and as such am part of its perpetuation, a situation which is not without its intellectual discomfort.

Like Sue Cannon (1992) I often volunteered information about myself and the university to the families. I also wanted to know what the student and her parents knew or otherwise about the workings of the department and faculty and to expand their knowledge about who had responsibility for what, so that that they could make reasonable demands on people when necessary. At the same time, I found myself wanting to protect university staff if I felt they were being unfairly criticised. This balancing of sympathies towards different parties is demonstrated in the following conversation where I wanted to clarify who was who but was lame in my attempt, even though I knew I was correct with my information. At first I hesitated to give them the information they required thinking that it might be going beyond my role as a researcher.

> Sarah's Mother: I mean is that what Dr X is there for isn't she? She's the head of department or whatever?
> Sarah: I've got no idea actually. I think she is, I think she is.
> GB: I think she's coordinating something. I'm not too sure that she's the head of department actually.

My hesitations were also an indication of my stumbling attempts to remain closer to them as an 'outsider' to the system. I was afraid that by telling them who the person was, I might change the relationship in a negative way. But, as can be seen by my next comment, I quickly decided that this was unhelpful for all of us and in essence a power-play. I therefore decided to make a virtue out of the fact that I worked where their daughter studied and could therefore clarify things for them and that this was beneficial to all of us.

> Sarah: Well everyone seems to report to her.
> GB: Probably because she's first-year coordinator. I think that's her role. Yeah I'll check this one. I don't quite know that but I think so.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated above, I still gave the impression that I was unsure about the facts, when in reality I was not. This was a situation where I had not yet determined my role as a researcher.

As well as highlighting my uneasiness with the combined role of lecturer and researcher, it was these occasions that made me realise the extent to which parents and students do not have or do not understand the structure of the place they study, and further developed my thinking about families and their relationships with universities. As Parke and Kellam state:

> families are embedded in a complex set of relationships with other institutions and contexts outside the family. In spite of this recognition, a great deal remains to be discovered about the ways in which families are influenced by these outside agencies or how families in turn influence the functioning of children and adults in their extra-familial settings, such as school, work, day-care, or peer group contexts. Moreover, we know little about the nature of processes that account for this mutual influence between families and other societal institutions and settings. (1994: 1)

The Changing Role of the Researcher

In the context of this study and my employment, I was an outsider to the parents of the students. First I was not a parent and second we did not share the same educational experiences. However, I was an insider (Burgess, 1984b) in that the students and I were part of the same institution albeit in radically different positions and I had once been an undergraduate student. I was also an insider in that I had been a first-generation student and therefore had some insights into the issues that might face any first-generation students or their parents I interviewed. However, there were limitations to this outsider within status as my experiences of student-life had taken place in another country and another decade and I was no longer sure that I could equate my student experiences with those of the students I taught each working day. Acknowledging and reflecting on my role as a researcher and my relationships with the people I 'researched' became a preoccupation to a greater or lesser extent throughout the project.

Throughout the project, it was neither my aim nor possible for me to maintain an 'objective stance' and instead I was aware and made use of my "conscious partiality" (DeVault, 1990). As LeCompte (1993) argues, I had "binocular vision" (page 12), recording with one eye what the participants were doing and with the other eye recording other data including my own actions and feelings. Although I did not set out to "develop critical consciousness, to improve the lives of those involved in the research process, and to transform fundamental societal structures and relationships" (Maguire,1987: 3) my inability, and later my refusal, to maintain an objective stance meant that my role as researcher often combined with that of advisor. I often felt like a mediator or translator of codes for the families and considered it morally indefensible not to give help when in my professional capacity I was able to do so. As the narratives in Chapter Three reveal, I was often the only point of contact that parents had with the university. Furthermore, for some of the students, I was someone with whom they felt they could talk to in a way that as yet they felt unable to do with their lecturers.

As the study continued, a shift occurred in the way I saw myself as a researcher and the way I interviewed and responded to questions asked of me. I was moving towards a more "horizontal, reciprocal and equitable relationship" (Maguire, 1987: 89) with the families I interviewed as this excerpt indicates:

> Sarah's Mother: Not very many people from this side of town ever went to university. You just didn't go to university. Parents couldn't afford it for a start.
> GB: That's my parents' story. I was the first one to go really.
> …(and a little later)…
> Sarah's Father: you see my day was get a trade and you've got something to fall back on.
> GB: Sounds like my Grandad. He said that to my father.
> Sarah's Father: Yeah and that was the way things were at the time.

In a similar way to Daly (in Gilgun *et al*, 1992), I wanted to 'give back' to 'my' families and by the time I started the second set of interviews with a new set of families, I made a conscious decision to ensure that each family knew they could telephone me at any time for advice or help. I decided that this was the least I could do considering they had been

so helpful in giving me their time. I also felt that there was a moral imperative for me to be able to help them if I could, especially as this was the core of my paid work anyway.

Christine was finding university assignments a struggle but did not want to ask for help. A couple of weeks after the first interview her father phoned me and talked about how she had asked him to phone me because she wanted some help with her work. We set up a time to see each other. I was very aware that I was treating her differently from other students because first I saw her at a campus I do not normally work at and second I saw her on a day when I did not usually see students. As it was, we missed each other and the session did not go ahead. I wrote to each family the following week to thank them for their participation in the first interview and at the bottom of Christine's letter I wrote that I was sorry I had missed her and hoped that everything was all right. Two days later, Christine's father rang me to apologise about us not seeing each other and assuring me that she did turn up. I assured him that I was not offended and that these things happen. A couple of weeks later he phoned me again to tell me that his daughter was "ready to grovel now" for help and could I see her on the coming Friday afternoon? I agreed. Again it was on a day and at a campus I would not normally have been at on that day but I felt obliged to meet her both on a professional level as she was a struggling student and from a research perspective I thought it would make interesting data! This time we did meet and we spent a constructive time discussing her academic needs etc. Before she left I asked how her parents were and was very aware that this was not something I normally did with students because I did not usually know them, itself highlighting how removed students' parents are from the university. She shared detailed and distressing personal information about how her mother was coping with her serious illness.

Issues of advice and interaction in this kind of research were an underlying tension in the research and one that is not accommodated by current ethics committee guidelines. Further research is possible in this area. Christine's and Francesca's families took advantage of my willingness to help them. (Compare Francesca's family narrative in Chapter Three).

Story Telling

As for Coles, (referred to in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), story telling constituted the landscape of my growing up. There were tales of the Second World War told to me by my paternal grandparents as I sat on the floor by their coal fire, and the stories my father created as we walked through the fields picking blackberries. Then there were the well-known fables and religious stories I learned through attending the local non-conformist chapel. Whereas Coles' interest in narrative arose "terminologically from literature" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:13) for me, the term is also situated in a long time passion for theatre, a world full of stories. In the world of theatre, characters, plots and sub-plots, tension and surprise, on stage and off are all key terms and ones which I often substitute in the most banal situations. In educational drama, 'story' and 'experience' are key concepts, as is imagining 'what it is like to be in someone else's shoes' (see Taylor, 1990). However, I saw no room in research, as I understood it at the outset of this study, for any of these terms or these ways of thinking. This reluctance and fear to write differently, led me until late in the thesis writing process to attempt to write in what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as the formalistic tradition. Clandinin and Connelly's description below is a neat description of my own processes in writing this thesis and which they say is fairly typical of those researchers new to narrative inquiry who

> turn to exposition of theoretical frames to position and begin their enquiries…The tension of the place of theory exists not only at the beginnings of inquiry but throughout. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:40-41)

Taking on board Clandinin and Connelly's permission to write differently, this thesis has thus far interwoven personal experiences to deepen understandings of first-generation students and particularly their parents. The next part of this chapter takes this further and refers to my own narrative history and narrative present. In documenting some of my own background and history as a first-generation student the reader can more readily assess my perspectives on the topics in this thesis.

Personal Narrative History

Like Valerie Walkerdine (1990), my history thus far is remarkable for its "ordinariness" (Walkerdine, 1990: 161). Growing up I experienced no "romantic poverty" (Walkerdine, 1990: 162), no council-house estate, no alcoholic parents, no physical, emotional or sexual abuse. I was born and raised in the UK in the same town as my father, grandfather and great-grandfather. I also attended the local non-conformist Unitarian Chapel and Sunday School as they had. Our family lived in a 'good' area of town, situated only a couple of streets from where my Grandfather had been born and a similar number of streets from where my father had grown up. I lived in a 'nice' street, in a 'nice' house and I attended the local, state comprehensive school.

I had always considered myself working-class, having often heard my parents and grandparents use this phrase to describe their own backgrounds. However, arriving as a migrant in Australia in 1991 led me to consider this label again. I soon became aware that class was, and still is, a debated category in Australian society, it being generally believed by Australians that they live in a 'classless society' (McGregor, 1997). Belief in this classless society became problematic for me when I began teaching at a university which was formed primarily for a socially and economically deprived region of Melbourne and which considered access and equity issues to be central to its educational mission. I felt that to argue that Australia is classless when such differences in economic and therefore educational opportunities are so stark was nonsensical. If there was social and economic advantage then surely there was class?

In the early days of this study, I was confronted by class as a tangible and yet often denied concept in Australia, when I discussed my response to a book by Ann Henderson (1995) with a colleague. The book is primarily about Henderson's daughter's and friends' experiences of Year 12. I had been shocked at the author's description of the lives of her own and other families around her as it related to education, not only for the privileges inherent in the opportunities and choices available to them but specifically in the author's

seeming acceptance of these as the norm. In particular I expressed my shock at the following statement:

> Busy working lives keep many parents at safe distances from playing tutor. But as the parental population becomes more highly educated, a feeling of responsibility has crept in. Parent groups in primary school help with reading. Every parent helps with homework until it gets too difficult. And in Year 12 some parents even take a year off work to support their student son or daughter through the stress. As we had told Ken Done, it was going to be a family effort with Johanna. (1995: 42)

Apart from being unable to socialise with famous artists such as Ken Done (name-dropping like this occurs throughout the book and indicates the author's location in a particular class group), the parents of students I knew in my own final years at high school and those I had observed in Australia would have found it financially impossible to stop work, even if they had wanted to. The more I read, the more outraged I became at the lack of acknowledgement of privilege. So amazed was I by the description of their experiences as if they were the norm, that I shared my feelings with a colleague the following day. Exclaiming about the privileged nature of the decision to have a year off from work to help a son or daughter through year 12, I also added that I considered such parents to be unnecessarily over-anxious and, I felt, rather pathetic.

Instead of being met with agreement, whether total or partial, as I had perhaps naively expected, my colleague remained silent for a moment and then replied that her family were from that same area of Sydney and were 'nice people'. I was of course, not questioning these people's 'niceness' but rather their acceptance of privilege as if it were the norm. My colleague's refusal, or denial, to acknowledge the point of my surprise and fury increased my growing suspicion that Australia was not classless at all. I felt an instant class-divide open up between us where previously there had been none. Whether or not my colleague felt the same, I do not know.

Australia, like the UK, has a class system but Australian are said to perceive themselves differently within it. Speculating on this sort of disparity, McGregor argues:

In Britain and the United States, for instance, the biggest class group in the past has been those who call themselves working-class, not middle class. Speculating on this sort of disparity, Broom and Jones have argued that the larger proportion identifying as middle class in Australia cannot be explained simply by occupational structure: 'Presumably there are real variations in class images among these three countries, with more Australian manual workers identifying with the middle class.' Possible reasons include a high incidence of home ownership and 'relatively high social and cultural homogeneity, at least by comparison with the United States.' (1997: 140)

McGregor's experiences as an Australian visiting the UK and experiencing the British class system at first hand are useful in highlighting how class is experienced in and across two nations and how acknowledgement of the existence of class in Australia is important for understanding my own perspectives in this study. McGregor's experiences also place my personal surprise at a colleague's refusal to acknowledge such obvious economic privilege in a context other than a personal anecdote and demonstrate the power of class in determining the way a person lives their life:

I went to England for four years and found out, at first hand, what it is like to live in a society in which class formations and conflicts are much more naked than in Australia; the distance between Southwark Bridge Road cockneys and the traditional English aristocracy, and the rigour and the importance of class construction, were a shock to an easygoing Australian who had tended to dismiss class as offensive and peripheral rather than perceive it as crucial to social organisation. I began to realise that class provided the basic structure of any society and that class distinction was not the foible of a few snobs but the visible effect of the way power is organised and distributed in class terms…Leaving England for the second time to return home I wrote a farewell journalistic piece which some crass sub-editor headlined 'Why I Am Going Back To the Land Where Nobody Calls me Sir'. (Shudder, shame.) As soon as my wife, who was born and grew up in England, and I stepped off the gangplank at Fremantle one of the baggage porters called me sir. Hmmmnn. (1997: 129)

My experience has many points in common with Valerie Walkerdine's:

I didn't have an affair at fourteen, join the Communist party at sixteen, go off to paint in Paris or live in an Ashram in India…in the circles I moved in there had been only two ways to turn the fantasy into the dream-lived-as-real of bourgeois life, and they were to marry out or work my way out…the epitome

of the hard-working, conservative and respectable working-class girl. (1990: 161-162)

Class and its constraints have not only affected my personal educational opportunities but have been influential in the development of this study. My maternal grandparents owned and ran their own shop. They were, in today's Australian vernacular, 'small business' owners. However, I knew these grandparents less well because they lived further afield. It was my paternal grandparents, who lived in my home town, whom I consider to have been the most influential, especially in educational terms.

My great-grandfather had been a coal-miner but encouraged his son not to follow in his footsteps. My paternal grandparents firmly believed in the power of education as a route 'out of' the working-class. Although they struggled financially like many other families, my grandparents' working-class narrative did not include slums, council houses and near-starvation but rather private housing bought and soon owned by them and a grandmother who was in paid work even after bearing a child. Although poorly paid, my grandmother worked variously in shops and a toffee factory. My grandfather was a sergeant attached to the Indian army in the Second World War, and afterwards worked in a cotton mill. He retired early because of ill health.

In the private sphere of family life, my grandparents attempted to change their son's public class position by trying to lift him up what they considered to be a steep class ladder. This they did in ways typical of their generation and class, encouraging my father to play the piano, speak 'nicely' and aim for a white-collar job. They succeeded in their goal of a white-collar future for my father complete with a 'nice' detached house in a 'nice' part of town. He became a draughtsman working for a multi-national company and married my mother, a confectioner, who later obtained a blue-collar, quasi-managerial position running a nearby factory canteen.

Having succeeded (in her eyes) to lift her son up the class ladder, my grandmother attempted the same with me. She began by focussing on my accent. I am from a region of England, Lancashire, which has a strong, regional dialect. The usual way to speak is to

leave out or 'drop' aitches at the beginnings of words. However, a classic sign of a well-educated person was (and still is) considered to be someone who "never dropped their aitches". Shifting from one speech pattern to another, where in the first the aitches are dropped and in the second they are replaced, becomes complicated for the speaker keen to demonstrate an educated background, not least because the latter feels so unnatural. As such, when trying to impress, a Lancastrian can be commonly heard placing aitches in the 'wrong' places, "Good Hafternoon" being an oft-used comedic example. Speech acts such as these often signal a Lancastrian trying to hide their working-class background and are often used to portray class differences in British comedy, conveying not only the often bizarre and cruel aspects of British society but also the subtlety and power of class marking (for a detailed discussion of marking, see Chapter One).

My grandparents were more than aware of how cultural habitus (Bourdieu, 1993) impacted on their lives, believing and knowing that very small accent changes, referred to as 'improvements', could lead to better educational and employment opportunities. They also knew that such 'improvements' could lead to being seen and heard, as opposed to dismissed, by those in positions of power. The emphasis on accent as a major discriminator of class, and therefore of opportunity, was real, as was, and is, class itself. My grandmother also attempted to modify her own accent but never quite mastered the art in a way that made her modified accent sound comfortable.

Nevertheless, experience had taught my grandmother that the most obvious way to differentiate the educated from the uneducated was by accent. In other words, the stronger one's regional dialect, the more likely a person was considered to be uneducated and, importantly, the more likely others would *believe* a person to be uneducated. She therefore encouraged me to change my accent at every opportunity, which I dutifully did. Knowing the power of a modified Lancashire accent in its abilities to provide opportunities not otherwise available, my grandmother also urged me to enrol in elocution lessons. Attendance at elocution lessons would, she believed, lessen any chance of me being sought out as a 'pretender', someone with one accent pretending to have a 'better' one, a phenomenon in some ways worse than maintaining one's local accent.

However, survival instincts told me that any accent changes needed to be minimal if I were to avoid being bullied at school and labelled as 'posh' and 'swot', (euphemisms for people who have rejected their 'own sort'). I did not succeed in avoiding the labels 'posh' and 'swot' but my survival instincts and strategies both in the classroom and the school-yard meant that conflict with my peers was minimal.

The small accent changes I did make became important when it came to relationships with teachers, who, because of what they deemed as my 'nice speech', relative to my peers, offered me more educational opportunities than I would otherwise have been given. For example, speaking 'nicely' meant that I was always asked to deliver speeches in school assemblies, to address important school visitors and to take part in such events as public-speaking competitions. Similarly, outside the world of school, adults often commented on my 'nice speech' which, as this was often equated with 'good behaviour', tended to result in adults giving me more of their time and attention.

As well as focusing on accent changes, my grandmother also insisted that I 'sat up straight' and 'walked properly'. For years I assumed she simply believed in good posture. It was to be many years later before I realised something else might have been influencing her apparent obsession with posture and good walking. My grandmother could well have been trying to distinguish herself from those who walked badly, who might, by virtue of their walking pattern, be labelled as 'common'. She was acutely aware of the gradations of both vocal and physical acceptability both within and outside her own class group:

> Members of different cultures not only talk differently (using different languages, discourse formations, coding orientations), but they even walk differently (Lemke, 1995: 32)

Unlike my grandmother, my grandfather was an expert at changing his accent whenever the need arose. He owned two books, a dictionary, and the complete works of Shakespeare, a prize for winning a writing competition as a boy. He was employed in a cotton mill until a lung disease necessitated his early retirement. He had a deep love of

theatre and acting and would often shift from a broad Lancashire dialect with friends and family to a 'Queen's English' whenever he thought it would make a useful difference to his listener's perception of him. At a well-to-do family wedding, where everyone was displaying their best behaviour and best accents, my grandfather not only impressed the audience with the content of his speech but with his voice. He was considered 'well spoken' and the speech met with thunderous applause as much for the style as the content. He had the voice, the charisma and, most importantly, the accent, to impress whenever he wanted or needed to. While my grandmother concentrated on the audible and visible signs of a person's class position, my grandfather concentrated on instilling in me a love of reading, words and education, his favourite phrase being "Learn something new every day." He visited the library at least once a week until illness meant he could no longer do so and he encouraged me to do the same. He quoted Shakespeare, not by rote as many of his generation, but with love. He also bought me my first dictionary.

I now have a curious combination of accents incorporating Lancastrian, Liverpudlian (learned by teaching in a high school near Liverpool) and Australian. My Grandmother's lessons in accent improvement were not totally successful, as indicated by my sometimes unavoidable mouth and tongue movements which seem naturally to want to say for example 'boos' instead of 'bus'. I therefore read with considerable empathy the Yorkshire playwright and actor Alan Bennett's observation of his own accent:

> The accent of course doesn't seem to change – a Leeds accent not at all rough-sounding to me but rather wet and lackadaisical. I tried to lose my northern accent at one period, the fifties I suppose, when the provincial voice was still looked down on. Then it came back and now I don't know where I am, sometimes saying my 'a's long, sometimes short, though it's the u's that are a continuing threat – words like butcher, study, sugar, and names like 'Cutbush' always lying in ambush…The truth is anyone from the north who ventures south of the Trent contracts an incurable disease of the vowels; it's a disease to which weather forecasters are particularly prone, and for some reason, lecturers in sociology. (Bennett, 2000: 95)

My own disease of the vowels makes me pleased to have not completely lost such a key identifier of place of origin. However, I feel sad to have lost so much of an obvious personal identity. Some Australians hear the remnants of my Lancashire dialect but I

always reply "it's not as strong as it could be", another way of saying I wish it were stronger. However, the class realities with which I grew up meant that, had I not made those slight accent changes, such was the importance placed on accent in determining one's class position and future employment hopes, I am convinced my teachers would not have been quite so helpful to me. While people tried to belittle me for changing my accent, having done so I had to leave to be considered a success. I shudder now at my own snobbery but at the time I saw these decisions as essential if I were to live a different sort of life.

My own narrative reflects some of the expected first-generation issues such as seeing college as a place where change occurs and where working-class parents have no place. The next part of this chapter examines how I dealt with the narratives emerging in the interviews conducted for this study and the struggle to find spaces for their voices and experiences within existing narrative frameworks and the need to highlight others.

Analysing the Narratives

In trying to make sense of the proliferation of material, the main tool used was the Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing Program (QSR NUDIST 3.0). With NUDIST, "the researcher establishes an index of data codes and seeks relationships among the coding categories" (Taft, 1993). For analysis purposes, the interview data were arranged according to the person they were associated with. This meant that the eight families of three people per family were separated into twenty four individuals, that is mother, father, son/daughter. The data were then coded into categories and examined for common and overarching categories. This process resulted in the identification of three key themes:

Investment and security

This theme refers to parents and students searching for signs that their choice of university will be or has been a good financial or social investment. Such signs include the comfort of the student and the parent with the choice of course, potential job

opportunities arising from it, the general reputation and 'look' and 'feel' of the university.

Knowns and unknowns

This theme includes comparisons between school and university and the expectations and realities of being a university student and parenting a university student.

Dependency and independency

This theme includes the experiences of growing up, perceptions of adulthood and independence and the significance or otherwise of turning eighteen. It includes a recognition of the 'slippage' concerning the reference to students as either child or adult and to the reference to university as school.

In writing up the thesis, early drafts included discussions under the three themes. However, this process led to a concern that the eight families I had interviewed had, in the writing up process, become twenty four separate individuals. In other words, the sense of each family having been interviewed together had disappeared and therefore so too had the sense of their conjoint university experiences. This separation affected me intellectually and emotionally and created much anxiety and frustration in the early stages of writing up this thesis. I saw each family fragmenting and disintegrating into abstract categories and themes on the computer screen and while I tried hard to create a system which kept the families whole it was to no avail. I found myself returning time and time again to the entire transcripts and to the cassette tapes in order to rediscover our experiences together as family and researcher. It was this sense of togetherness that I wanted to capture in the analysis.

My frustrations were such that I shed tears in front of my rather bemused, and no doubt embarrassed, Phd supervisor. Those frustrations were increased because of my inability at the time to articulate reasons for the outpouring of emotion. Only in the space of reflection and synthesis through the thesis writing experience have I come to understand those tears. Crying was a response to feeling unable to tell the stories of the lives of the

families I had interviewed in the way I wanted to. Specifically, I wanted to keep the families' stories 'whole'. My tears were also a response to what I then saw as the realities of research many of which I did not like. According to Clandinin and Connelly mine was not an unusual experience:

> Abstract theoretical categories might be uppermost prior to the research, but participants, and one's relationships to them, are key by the time the research text is to be written. The researcher learns that people are never only (nor even a close approximation to) any particular set of isolated theoretical notions, categories, or terms. They are people in all their complexity. They are people living storied lives on storied landscapes (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:145).

Taking the above into account and the three identified themes, I revisited the literature to examine if and how these themes emerged within it. In particular I examined two narratives written by Rodriguez (1982) and Schaper (1993). These are described below.

Rodriguez's Narrative

An examination of the relatively few autobiographical accounts of students' experiences that exist reveal metamorphosing tales of impoverished first-generation students making good by virtue of going to university. One of these has become notorious for its somewhat controversial content. Richard Rodriguez (1982) describes his experiences as a Spanish-speaking, working-class American and in particular, the process of physical and psychological separation from his parents and his first language that he experienced or felt necessary as he became more educated. He relates how his desire to enter higher education affected perceptions of and relationships with his family, background and culture. For example, in becoming what he refers to as 'a scholarship boy', Rodriguez became embarrassed by his parents' speech and attitudes. The discourse of separation is highlighted when he writes of the pain he experienced as he noted his parents' lack of education and "how far one must move from one's past. Nothing is said of the silence that comes to separate the boy from his parents". (page 68)

His embarrassment is tinged with shame because of his awareness that, without his parents, he would not have succeeded in the way that he had:

They sent their children to parochial schools because the nuns 'teach better'. They paid a tuition they couldn't afford. They spoke English to us...she would say, 'Get all the education you can'. (page 53)

However, as Rodriguez began to learn what impressed his teachers and how to gain their attention, he became frustrated with his family's lack of formal education and his parents' inability to help him with his school work:

I was oddly annoyed when I was unable to get parental help with a homework assignment. The night my father tried to help me with an arithmetic exercise, he kept reading the instructions, each time more deliberately, until I pried the textbook out of his hand, saying, 'I'll try to figure it out some more by myself.' (page 44)

Rodriguez's narrative of separation from his parents has its appeal not least because of its almost soap opera quality, in which the bright son of impoverished parents becomes educated by virtue of leaving behind all that he knows. Like the proverbial frog turning into a prince, Rodriguez changes from uneducated and disadvantaged to educated and advantaged. In this narrative, education is regarded as the escape route from an otherwise deficient existence and thus conforms to the dominant educational narrative of first-generation students.

Although the rags to riches narrative is familiar and popular, it can obscure the detailed, lived realities of first-generation students' lives and the opportunity for other narratives to emerge. It can also serve to corroborate the placement of the student population into simplistic binary groups, (1) those with parents with a university education and (2) those without. This simplification also serves to abnegate responsibility for student failure away from the university and to blame the student. That is, if first-generation students do not succeed it is because of their 'backgrounds'. Conversely, if they do succeed, it is in spite of their backgrounds. Consequently, because first-generation students' backgrounds, or more directly students' parents, (for the term 'background' is often used as a euphemism for students' parents) are perceived as problematic, universities require them to remain as distanced as possible from their student offspring, allowing universities to

more successfully 'acculturate' and 'integrate' its first-generation undergraduates (see Chapter One for more discussion of these themes).

Schaper's Narrative

Donna Schaper's narrative is similar to that of Rodriguez' in that it also includes a strong narrative of separation. Like Rodriguez, Schaper was a scholarship student who felt that her college education had raised important, difficult and complex issues and feelings about her home life. In particular, reunions with college friends highlighted her deep feelings of difference. A discourse of migration, in which the student is said to feel as though they have moved to a new country is similar to that referred to by Chaskes (1996) and is alluded to in Schaper's writing:

> The ones who travel back and forth between the country and the city, between home and exile, exiled home and homey exile, switching our language between that of our nativity and that of civility. I like traveling with my own displaced kind. The hardest place for me to go is back home to places like my father's factory. Polyester and jello salad receive an unnecessary scorn from me. Even poverty seems more appealing. (Schaper, 1993: 34)

Later to become a minister of religion, Schaper's use of powerful biblical imagery, including references to fire and heavens, renders her autobiography as similar to a religious sermon replete with short, strong, powerful and poetic sentences used to demonstrate the profundity of her experiences, particularly crossing social class lines:

> You don't choose change—it falls from the heavens, and the culture, on your head...You can't get educated unless you're willing to offer boundaries to the fire. And yet. And yet. I didn't want to leave Martinsburg and become 'middle class.' I was happy where I was. But I had been forced by heavens and culture and good/bad luck to cross a boundary. To change. (Schaper, 1993: 33)

Disturbingly, for those who believe education should be a positive change agent, Schaper's feelings of difference, experienced through her metamorphosis from one class to another (a metamorphosis of the kind also experienced by Rodriguez) left her believing that education had narrowed rather than broadened her mind:

it seduced me into its class allegiance in such a way that I can't get back to a prior one. I now actually believe in the superiority of natural fibers and vegetables over polyester and casseroles. There has been a narrowing of my mind to the degree that I can't accept my Eastern European pear frame: I want no less today than I did on my first day of college to look like people who are not my people. The class injury is permanent. I am scarred. So I live on the bridge at one of the gates of some castle. And like a deinstitutionalized woman, I walk back and forth on it all day and all night long. (page 34)

Both Rodriguez's and Schaper's narratives are compelling because of their themes of disjunction and pain and the seemingly obligatory fairy-tale metamorphoses. However, they are also deeply distressing as they expose the power of educators as would-be fairy godmothers who appear so easily to be able to separate a person from what and who they know.

The Student Experience Narratives

A re-reading of the literature and particularly of the above two narratives led me to recognise that students have been 'storied' (a term used by Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 177) by the academy. In other words, the academy projects certain narratives on to their student body and in doing so they are assumed to be experiencing university in certain ways. These projected student-experience narratives have come to form the basis of our understandings of the first-year university experience. They have a privileged and powerful position within the academy because they have been constructed by and are owned by the academy and are projected on to, rather than being owned, by those they describe. Within these narratives, students' parents are either non-existent or marginal, having been left out of the accepted, sometimes mythologised, students' stories, because they are considered irrelevant. In so doing they set what has become an accepted pattern of omitting parents.

Existing narratives position students' parents as irrelevant and emphasise the need for students and their parents to separate both emotionally and psychologically from each other. I have named the first of these narratives the Archetypal student experience narrative. The Archetypal student experience narrative is described below.

The Archetypal Student Experience Narrative

In this narrative the students' parents attended university and as a result are said to have an historical advantage over those students whose parents did not attend university. The narrative includes families who are able, in terms of their perceived abilities, socially, economically, linguistically and culturally, to suitably rear a child for a university education. These parents who have attended university themselves are considered to have the ideal 'background' to be able to pass on to their children knowledge and information about university life. They are able to inform their offspring of the benefits of a higher education and support them through it, identifying for them the expectations and potential benefits.

For students who live at home with their parents, the Archetypal student experience narrative provides only limited space in which parents can be part of their son's or daughter's university life. The construction and use of the terms 'university life' and 'student experience' are significant in their singularity with the terms situating the student alone. Indeed, the singularity of the terms 'university life' and 'student experience' as opposed to 'lives' and 'experiences', emphasises there being only one university life or experience worth having, only one of real worth and consequently the only one with real status.

Within this narrative, parents are merely causal characteristics of their offspring's presumed abilities, knowledge or behaviour. It is therefore no surprise to discover that at the core of the Archetypal student experience narrative are emotional and geographic separations of the student from the parents and vice versa. Parents choose to play out a particular developmental plot-line (Dickerson et al, 1994 and see Chapter Four) and are heavily encouraged by the university, and indeed by the wider society, to become largely invisible and play a diminishing role within the daily lives of the students' university experience.

The act of 'becoming' is central to this narrative and points to an expected shift in a person from one state of being to another, that is from a once high school student to a

university student, or put another way, from child to adult. The move from one to the other assumes not only a physical change from one institution to another but also of a shift of identity, for to go to university is to recognise that one must change, that one changes and/or is changed. This assumption appears in Williams and Germov's (2001) opening sentence of their book 'Surviving First-year Uni': "the transition to university is a dramatic one" (page xiii). In this narrative, university life is said to be so distinct and separate from other parts of a student's life that students' parents and the university encourage the student to leave home in order to 'become independent'. Part of the university experience within this narrative is one of large portions of leisure time, the joining of social clubs and activities and of parties held and new friends being made. It is a narrative which focuses on the necessity for the new university student to become independent of parental influence and control and is informed by traditional, middle-class and late twentieth century western notions of adulthood and life span development.

Moving away from home is therefore considered an essential part of this narrative, the discourse of which includes phrases such as 'shifts to adulthood', 'independence', 'cutting loose from family and friends', 'moving away from home', 'letting go', and 'the empty nest'. Leaving home is considered an important part of becoming a university student as doing so helps with the inculcation of the student with particular institutional values and attitudes and to be crucial in 'integrating' (Tinto, 1988) the student into university life.

The Archetypal student experience narrative holds almost cult status among many ex-students. For many years after graduation, the experiences of the student who lived away from home are told and retold with relish and nostalgia. It is also the student experience narrative by which students and parents who are not following the particular plot-line of this narrative are compared and judged.

An additional narrative exists within the literature and, arguably, within academics' psyches. This narrative emphasises not only separation from parents but also separation from class roots. This I have termed the Alternative narrative and it is described below.

The Alternative Student Experience Narrative

Where parents do appear within student experience narratives, it is within what I have termed the Alternative student experience narrative. The word Alternative has been chosen as it suggests something other than what already exists, an 'other' way of being. This narrative has arisen from the existence of the massified university system in which students' lives do not fit as neatly into the Archetypal narrative. This narrative has particular appeal to those who lived the Archetypal student experience but who see others experiencing university in a different way to themselves. This narrative is useful for explaining those who do not fit within the so-called norm.

This narrative also has a particular appeal to those who consider their mission in higher education to be to reform or help those from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds. Within this narrative are 'other' students whose parents did not attend university. Within this narrative, students are constructed as disadvantaged because of their parents' perceived deficiencies in social, economic, linguistic and cultural terms which render them, it is thought, next to useless in helping their son or daughter 'become' a university student. Parents within the Alternative narrative are said not to possess a historical advantage and hence are considered disadvantaged. Unable, it seems, to be able to offer advice about expectations of the university, these parents are storied as being unable to adequately prepare, or not able to prepare at all, their offspring for the expectations of higher education. As such, these parents are pathologised by virtue of a particular non-experience and, in turn, so too are their offspring, who are consequently dubbed 'first-generation' students.

Within the discourse of this narrative are themes of separation, dislocation and loss, which arise not only from the tensions of separating geographically and emotionally from home and family but from the move into an environment unfamiliar to both students and parents. Within this narrative therefore is a cultural transformation on the part of the student, from high school student comfortable in their home and high school environment to university student in a previously unknown and strange intellectual and cultural

environment. The shift from one to the other is thought to be so great that students within this narrative have been likened to migrants in a country that is foreign to them. Students in this new culture experience 'culture clashes' (Chaskes, 1996). The cultures of home, family and friends and paid employment clash with the culture of new towns, new forms of speech and a focus on study for study's sake. In order to succeed, therefore, both the students and parents within this narrative must overcome 'barriers' and 'hurdles'.

Central to this narrative is the main character, the student, who dreams of becoming 'other than' their parents. In order to realize their dream, the student recognises the need to go to university but knows that such an experience will necessitate personal and family sacrifices. However, the journey is not to be an easy one. In place of wicked step-sisters are 'wicked', or at least defective, parents whose lack of understanding of universities and their operations and expectations, are unable or unwilling to encourage their offspring to further their education. The student is instead left alone in a metaphorical educational maze, and their adjustment to the new 'culture' becomes a solitary and lonely journey. Meanwhile, the 'wicked' parents often feel betrayed by their offspring whom they see as shifting into a world incompatible with their own.

This narrative also has its specifically Australian and for the purposes of this thesis, Melbournian characteristics, with the family living in a low socio-economic area, often with an 'ethnic', migrant or Indigenous background. Their parents might be described as 'battlers', earning little but working hard or being unemployed. Specific to the city around which the families of this study live, the poorer areas of Melbourne are the places where such families live out their lives. To be 'from the western suburbs' is to be defined as a particular person with particular and negative family background characteristics. Its binary opposite 'eastern suburbs' is often used as a shorthand for distinguishing between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and, even, the 'bad' students from the 'good'.

That a narrative has been constructed for these students at all, points to the recognition of massified systems of higher education and to universities which tolerate or, sometimes (but rarely), celebrate and honour difference. The perpetuation and popularity of the

Alternative student experience narrative (such as the popular use and acceptance of terms such as 'first-generation student' and the 'at-risk' student') gives the impression of an academy supporting and celebrating differences in their student populations. In reality however, and as Chapter One has shown, the construction of the category 'first-generation' student demonstrates a threatened academy, largely unable to recognise its own élitism and shortcomings in the ways in which it responds to students from a variety of class and cultural backgrounds.

The Newly Identified Narratives

For as long as one narrative is used as a benchmark against which other narratives are compared, there will be no genuine shift in thinking or attitudes by the majority of staff in universities, or at least not enough for real and lasting change and, most importantly, understanding to occur. If there happen to be students who are unable or unwilling to change then this is constructed as evidence that all are not suited to university. To resist the reformist's hand is the ultimate educational heresy.

Gergen (2001) points out that there exists no major reason for limiting the available number of life narratives. Nevertheless, he argues that there are three "rudimentary forms of narrative" which he describes as stability, progressive and regressive narratives. The first, the stability narrative is one in which "Life simply goes on, neither better nor worse with respect to the conclusion" (page 5). This is contrasted with what Gergen refers to as the Progressive narrative "ever better in every way…I am really learning to overcome my shyness and be more open and friendly with people" (page 5). Gergen's third identified narrative is the regression narrative, "a continued downward slide…I can't seem to control the events in my life anymore." (page 5). Gergen argues that these narratives can be viewed as "rudimentary bases for other more complex variants" (page 5). Similarly, Tamara Bollis-Pecci argues that "self-narrative allows individuals to tell various narrative versions of more than one self, rather then being fixed to the telling of a set narrative" (2000: 2).

Who does it serve to perpetuate the Archetypal and Alternative student experience narratives but not report or pay attention to other narratives, in particular to those owned by students and their parents rather than the university? Constructing the university as alien environment encourages within universities a culture of translation, a university system which sees itself as so different (substitute élite here and the argument is even clearer) that its 'non-members', that is 'first-generation' students, (if we really must allow them access) have to be helped to understand how to become part of the system. Indeed, many academics and other professionals within universities have built their careers by attempting to rectify the perceived deficiencies of first-generation students (the author of this study being one such example). While the motivations behind such efforts might be genuine, the élitism inherent in them is stark and unrelenting and made all the more élitist and dubious by the students and parents not knowing that they are considered problematic.

Supporting Tierney's (1992) assertion that higher education research focuses primarily on individuals, I found that parents' invisible or marginal position in relation to how they are situated by universities has led to a focus on how students experience university alone rather than how they experience it with their parents. How can we know the narratives of Rodriguez's and Schaper's parents except through others' reinterpretations? How did Rodriguez's and Schaper's narratives and autobiographical memories shift over time? How did their parents' narratives shift over time? We do not know. Such an omission in understanding impacts of university experiences is significant when so many students live with their parents. I therefore asked the question, are there other narratives, until now unacknowledged or ignored that include rather than exclude parents and which acknowledge a conjoint rather than singular experience of university?

In addition, our understandings of students' university experiences have been informed by studies which ask students to reflect on their experiences at the beginning or end of a year. Any changes or continuities which occur as the year is lived are missed, meaning that insights into the first-year undergraduate experience as it unravels through time are less known or understood. Similarly for students' parents. What do they experience and how do they feel as the year progresses? More specifically, how do first-year students

and their parents experience the first-year together? Which known narratives appear within the conjoint interviews and which new ones emerge?

In an attempt to address these issues I examined the transcripts of the eight families I interviewed and pinpointed when and how the narratives already described emerged across the year. I found that the Archetypal and Alternative student experience narratives did not adequately allow for the voices and lived experiences of the parents and students in this study to be heard and acknowledged. I felt that acknowledgement of their narratives would help avoid the likelihood that the experiences of families in this study would be considered as merely idiosyncratic or be considered as 'extreme' or 'rare' cases. Further, I felt that the acknowledgement of these other narratives would lead not only to a richer sense of the lived experiences of students and their parents would encourage a shift from a deficit model of thinking about such students and their so-called 'backgrounds.' I looked therefore for spaces in which to voice the experiences of these students and parents and 'discovered' two additional narratives which acknowledged and honoured their voices and experiences. I named these the narratives of Metamorphosis and Continuity.

The narratives of Metamorphosis and Continuity are perhaps less appealing in their narrative form because they do not contain the classic fairy tale elements and are more challenging to respond to pedagogically. Their most significant characteristic is the conjoint nature of the families' experiences. The identification of these additional narratives is significant because they give voice to aspects of students' lives which are silenced in the two main and known narratives.

The Narrative of Metamorphosis

The narrative of Metamorphosis is different from the Archetypal narrative because it acknowledges students' parents as part of the university experience. Within this narrative, changes occur not only for the student but also their parents. Although these feelings might not occur immediately or without some emotional pain in the first instance, so great and pleasing are the changes that students often feel exalted. Students and often parents, attribute the changes they see in themselves and in each other to the experience

of one of them being at university. As changes occur, rather than taking a back seat, the parents remain central and important to their son's or daughter's university experience. However, despite their strong connection to their son or daughter, the parents feel apart from and invisible to the university. Feeling unconnected to the university and sidelined from it creates tension for parents who have noone but their student son or daughter to ask questions of.

The Narrative of Continuity

The narrative of Continuity is marked by the experiences of university not being particularly life changing, as in the narrative of Metamorphosis, at least at the time of being an undergraduate. Instead, students see themselves as moving along an educational treadmill, a conveyor belt which has few surprises and effects little change. In the narrative of Continuity, university is often considered to be much the same as high school in terms of its organisation and expectations and there is little sense of having gone to anywhere particularly awe inspiring or different. Within this narrative, university is often referred to as school and study is referred to as homework. In addition, the narrative of Continuation relates to the expectation that university attendance will occur, that there are few opportunities to do anything but attend university. The student may or may not show signs of a change to what the student and parents regard as adulthood but the signs are small. Parents within this narrative feel curious about the university their son or daughter attends but feel resigned or frustrated about the university's apparent unwillingness to include them in their son or daughter's university experiences.

Application of the Narratives

LeCompte (1993) states that discourse within narratives "may be powerful, and it may seem truthful and authentic. But it is, in fact, still a "partial discourse" (page 12). This is certainly the case with the narratives presented in Chapter Three. The need to focus the thesis on the three main themes of knowns and unknowns, investment and security and dependency and independency means that there is rich data from the interviews which has not been reported and as such the narratives are partial. However, the aim was still to

present a sense of the conjoint nature of their experiences and to show how the four identified narratives described above occur throughout the year.

Chapter Three is organised in such a way that the reader is presented with eight separate family narratives, organised as separate threads but complementary of the whole. The methodological decision to interview students and their parents together and three times across a year, provided an opportunity in which not only can conjoint narratives be told and heard but also they can be told as they emerged across time. Each family's experiences are prefaced by a background profile, that is, the sort of boundaried description more conventionally used to describe a student's background, complete with the usual categories and terms often used in such contexts. The intention of providing these brief profiles is to demonstrate the inadequacy of such thin descriptions and of the cursory attention typically given to students' parents and to place them in direct contrast with the following thicker descriptions of their experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

The Families

> We need not to see our participants as univocal, not tied to one theoretical structure or mode of behaviour that would leave them with the appearance of being unidimensional. We, and our participants, live and tell many stories. We are all characters with multiple plotlines. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000)

This chapter shows how the narratives described in Chapter Two and their variants emerge, disappear, reemerge and change within families' conjoint experiences of university. The fluidity, predictability and unpredictability of these narratives deepen and sharpen our understandings of not only first-year university experiences as lived by individuals but, significantly, how they are lived conjointly within families. It is appropriate to the overall intention of the study that these narratives form the major part of the thesis and enable a 'thick description'.

"HE'S ALWAYS ON THE COMPUTER TYPING"

John is a first-generation student from the western suburbs of Melbourne. His parents are migrants from Malta. John's father is a labourer and his mother is not in paid employment. John attended an outer suburban campus of the university.

Based on the above background profile and in terms of categories used to summarise various key family characteristics and to construct a background that is commonly understood by academics, John the university student can be categorised in at least three ways. First, as working-class, second as a migrant and third as a first-generation student. Furthermore, due to the presumed lack of cultural capital these categories imply, a more general category can be applied which encapsulates each of these categories, specifically John can be described as a student 'at-risk'.

Such categories can be useful short hand for describing students and their so-called backgrounds. However, this short hand becomes problematic when it is used, intentionally or otherwise, to cloak the complexities of students' lives and their families.

The categories are more often symbols of academics' anxieties towards a massified university student population. For example, concern about students' 'backgrounds' invariably takes place within the context of discussions about a decline of academic standards. Once it is determined that a student falls into a particular category or more than one, the concern felt by academics that is inherent in the categories leads to the Alternative student experience narrative being applied, along with subsequent fantasising about their lives (Walkerdine, 1990). Such fantasies convince the categoriser that the student's needs and lives are known and understood. For example, the application of the Alternative student experience narrative would, in John's case, lead to a presumption that, by virtue of his migrant background, John would require extra academic support such as 'help with English'. As a first-generation student with parents who have little or no knowledge of university, the Alternative student narrative would also predict that John would experience culture shock (Chaskes, 1996 and see Chapter One). In turn, tensions would be expected to arise between John and his parents and John would feel the need to separate both intellectually and physically from them.

The application of only one student experience narrative however, restricts the observer's potential for seeing other possible narratives and therefore from developing any deeper knowledge of the student as a person within a complex social setting, specifically his family and the family's relationship with the student. Remaining open to the possibility of other narratives allows a reassessment of existing knowledge about students and their lives. For example, in relating a story in the first interview about events that occurred in the family's early years of being in Australia, John's mother opened up an important element of her family's narrative, describing that how they worked hard in order to feed and clothe their family when they first arrived in Australia and to help them do this they enrolled their two children in crèche. However, a spot inspection of the crèche by John's father, found his own and other children in dirty nappies, with sour milk and being ignored because they couldn't speak English. The parents withdrew their children from the crèche and for the next ten years, John's mother worked at home, taking in sewing jobs. A typical working day for John's mother during this decade started at nine in the morning and went through until three the following morning.

The significance of this story lies in the existence of what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as a pre-narrative, a narrative which existed before the researcher's inquiry started and of which the researcher may or may not be made aware. In this case, the pre-narrative related to migration from Malta to Australia and the hardships the family faced and overcame. Alongside the family's pre-narrative of migration, was my own migration narrative from the UK and our sharing of them. The intersection of these narratives led to an intimacy between researcher and participants that was qualitatively different from that felt with the other families in this study and stemmed from the shared knowledge of what it is like to be a hemisphere apart from the people one loves. This intimacy was encapsulated when John's mother proudly showed me photographs of her mother and other relatives in Malta who had passed away since she moved to Australia.

It is usual to think of 'first-generation' students as isolated within a university environment they know little or nothing about (see Chaskes, 1996). If the first-generation student moves away from home or attends a university some distance away from their home-town then this can increase their isolation. This double isolation is thought to be the cause of much distress and problems for the first-generation student. Prior to 1991, John might well have had this experience because he would have had to travel a reasonable distance away from home each day to the 'other side of town', as a university prior to this time did not exist in the western region of Melbourne. However, the creation of a university in 1991, at campuses across the western suburbs, has created greater access to higher education for students from the west of Melbourne which has led to interesting new student experiences. For example, the university campus that John attended was very close to his western suburbs home. Furthermore, in much the same way that the Maltese families in Terry *et al's* (1993) study described their lives in Melbourne's western suburbs, far from relating an expected story of lack of educational opportunities or infrastructure about where she lived, John's mother reported the advantages of their suburb and their lives:

> kinder down the road…the primary's at the back too. Good location here! (John's mother, Interview 1)

and thus supported McConville's argument that students who are perceived to be at a disadvantage, often do not see themselves that way:

> the notion of being deprived does not occur to them all that often. Different to the rest of Melbourne certainly, but deprived? How could they feel deprived responded several, when they enjoyed living in the West, when their parents often owned their own homes close to work and with easy access to the city and to the countryside? Some even felt that pampered youth of wealthier suburbs were culturally deprived. (McConville, 1991: 19-20)

Although the university had only existed for six years at the time of the interview, John did not experience an Archetypal 'culture shock' which Chaskes (1996) identified as being typical of first-generation student. This was because sufficient time had passed for there to be a group of young people who John knew and who had experienced attending the same university close to home. In this way, although a first-generation student, John had learned about the university before he went there and in much the same way as a parents who had attended university might pass on their stories and experiences[1] of university to their children:

> I wasn't scared…a lot of my friends (are) doing those courses, they always tell me how good it is and everything else like that…Whenever I can't get the car I go for a walk, or just get the bus. I always get there though. I get a lift off some friends cos I've got a lot of friends from this area who go down to (names campus) (John, Interview 1).

Similarly, and contrary to social integration theories in which students are encouraged to separate from their families and high schools (see Chapter One), John had remained very much connected to this earlier part of his life. Furthermore, whether it was old school

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[1] In 1993 when I first started to teach at John's campus, a student told me how as a child he and his friends used to ride his bike on what was then just a large area of dirt. He said he found it hard to believe that the same mound of dirt was now a university campus and that he was a student there. Just a few years later, there was no such disbelief for John who considered the campus to be an established part of his community.

friends or high school teachers, these connections had helped rather than hindered his transition to university:

> I'm still good friends with some of the teachers and I still talk to them and go and visit them and stuff…and if I have a problem with university, they would be able to help me to their knowledge. And I've visited them a couple of times asking them for help and they have helped me. So that has been an advantage for me as well. A lot of other people don't usually go back to my old school, they really hate it, hate the teachers, but I found that teachers work well when you're friends with them, more so than when you are enemies (John, Interview 1).

Money, or more usually lack of it, is a common and important element of the Alternative student experience narrative, with first-generation students and their parents often struggling to meet the financial demands of a higher education course. In John's case, living at home highlighted money as an issue in a way which might not have been revealed had John lived away from home. Specifically, John's mother was anxious that her son was not in class very often. Having estimated that the family would be paying $10,000 for their son's education, not being at university all day, five days a week had led her to the conclusion that she was not getting value for money:

> It's a lot of money for three days work…the other two days he's got off. He's always on the computer typing…It's a lot of money for that. I think it's a rip off (John's mother, Interview 1).

John's father was also concerned about the small amount of time his son had to attend university:

> when you talk about uni, you know, you expect like he's going to do four days a week you know (John's father, Interview 1).

If John had lived away from home, his parents would not been able to observe the rhythm of his days and weeks and presumably they would not have felt the same need to question what was happening in their son's education. Physical distance from their son's experiences would have led to less scrutiny of the university's practices. However, being

closer to the comings and goings of their son's university life meant that they were more able to criticise them. The financial pressures felt by John's parents were real and it is easy to see how a student studying for three years at the family's expense but not on campus very often could be considered highly indulgent and wasteful.

The parents' history of working long hours to provide for their family and their desire to maintain integrity as good parents were two major issues throughout the interviews. While John's mother was able to keep a closer eye on her son because she was at home, John's father felt more distanced from the every day goings on of the household:

> I don't see him that much, because I be (sic) at work, I work twelve hours a day (John's father, Interview 1).

Like the families in Terry *et al* (1993) he wanted something better for his sons, wanting them to work with their brains rather than in poor conditions in a factory like himself:

> We didn't have that opportunity to learn to go to uni and all that back home in those days (John's father, Interview 1).

John's mother encapsulated the reality of this difference in the following comment:

> We're only here to work in this world (John's mother, Interview 2)

The hardships they had experienced and the importance of work in helping to relieve some of those hardships meant that the world of employment was central to their identity. As such, the Alternative student experience emerged whereby the world of work was a known world but the world where paid work could be postponed, was a strange one. This strangeness was highlighted by John's mother who emphasised that she and her husband had stopped their schooling at age fourteen and so were not aware of how universities operated which created fear:

> I was more scared than him…it was starting a new life, a new course, three years, four years, I don't know what's going on I don't know how they work

cos we've never been to uni, I don't know if all the kids pass because you been three years in the course or if there's some dumb kids that they don't pass! I don't know how they work (John's mother, Interview 1).

Their search for answers to important questions had remained unanswered or unresolved, resulting in John's mother feeling uncomfortable with her son's decision to go to university, a discomfort felt in part because she knew little about university life. However, she utilised her participation in the research to help her. In the same way that John had sought insights from his older friends about university, an inquiring look from John's mother signaled that she considered my role to be to provide similar insights to her. In a situation where information of the sort she required was scarce, John's mother storied me as information provider. On seeing and hearing her discomfort in not knowing certain things about university, she alerted my long-held resolve that I would help to explain the university system if and when necessary or requested. Clandinin and Connelly refer to this as how we are storied as researchers by participants in our enquiries

Of course, the landscapes on which we work are storied. Of course, as researchers on these landscapes we will be storied by those with whom we work. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 177)

While universities work hard to keep parents at a distance, John's parents busily tried to find a space for themselves within their son's university experience. For example, John's mother made a very powerful entrance into her son's university experience narrative by asking her son to tell a story which she titled "how he proved me wrong". The telling of this story gave not only an important insight into understanding John's responses to university but to his mother's anxieties about him going there. Clandinin and Connelly point to the significance of family stories that are passed on from generation to generation, stating that they are often told "when we are trying to give an account of ourselves and when people, frequently parents, are establishing values." (2000: 113).

To some readers the ways in which the family members spoke to and about each other might seem shocking in their honesty and suggest a harsh family environment. However, this was not the case. The obvious love and concern that they had for each other was clear

throughout the interviews demonstrated through exchanges of smiles, winks and nods. For example, John told a story which was an overheard conversation between his mother and relatives about himself. They were comparing John and his younger brother. This story turned out to be a significant one in terms of revealing John's motivation to go to university. John overheard his mother say that she thought John's brother would do well at school but that John would not:

> my mum started to say to all the other ladies there, like my brother's going to make it, he's the smartest one in the family. We've got no hope in John. He's going to be nothing. He's hopeless (John, Interview 1).

On overhearing this conversation, John said that he had felt like crying but didn't because his cousin was there. He said: "I just wanted to kill her." (John, Interview 1) John's mother said that on overhearing this conversation, her son declared:

> I'm going to go to uni to prove you wrong (John's mother, Interview 1).

Another way in which John's mother wrote herself into her son's university experience was through control of the domestic space. By placing her son under a certain amount of surveillance she was able to write herself into her son's university experience narrative, in this case as gatekeeper and protector. For example, if she knew that John was studying, she shielded him from friends:

> I go, no he's not here…I have to otherwise he get (sic) interrupted… I wanted him to stay there (John's mother, Interview 1).

This gate-keeping allowed her to offer maternal protection and maintain domestic control at a time when she knew little about her son's university experiences. This shared negotiation of physical and conversational space meant that John's mother could take ownership of and be part of John's new life as a university student while at the same time maintaining her role as mother. John's mother highlighted her strong connection to her son by relating her control of physical and conversational space when she sensed a problem. She said that she would switch off the television and suggest they talk things

through and called this "Mother talk" and said she did this with both her sons. This self-labeling of her intervention highlights not only its importance to her but the ritualised nature of it.

The control and surveillance of physical space however did not run only one way. Running parallel with the control of the space by the mother was John's insistence of the family needing to adapt to his new needs. For example, John's mother had to deal with her son's insistence that being a university student required a level of quiet in the home. She said:

> as soon as he comes in we all shut our mouths and be quiet (John's mother, Interview 1).

The emergence of John taking over some control within the family was also evident in his own words and in his own ebullient and jockeying style. John's way of speaking to his mother when read out of the interview context might sound harsh and bullying but throughout the interview smiles between mother and son were a continual presence, revealing a loving relationship between mother and son and highlighting the importance of not only non-verbal language in the interviewing process but emphasises how different cultures use words, narratives and explanations differently (Steeves, 1992):

> Mum shut up. Mum get out! It's my house! (John, Interview 1).

Although John's mother tried to talk with her son about university, John preferred to deal with things himself saying "my responsibility". This signal to his mother that he felt his situation had changed in terms of parental input and control was interpreted by his mother as a sign that "he doesn't want me to worry." In this way, a narrative of Metamorphosis appeared in which John exerted his need to have some distance from his mother while at the same time remaining connected with her. By claiming the house to be his own and demanding his mother leave it, John and his mother can be seen renegotiating their roles and status within the household, a renegotiation which John considered necessary to fit his new identity as university student. This shift of identity to 'John as university student'

was related strongly to his change of status from child to adult, a change which was acknowledged both by John and his parents. For example, John's mother believed her son to be different from when he was at high school, remarking:

He works before he plays (John's mother, Interview 1).

She attributed the changes she saw in her son to him being older but also to the university which she felt had changed him to the extent that:

He thinks a lot now... They treat you more like a man than kids (John's mother, Interview 1).

However, changes in John were not solely considered to be the result of John going to university. For this Maltese-Australian family, turning eighteen years old was culturally significant in signalling the metamorphosis from child to adult and boy to man. However, adulthood did not mean a separation from parents but rather a continuation of strong connections, unlike their perceptions of non-Maltese Australians whom she viewed as abandoned by their families:

at fourteen they're on their own, on the streets (John's mother, Interview 2).

Being a man was also about being reliable. For example, his mother said that he used to forget to feed the chickens or the rabbit but:

now with only one word now you can rely on him (John's mother, Interview 1).

John's father felt that his son being one year older was significant enough to have affected his personality:

his mind settles down, his life settles down and that makes him you know, like you know where you're going... less worries...he is trusted and he knows the rules that's there (John's father, Interview 2).

John agreed with his parents that he had changed since going to university and believed the changes were due to being treated as an adult. He compared himself with his friends on the dole and said:

> they've really got nothing to exercise their adulthood (John, Interview 1).

The story John told of trying to prove his mother wrong, reemerged in a way which demonstrated his awareness of the lives of his peers and his unwillingness to be like them when he explained why he thought he had responded so well to being at university:

> I woke up to myself and thought my life, screwing round is over, now I should start looking towards a future…I did not want to waste three years like other people (John, Interview1).

Having made such a smooth transition to university in first semester, the second interview was surprising in that it revealed a marked difference in John's demeanor. From being outspoken and confident in the first interview, John was noticeably quieter and calmer. A combination of three factors seemed to have caused the change in John, first that university was no longer a novelty, second, he had dropped his part-time job and third he was frustrated with certain aspects of his course. As a result of his general malaise, John was considering not leaving university but applying for a scholarship to study in Malta. This desire to go overseas signaled a potential separation from his family and this possible separation had not been greeted with enthusiasm by his mother who declared that if John were to go ahead with his plan then she would go with him. Going to Malta was considered by his mother to be a type of betrayal, a slap in the face to them as parents for having taken them away from Malta to Australia:

> We came for a future for you (John's mother, Interview 2)

In the Alternative student narrative this situation would be interpreted as a mother being over-possessive towards her sons, who should be taught the importance of separation

from her children to allow them to become adult. However, this would be too simplistic an interpretation for, as we have already seen, both John's mother and father considered their son to be an adult now. Perhaps the more accurate interpretation is a surprise and annoyance with her son's rediscovered enthusiasm to visit the country of his birth. The surprise seemed related to the apparent suddenness with which John wanted to go and their annoyance at the reversal of what she and her husband had expected when they left Malta for Australia, an expectation that John would see his life as being in Australia only. Having come to terms with the fact that her son was to study at university for three years, John's mother was now shocked to discover that John seemed to have changed his mind. John's mother was also concerned that he would give up his studies and not be able to find a job and this frustration with her son who was seemingly about to throw it all away was seen as a backward step, a step which would decrease his opportunities. Like the families in Terry *et al*, (1993) in which the parents said they wanted their children to have "more than I have", John's mother had the same desire although she signalled her need to understand her son's life:

> I want to see him better than me. And I want to understand what you're doing too. I want to say that my son is doing this or that (John's mother, Interview 2).

John's mother's desire to understand what her son was doing was made easier by the fact that her son lived at home with many heated discussions about John's future. On hearing that John's reasons for studying were to "enhance his own life" she expressed again her feelings that studying at university was an indulgent practice few could really afford:

> a waste of money. $10,000 for nothing. Just to please himself (John's mother, Interview 2).

In the Alternative student experience narrative, students and their parents are often criticised by academics for their vocational outlook on higher education. In this case, John the first-generation student, criticised his parents for this outlook, referring to them as "old fashioned" for believing a university education should be vocationally driven.

It is tempting at this point to interpret John as a student whose university education had succeeded to 'broaden his mind' away from the 'narrower' vocational outlook of his parents. Whereas many academics might consider John's mother to be too narrow in her thinking, John's mother saw her son as "crazy". Her son's craziness was related to four specific and related factors, the spending of so much money, for so little teacher input, for such a long time, for no guaranteed better job. To John's mother, both paid and unpaid work had been all consuming, leaving little or no time for activities where one might "enhance one's life". Consequently, her response to John's question "what if you don't like it?" meaning the job you get, is understandable:

> you have to do another degree…we're only here to work in this world (John's mother, Interview 2).

She pointed out that for her, the degree course should match the eventual job:

> like I want a degree in sewing I do sewing all my life (John's mother, Interview 2).

John was emphatic in his reply of "no" to his mother and used his newfound knowledge learned in his course to explain himself:

> that's what we've been studying, capitalism and globalism, and we are only seen as consumers but you don't have to be that way. Like people now go and do medical courses and everything else and when they're asked, why did you do this? It's not to save humanity or people's lives, it's oh because I wanted to get some money, be rich you know. I got a high TER and I wanted to get in the best job. That's wrong because like if someone dies on the operating table, they're just going to think oh well…put it this way. If you enhance your creativeness and everything else right, if you become a much smarter person then you've got any job you want. All you have to do is set your goals. Right? (John, Interview 2).

His mother accepted this reasoning as if it now, unlike in the previous interview, made some sort of sense and replied:

> Yeah now you tell me (John's mother, Interview 2).

While John's mother was coming to terms with having a son who was studying for reasons she was only just beginning to understand, John was trying to come to terms with becoming eighteen, an age which meant he was allowed to drive and drink alcohol. As Neusner (1998) has noted, a conflict of interest occurs when students go to university straight from high school, a conflict which John described vividly and in a way which showed school had been much more challenging than being at university:

> you should at least have levels, like first you get your licence or drink first and then once you start drinking that much then you'll be able to get your licence. You don't want to drink and drive though…that's what I reckons really bad with how everything's, how things run in our society, like from 17 you're not allowed to do nothing at all. And as soon as you jump to eighteen, you've got, bang your licence, bang pubs, you've got everything jumping at you and people get really confused with that. That's why I see it's really bad…because that's when they get addicted to drugs and everything else like that as well… You should at least have levels (John, Interview 2).

The child becoming adult and the university student living with parents, were played out within a world of existing and renegotiated boundaries of inclusion and in a way which allowed John's mother to remain part of her son's life and to ensure the family members maintained their strong ties with each other. For example, although John was allowed to eat alone during the week, Sunday dinner was a family affair and the one meal his mother insisted he partake of with the rest of the family. John's mother said she began to cook at 4pm ready for a 6 or 7pm meal. Being flexible every day of the week except Sunday meant that John's mother was able to maintain ties while at the same time giving her son individual freedom:

> He's got his freedom to a certain point…If I say John tomorrow, five o'clock we are having dinner, roast beef and stuff like that, you know you have to be there. He has to give a good reason for not being there. And he will be there…have to do something, keep us closer together, you have to do something…otherwise the family will fall apart. You know what I mean (John's mother, Interview 2).

John's mother continued to clean her son's room, wash his clothes and make his dinner, acts which have made some colleagues I have spoken to react with shock that "someone

so old" could still be being looked after in this way by their mother. I admit to the same response and think back to student days as I spent what seemed like hours at the Laundromat watching my washing spin round and round. However, I have to remind myself of how willingly I allowed my mother to do my washing and ironing when I returned home in the holidays and, curiously, how willing my mother seemed to do it for me. Conversations with her since have informed me of the comfort she felt in having me back again when I had been away for three months. Being able to clean and iron my clothes constituted a reconnection of the daughter to the mother and vice versa, a direct and usually unopposed way, of writing oneself back into a son or daughter's life. The smell of fresh ironing in the house when she visits is something I still love, evoking as it does strong and happy memories of wet Sunday afternoons when, my mother ironed as we watched an old movie together on the television. It was a time when she and I were together, alone and connected. This interpretation of the role of mothers and domestic chores is not meant to excuse my own or others' willingness to allow their mothers to do chores for us but it does go some way in helping to explain the willingness and prevalence with which it occurs.

While John's life continued much the same in terms of his mother controlling to a large extent the domestic space, John felt that university had changed him and his views. In summarising his thoughts towards the end of the second interview, John spoke about his university education.

> I do have a wish. And I know how I will achieve it. My wish is just to be umm to be more than what I was. And I am. And if I were to drop out at year 10 like I was supposed to I would not be, nowhere near what I am now. And it's just what I wanted to do. I wanted to change myself. Like, not change myself but change how I see things. Like I see, even university I see changed views, so many views on how I see the world, it's unbelievable. Like I feel sorry for the people who don't even get to go to university because they aren't aware of a lot of things. Like my friends that's done year 12 and who are working and I actually you know and they go what do you do at uni? Oh discuss you know globalism and capitalism. And what's that? And I say you don't know what that is? That's one of the like you know biggest like issues how we are actually run and I talk about like Marxist views and you know Freud and everyone else, and Darwin, Darwinism and they're like yeah?

> They actually like to listen to me talk because in a way they're listening to
> what I'm learning and they actually like, I'm a tutor or something, teaching
> them different things (John, Interview 2).

An interpretation of the above, situated within the Alternative student experience narrative, is that going to university changed this working-class male to such an extent that he felt intellectually distanced from his friends and family. Certainly, his university course challenged and excited him and in a way probably all academics would applaud. However, John was not an empty vessel before he started university. Instead John's was a Metamorphosis narrative which included and not excluded parents and old school friends. He wanted to maintain his connections with friends and family and was able and wanted to pass on his knowledge. In doing so he balanced, negotiated and renegotiated his links with old friends in subtle and sensitive ways. His connection to them continued while his interest in ideas found a place to be further nurtured at university. This connection was evident through the passing on of his knowledge to friends as if, he said, he was their "tutor or something".

The final interview revealed that John had continued to work hard to maintain a balance between home and university and there was also a sense of closure with the narrative of Metamorphosis remaining strong. John and his parents each seemed to have moved on ad to have recognised that changes had occurred, lessons having been learned and more changes were being anticipated. John felt that he had moved on, so much so that he spoke in terms of undertaking metaphorical journeys. He said that connections with his old school had lessened a little, commenting that year 12 felt "close" and "close and far…I like to keep in touch". However, he felt he had

> moved on…starting my journey…my learning stepping stones…but far
> because I've moved on…Like I'm in university now. I like going there and
> they say yeah what are you doing at university, how's that going, and you
> start telling them and they really care but also I'm on my own, not on my own
> but you know, I'm like on my way. Like, starting my journey…my trip's
> going to be up and down, I'm not just like every other person who just like to
> do things the normal way. I go over the top and make myself happy and make
> myself try harder so I feel it's going to be different to most people (John,
> Interview 3).

John's mother revealed that she too had changed. She felt more comfortable about her son being at university and she emphasised a connection with her son which had been enabled by them living together and being able to discuss things together:

> he might as well enjoy study and work now and have a better job after…if he's happy I'm happy… I said "why you going to school? You don't have anything in mind like being a doctor or something this or that. And now he said it's all open for me. So I could understand that (John's mother, Interview 3).

John emphasised this connection to his mother and with a smile on his face, gave an insight into his world at home where his mother found ways of maintaining a physical and emotional connection to her son:

> she's like a reporter. She comes and tells me what's on the news every time, she's like, Princess Di died and I'm like all right all right I'm not really interested in that right now (John, Interview 3).

While John's mother was much more comfortable with her son's decision to go on to higher education, she revealed her skepticism towards certain government and university policies. She compared her son as a full-time student to him being unemployed and in so doing revealed the ambiguities and inconsistencies outside the family regarding her son's status and her own role as provider:

> The funny things about it, if he's living in my house, he's 19 and he's on the dole he gets the full dole and I'm feeding and everything. No, because I'm sending him to school and I'm paying his school he won't get Austudy. Why? So the government doesn't want kids to go to school (John's mother, Interview 3).

University entrance scores (known at the time of the interviews as Tertiary Entrance Rankings or more commonly T.E.R's) also came under scrutiny:

> sometimes the people that do well with TERS don't deserve to go to uni…one of my friends got 67…and I've done very well compared to her…it proves to me like TERS don't mean nothing (John, Interview 3).

In agreeing with her son, John's mother also showed how she had come to understand her son's motivation to study, a metamorphosis of her own which had occurred because of her close connections with her son during the year:

> what I feel is they don't give them more chance to do what they want to do from the heart (John's mother, Interview 3).

In summary, the narrative of Metamorphosis dominated the university experiences of John's family. Various metamorphoses occurred. The first was John's shift from a mediocre high school student to a university student revelling in the intellectual debates of his university course in such a way that he was excelling academically. This metamorphosis occurred with the support of his mother and father although it was not a process his mother found easy to accept. Although initially perturbed by her son's university experiences and the differences between school and university, the fact that her son lived at home meant that John's mother was able to ask questions of her son about his university experiences and clarify issues with him when she needed to. In this way she was able to learn from her son in ways which meant that John's mother felt able to trust her son and give him more responsibilities. John and his parents were able to enjoy and learn from each other during the first-year without needing to separate from each other.

"HE'S PROBABLY SPOILT REALLY"

Steve lived on the outskirts of a regional city. Each family member was born in Australia. His father left school at form five and was a shift worker in a large local company. His mother studied to be a primary school teacher and continued to work part-time in this role. Steve's older sister had been to university but dropped out after two years. Steve attended an outer campus of the university.

Each interview with Steve and his parents was marked by Steve's incredibly laid back attitude, not only to the interviews, but to life in general. Steve was so laid back that at times it was difficult to illicit anything other than the most basic response from him, itself perhaps a reflection of the ease with which he had made the transition to university. Steve's apparent refusal to be ruffled by anything or anyone and the ease with which he had made the transition to university added a dimension to the interview that gave the impression he found the whole interview process rather odd. It was as if he thought, 'Why interview someone about their first-year? It's so inconsequential.' This attitude was encapsulated in the following interchange during which we both smiled at each other at the seeming ridiculousness of the situation:

> GB: So you're basically doing a course that you like?
> Steve: Yep
> GB: You find the campus OK?
> Steve: Yep.
> GB: You're making friends?
> Steve: Yep.
> GB: You're enjoying living at home?
> Steve: Yep.

I looked round at Steve's parents to see how they reacted to this exchange and said:

> GB: Sounds good doesn't it!

To which Steve's parents replied:

Steve's mother: It does. It's not a bad life.
Steve's father: Life's a ball.
Steve's mother: Still gets you know the best of both worlds…he's at uni having, doing something he likes, he's still at home not having to do much as far as looking after himself…He's still got his sport. He really hasn't had to give up anything for uni have you?
Steve: No.

Helping his transition to university was being under much less supervision than he had been at high school so that, like John, Steve revelled in the freedom, pointing out that freedom was the major difference in his life since starting university:

(it's) a bit different to school…they don't really chase you about work and that as much as teachers did at school…they used to annoy me last year when they chased me up and stuff. I used to get hassled last year by the teachers so I didn't like that…I like the uni way better because I don't like people yelling at me…I didn't like wearing a uniform. You've just got more freedom at uni I think than school…whereas school you have to do stuff because you just have to do it (Steve, Interview 1).

Living at home while at university formed an important part of the emerging narrative of Continuation for this family which persisted throughout the year. Steve had made a conscious decision to live at home because he wanted to continue certain aspects of his life:

Friends. Sport. I play a lot of sport. So I didn't want to give it up. (Steve, Interview 1)

Steve's mother felt that living at home had been important for her son precisely because it had led to less change, to a narrative of Continuation:

It's easier…he's fed…his washing's done for him. He really doesn't do much…He's got the use of the car being at home. It's easy in that way. It's not much of a change in lifestyle where he has to look after himself…He's probably spoilt really (Steve's mother, Interview 1).

Arising from her son's narrative of Continuation was a stability that her eldest daughter had not experienced when she had attended university a few years previously. Having

observed her eldest daughter's negative experiences of university, Steve's mother was happy to see that her son was not experiencing too many changes:

> He's probably fortunate he's doing a course that he likes, that makes a big difference. Our elder daughter she went to (names a university), did a course that she thought would be fine and turned out not to be what she wanted and she was at a big campus and she just got lost and hated it and she ended up dropping out after second year and it was basically a waste of two years. I think the small campus makes a big difference. I think they feel part of the place whereas the bigger campus they're really a nobody except among their own group of friends (Steve's mother, Interview 1).

Perhaps her eldest daughter's experiences had shifted her perspectives of education because, unlike the parents in the Archetypal student experience narrative who regard university attendance as the norm, Steve's mother was no longer convinced that going to university was essential:

> (I) always wanted them to go to uni but as they got older I would rather have them be doing something they were happy doing. Because you're a long time working (Steve's mother, Interview 1).

In contrast to his wife, Steve's father had not been tertiary educated. However, he was very aware of one particular aspect of the Archetypal student experience, of a student social life based on joining student clubs and societies. Awareness of this narrative meant that he was disappointed that his son was not experiencing it. He had expected that his son would:

> get more into clubs and associations that unis have…it's just what I've read of university…and I thought Steve would, he's a joiner and a player and I thought he'd be right into that (Steve's father, Interview 2).

Awareness of the Archetypal student experience, meant that Steve's father was unimpressed with the university graduates he had encountered in his own workplace, so much so that he was concerned that his son might become like these graduates:

> I know some very stupid university graduates…They have no common sense at all. They're in another world…everything is just black and white to them and it doesn't work that way in the real world (Steve's father, Interview 1).

Sivier (1997) discussing anti-intellectualism in the UK

> encountered the same attitudes when I first started work after graduating…To some members of the working-class, someone from the same background with a degree is some kind of class traitor who's got above themselves…You meet endless numbers of people who delight in telling you they, coming from the university of life and the school of hard knocks , were able to solve a particularly knotty problem while the graduate 'fresh out of uni' was useless (page 2)

Steve's father's cynicism towards university graduates did not prevent him or Steve's mother, from taking a keen interest in their son's university education. Indeed, living at home made it more feasible for them to do so. The interviews were punctuated by the occasional comment by Steve's parents which indicated their frustration with what they saw as their son's laziness. For example, when I asked if Steve's course had been his first preference he replied:

> I don't know. I had all these things down at the start of the year but then I didn't bother to change them. I couldn't be bothered changing them when I got my results so I don't know what number it was….I could've changed them all but it was too much of a…

To which his parents replied:

> Steve's not one for making much effort (Steve's mother, Interview 1)
> You only do the bare minimum (Steve's father, Interview 1).

Like parents in the Alternative student experience narrative, Steve's father wanted his son to make the most of his opportunities and was therefore exasperated with his son's laid back attitude to his university education. Steve's mother felt that her husband's frustration was due to his different educational background and the emotional investment he had in his son's educational opportunities:

it's probably more frustrating for Chris (Steve's father) because he's never had opportunities to do tertiary, he was never really encouraged to do tertiary education and he doesn't want to see Steve blow it (Steve's mother, Interview 2).

Steve's father agreed, pointing out that he believed his son had been given a once in a lifetime opportunity:

I'm out in the workforce and I know how hard it is to get a job…but if anyone wants to get a job now it's just almost impossible…So I just don't want him to blow it because he's only going to get one shot. So I wasn't really happy when he failed one subject I must admit. I went ballistic! (laughs)… If I was looking for anyone to hire I'd be going through and seeing if they passed everything they were supposed to pass when they were supposed to pass it…to see if they had a real go or not (Steve's father, Interview 2).

Despite being frustrated with his son, he felt Steve had, "matured a bit" (Steve's father, Interview 2). According to Steve's mother, this maturation had been the result, not as one might expect, of going to university, but of Steve living at home. In explaining this, Steve's mother challenged the prevailing wisdom of needing to separate from parents in order to become adult and described the complexities of parenting adults in the home:

I think in some ways he's become more responsible for himself…just in his attitude to what he's doing…he's 19, he's an adult now he's not a child. Even though he's living at home he's still an adult. And that's probably hard to see our children as adults…You've got to step back I think and try and let them, you know it's hard to let them make their own mistakes, you can see them doing it…even work and assignments and just in general life (Steve's mother, Interview 2).

Indeed, parental involvement in Steve's university life was a complex issue in the life of this family, with some levels of involvement being considered better than others and responsibility for involvement being shared amongst various stakeholders. For example, Steve involved his mother in his studies:

I just bring things home and give them to Mum…she's the boss…she'll tell me if I need doing anything (Steve, Interview 1).

But Steve's father was unhappy with this sort of involvement, defining it as over-reliance:

> without mum he wouldn't pass…(I'm) upset because I don't think he works hard enough. He doesn't study unless the exams are coming up and then he comes out and says how do you study? (Steve's father, Interview 1)

However, another type of involvement in his son's university studies was acceptable to Steve's father, namely he considered it reasonable for him to "pick out spelling mistakes and grammar mistakes" in his son's essays.

Steve's father's concern about involvement lay not so much in parental involvement in their son's studies but rather in the university's failure to involve parents in the life of the university. He described himself and his wife as "in the dark most of the time. We have no idea what's going on. (Steve's father, Interview 1) and felt that they could be helped to feel more involved in their son's university life through the university holding social events for parents, "hav(ing) some sort of social thing occasionally." (Steve's father, Interview 2). It is tempting to interpret this comment as being typical of parents who have not come to terms with the fact that their offspring are now adults and therefore autonomous beings for whom parents should be largely irrelevant in their university life. However, this interpretation weakens in the light of Steve's father's description of the differences between school and university. Steve's parents certainly did consider university to be different from school, so much so that they used the word university rather than school because they believed university was "separate" (Steve's mother, Interview 2). Furthermore, Steve's father believed that university students were more autonomous and demonstrated great insight into how many students might deal with the differences:

> School to me is for younger people who are under more control. Trying to get them to hand their work in. At university the teachers don't care if they don't hand the work in. It's bad luck…probably a bit of a culture shock for the kids because they sort of think well they're not under pressure to do anything and if they forget about it or don't do it well, bad luck (Steve's father, Interview 2).

For Steve's father, certain aspects of the Archetypal experience were missing from his son's experience and this disappointed him. The failure of the university to look architecturally different from school and the fact that his son's life had changed so little were the biggest disappointments and showed how strong a hold the Archetypal student experience had. Steve's father's general disappointment in his son's university campus and experience was experienced as follows:

> just looked like a normal school…there's been no change. He just comes home from school, goes and does his training and comes home and goes out with his mates and nothing's changed from last year (Steve's father, Interview 2).

In the final interview, the narrative of Continuation remained, as did the sense that interviewing Steve about his first-year of university was strange to him because it had been so inconsequential. The first part of the final interview was conducted with Steve trying to leave the room as quickly as he could to go to work. He commented that "life was the same as it always had been" replying to my quickly fired questions with polite 'yeps' and 'nopes' as if to make his exit from the whole experience of being interviewed finish as quickly as possible. How much his exit speed related to needing to be at work on time or how much it related to any relief he might have felt not to be involved in the interview any longer is not known but my instincts suggested a mixture of the two.

The rest of the interview continued without Steve in which Steve's mother pointed out the minor role she felt that going to university had so far played in her son's life but emphasising the major role that the family had played. She did this by describing the pleasure she felt in her son's abilities to balance his home, university and social life:

> It really hasn't changed much in lots of ways…This has been a much more positive experience (than their daughter's experience of university)…I don't think uni itself has changed him at all…I thought it might have but no it hasn't. And I think living at home has been beneficial in that way too…he's still got responsibilities within the family…he's still got his chores he has to do round here…getting himself home safely because he's using our car…he's still got to fit in with us…he's still doing his partying but he's not doing it in a crazy way which may have happened in a group of teenagers…perhaps

being at home hasn't been such a good thing in that he's still, it's still fairly easy for him …he's still getting his clothes washed and ironed and he's still getting his meals prepared for him (Steve's mother, Interview 3).

Steve's mother's pleasure on the one hand with her son's maturation but her slight uneasiness with whether or not living at home had been good for him suggests an awareness of the narrative of separation. Perhaps she was anticipating the researcher's response to a son who has so much done?

Steve's father highlighted how his son's attitude to his studies seemed to have remained the same but that other aspects of his life such as being able to drink alcohol and having a car to drive had impacted on his son much more than going to university:

He just expects to go through uni, get a degree, go and get a job, and live happily ever after. But it doesn't work that way…He went though year 12 exactly the way he went through university. He didn't work at it…It's just more of the same…except now they drive cars and go out and drink more than they used to (Steve's father, Interview 3).

In summary, the narrative of Continuation dominated this family's experiences of university with neither Steve's or his parents' lives changing very much at all. While this feeling of little change was comforting to Steve's mother and accepted as the norm by Steve, Steve's father desired more of an Archetypal experience, while at the same time feeling comforted that his son lived at home.

"IT'S LIKE BEING INVISIBLE, WE JUST CAN'T SEE WHAT SHE'S DONE"

> Christine lived in a western suburb of Melbourne. Christine's mother was a house wife. A year earlier Christine's father had been retrenched from his job as a labourer in a large local company. Christine received Austudy and attended an outer campus of the university.

In direct contrast with the laid back atmosphere so apparent in the interviews with Steve and his parents, the first interview with Christine and her parents was full of tensions of which I felt immediately part. On arriving at the house and before the tape recorder was switched on, Christine's father informed me his daughter was not yet home and that she did not want to participate in the interview. While I attempted to be jolly and polite at this news I wondered how I might be able to salvage the interview. Christine's mother remained seated in an armchair in the corner of the lounge room and neither she nor Christine's father invited me to sit. In order to ease what I assumed was their embarrassment at their daughter not being present at the arranged time, I used the tape recorder as a vehicle for breaking tensions, asking where it would be best to plug in so that all could be heard. The spot where I stretched behind a chair to plug in the tape recorder became the place where I sat in this and subsequent interviews with noone suggesting I sat elsewhere and with me being reluctant to request another chair. As well as feeling tensions of which I did not know the source, I also noticed the material sparseness of the lounge room in which I sat. Like the academics I have referred to in Chapter One, I found myself making judgements about this family based on my observations of their behaviour towards a stranger and their apparent lack of material goods.

When Christine arrived about ten minutes later, the tensions increased with Christine shooting fierce looks at her father while I attempted to placate her by taking an interest in where she had been. I was aware of Christine's father half-smiling at Christine's general attitude as if he could have predicted her behaviour and attitude. As I wondered what could have happened to create such tensions between Christine and her father, they

informed me that Christine's mother was very ill and that Christine's father had been made redundant as a labourer in a large local company a year earlier. On hearing this, I felt incredibly guilty to be taking up their time with what seemed such a trivial piece of research in comparison to the issues they were dealing with and I wondered how Christine going to university would fit into this family context.

Like John, at first sight Christine appeared to fulfil the Alternative student experience narrative. Christine's mother had left school at form 3 and then worked in a factory "because there were jobs around when I left school" and she stayed there until she married. However, although both John and Christine were 'first-generation' students, Christine's reason for attending university was quite unlike John's. Christine was going to university because it meant she could continue her life with relative ease. The world of work on the other hand, promised far more difficult obstacles, obstacles that she was reluctant to overcome:

> that's probably one of the reasons why I went to uni, because that was easy just signing a couple of forms and I'm in at uni but for a job you've got to go for interviews and you've got to meet people you don't know, you don't like, do a job that you don't like (Christine, Interview 1).

The image of the university as a rarefied, difficult space to enter and one which should be considered difficult and a privilege to access is common in the Archetypal and Alternative student experience narratives. However, Christine did not perceive university in this way. The worlds of employment, unemployment and sickness played much greater roles in her life. Far from being worried about what to expect about university, Christine had no expectations at all, "I never thought about it" and this was mainly because "I never thought I'd go to university or anything like that." None of Christine's year 12 school friends were in her course or at university and most of them were "just bumming around." She had expected to get a job or "bludge around" but when she discovered that she had been accepted into a course, she decided to enrol and if it did not work out she would leave. Christine was so uninspired about going to university that she said she

"would rather have a car". However, she did suggest that starting university was a chance to make new beginnings, "starting over, I broke up with my boyfriend and stuff."

Christine's father was recovering from the emotional and financial blows of redundancy and as a result, Christine received Austudy of $174 a fortnight and she considered it too expensive to leave home. Within the Archetypal and Alternative student experience narratives, the student is expected to be an autonomous adult with little or no need to remain dependent on parents. However, in this family narrative not only was Christine dependent on her parents for a roof over her head but her parents were dependent on Christine for money because they expected their daughter to give them $50 a fortnight for room and board. However, her mother said "It's very hard to get money out of Christine, it's like getting blood out of a stone" and Christine often ran out of money by the end of the first week. Christine's refusal to adjust to the family's new financial situation was a bone of contention between Christine and her parents with her mother saying the extras she used to be able to buy could no longer be bought.

Christine's mother was also facing a physical battle with a serious and potentially terminal illness and therefore within such financially and emotionally draining circumstances, Christine's decision to go to university rather than search for a job can be interpreted as Christine's search for as much stability and continuity as possible. Challenging traditional assumptions about first-generation students in which they are supposed to experience great changes, for Christine going to university was the most desirable option because it would lead to the least change. The stress and unpredictability of searching for a job and the possibility of unemployment were too frightening to entertain and so although Christine was finding study difficult, it was a less stressful choice than the world of searching for a job. Christine's father highlighted this in describing relating how a friend of Christine's was working in an ice cream parlour, "she's working selling doughnuts, you go and do it. But Christine doesn't want to do that. She doesn't want to go and sell doughnuts or hamburgers". Christine agreed but said she was too scared "It's something new to me." Her mother said she'd prefer to "be in a back room somewhere where noone can see her." Christine's desire to be in a world of the

known rather than the unknown and her mother's perception that Christine desired to be invisible are explained by her mother as a sign of her daughter's "self doubt…It probably runs in Christine and I." But perhaps Christine's desire for invisibility, continuity and stability can also be explained as a rationale response to a year of upheaval and extreme stress for Christine and her family.

In many ways, the experiences and reactions of Christine's parents towards Christine's education and higher education resemble elements of the Alternative student experience narrative and as such they resonate for those academics who have either taught first-generation students or who imagine what 'they' might be like. For example, Christine's mother felt unable to understand or contribute to Christine's higher education because "I don't have a clue what she's talking about." Similarly, Christine was finding university studies difficult because she was too embarrassed to ask for help. There existed a gridlock with Christine feeling unable to ask for help and her parents wanting to help but not knowing quite how. For example, Christine said she had been struggling with an essay and had shown her parents but

> they didn't understand it because it had big words and stuff and I was worried about handing it in and failing (Christine, Interview 1).

Like Steve's father and John's parents, Christine's parents going to university was seen as an opportunity they had not had and therefore to be made the most of:

> we want her to keep going because we've never been able to go to university (Christine's mother, Interview 1).

The term 'keep going' suggests a continued journey, of travelling forward and in this way, university is seen on a continuum of other educational experiences, part of a series of educational steps a person takes. However, although Christine had taken what she thought was the line of least resistance, she was not finding university easy. Whereas John and Steve were enjoying new found freedoms, the realities of independent study were causing Christine to rethink her decision and to consider deferring. Christine's

reasons for going to university and the potential mismatch between her own personality and abilities to cope with the demands of study, combine to present a narrative in which Christine was trapped by both her own personality and wider social and economic circumstances. Her description of her attempts to study are not dissimilar to Knight's (1990) imaginings referred to in Chapter One:

> I don't have the motivation…I think I have a lot of spare time on my hands. I try…I sit here and say 7.30 comes, got my folder here, I'm going to do something but then Blue Heelers comes on or something like that and I think I'll do it after that. And then I go, oh I'm tired now. I'll go to bed and do it in the morning. Morning comes. Nothing…I've been talking to mum and dad this past week and telling them I want to leave school because I've just never been any good at study so I don't know how I'm going to cope with four years (Christine, Interview 1).

Christine's comments above also bring into focus two other issues of 'spare time' and university being referred to as 'school'. 'Spare time' in the context of this narrative refers to large gaps of time between classes and/or low classroom contact hours, a phenomenon which contrasts starkly with high school life in which each week day was more tightly structured and filled by teachers. In applying the Alternative student experience narrative, whereby the first-generation student is generally seen as problematic, Christine would perhaps be encouraged to seek counselling in time management. However, the application of this narrative ignores the realities of the ways in which students perceive and live through their university experiences in which spare time can often be seen as a wasteful luxury. The university timetable is not seen as a flexible system which allows students to interact with their peers and staff and give them time to study but as a financially wasteful system which students find frustrating. Take for example, a conversation I overheard when sharing a lift with two students. One of them exclaimed:

> "I hate breaks! A waste of time, a waste of money and a waste of resources."

Christine and her parents referred to university as 'school', a phenomenon observed with other students that has been noted with surprise by McInnis and James:

> We were struck by the number of students at both New and Regional universities who referred to university as 'school'. Indeed, some students we interviewed could not identify significant differences between life at school and life at university. They enjoyed the freedom of university (being 'allowed to leave the gates'), the spare time, the absence of rigid pattern and they were conscious of the responsibilities they had for their personal organisation. But university was not what these groups of students had expected and, to their disappointment, it turned out to be an extension of school. One student said with a mixture of regret and cynicism, 'the teachers at my old school would say if you go to university you will feel really alive…then I get here and it's nothing. (McInnis and James, 1995: 33)

McInnis and James interpret the use of the term school as an expression of university feeling no different from high school and therefore of university being a continuation of what has gone before. Christine's father provides support for this interpretation:

> I mean Christine's been going to school for twelve years (Christine's father, Interview 2).

However, Christine used the word university not necessarily because it felt like school but rather for social effect, when she wished to impress or when she was with other students who had a specific understanding of what the term meant:

> If I'm around my friends I say I'm going to uni cos it sounds really good but I say school…I like it when people say that, it sounds really really smart…you're going to uni…you feel like Bachelor of (names course). I don't know (laughs). If I'm trying to make an impression on somebody I'll probably say university not school (Christine, Interview 2).

Although Christine's explanation for using the word school instead of university is not explained, her unfinished sentence suggests that Christine uses the term school as a way of equalising social situations, when she does not want to seem different from others. These sophisticated shifts in her use of language indicate something of the complexities of her social world in which she recognised the power that saying one is 'going to university' can have in certain circumstances but how it can create unwanted or unnecessary tension in other situations. Its use also indicates something of her attempts to deal with a shifting identity, from a high school year 12 student to a first-year university student.

The financial stress combined with the emotional stresses being experienced by Christine and her parents were a constant presence in each interview and I felt a responsibility to ease the family's stresses if I possibly could. This desire led to a merging of my professional and researcher roles. Having listened to Christine's concerns about her abilities to study, at the end of the first interview I offered my help as a student learning support lecturer, specifically offering to teach her some skills and strategies for assignment writing. She was keen to do this and we arranged a day and a time. However, Christine did not turn up. A Journal entry detailed not only what happened after that, but the tensions I felt concerning the prevailing discourse of separation:

> Journal entry 25/7/97
> Yesterday Christine's father phoned me at work to tell me he had received my thank you letter for the first interview that mentioned that I had missed meeting Christine the week before. He phoned to say that she did go. "We had to wake her up and we got a mouthful of cheek for it." He said that he thought she should be ringing me but "you saw what she's like." I told him the times and places she could see me. He said he'd pass on the info.

Some readers might be annoyed or shocked at the involvement of Christine's father in this way and would perhaps argue that on the basis of her being eighteen and therefore adult, Christine should be allowed to choose whether or not she go to the appointment and her parents should take no part in the process. However, acknowledgment of a conjoint rather than singular experience of university allows and approves of parental involvement. Arguably involvement in the research was the catalyst for a more conjoint experience to emerge. Christine's father wanted his daughter to receive help and to be respectful of making an appointment time.

When Christine's father phoned me once more to arrange a second time for his daughter to see me, it was clear that Christine's father saw himself as the go-between:

> Journal entry 25/8/97
> Christine's Dad phoned me today. He wanted to make an appointment for Christine to see me on Friday. I agreed to see her at 4pm. He said that she's struggling and needs help but it's only now that she's willing "to grovel", as he put it, for help. I don't think he meant this horribly but was just explaining

how Christine felt. He said that Christine wouldn't phone me but was willing to let her dad phone me. What does all this mean in terms of student/parent relationships? If I hadn't been to their home, would Christine have even sought help or thought about doing so? Her Dad said he'd mentioned a few times about going to see me but she "wasn't ready."

That I was struck by Christine's father acting as go-between is also indicative of my own surprise at the parent contacting me and speaking on Christine's behalf. Had I encouraged the separation narrative the parent would have not had the opportunity or the inclination to call me or would have been discouraged from doing so. Furthermore, if living away from home, it would have been unlikely that Christine's father would have known his daughter was struggling with her studies and even less likely that he would have had the phone number of someone he could call to request help. In contrast, the design of this study placed the student, the students' parents and myself in a situation whereby avenues of communication that would normally have been closed, unknown or unused were open, known and accessible allowing a conjoint experience where the student and her parents and the researcher were able to work together.

In the world of university and the ways in which student experience studies are designed, this was an unusual set of circumstances. It is more usual that when parents do appear on campus or on the end of a telephone or email, they are considered to be trespassers. Parent as trespasser on campus was highlighted again in the following situation which I recorded in my research diary. Significantly, so strong was the feeling that parents should not be part of the decision making about their son or daughter's university course that I felt unable to offer an alternative view:

> Journal entry 25/8/97
> In a meeting yesterday, someone raised the issue of what would happen if a student brought their parents for an admissions interview and they were influencing the student 'too much'. We were told that the parent would be asked to go for a coffee etc and come back later. I smiled because people in the room were scoffing about such parents whereas I felt like standing up for them. I felt like saying but you can't divorce the student from their family. They are not separate.

Interviewing this family just once would perhaps have led me to the common conclusion that parents of first-generation students are unable to help their student offspring and that students are better off to separate from family ties. However, unlike the first interview when Christine had felt unable to share her study concerns with her parents, in the second interview, a narrative of Metamorphosis emerged. I asked if her parents ever became involved in any of her university studies. Considering the tensions between father and daughter in the previous interview, I was surprised to hear Christine's response, "I got Dad to help me with my maths project." The increasing conjoint nature of their university experience emerged further when her father commented "I mean Christine's …learning levels have surpassed all ours but still she talks about what she does and we get to see some of her work." Christine said of this "I show them why I pass, marks and everything." and her father quickly said "I repair the car she drives to school so I feel I'm part of her going along!" (laughs) so yeah I'm still in some way involved. More giving support. Plenty of yelling and screaming still goes on."

Another change had also occurred for Christine. In the first interview making new friends had been a stressful factor, especially being in a classroom with older students:

> I sort of rush into things and making friends I wouldn't ordinarily make friends with…there's a person who's constantly on the phone to me and of bother to me now…another reason of why I don't want to be there. I've got friends there who are older and I don't know whether I'm saying the right things or if they're laughing at me and stuff like that. I know they're not but I've got that sort of suspicious mind (Christine, Interview 1).

However, by the second interview, Christine felt that new friends had been central to her continuing with her studies. She had become more confident because her friends, "know who I am now. They know what I'm like. They take me for me now." There was also evidence that Christine had begun to 'disassociate' herself from her past in much the same way as authors such as Tinto consider necessary for successful 'integration' (see Chapter One). She felt that year 12 was a distant memory "I don't remember anything I did in year 12" and she only kept in touch with her best friend "Everybody else that I knew are in dead end, dead end jobs." Christine said that things were better because "I

know more people now and I can do my work and help and stuff. Teachers, different teachers are better." Her social life had also improved and she chose the interview to reveal to her parents that she had "skipped a computer class and ended up going down the pub. Did I tell you that?" and her friends were helping her out with assignments "At least I know they're there to help me." In comparing these experiences with last semester she said that "I always used to think about what I was going to say and it would come out wrong and I'd look like a nerd and now I say different things all the time."

The narrative of Metamorphosis was also apparent in Christine's observation that university was different from school. Despite sometimes calling university school she felt it differed in the same way that John and Steve had experienced, "Just the discipline, staff side of it …class teachers aren't on your back." Christine's father agreed that university was different from school and felt that this difference had impacted on his daughter. He said that he had seen Christine:

> assuming a different responsibility. Her learning I guess…the material she brings home…has a different degree of difficulty than what she's had to cope with in the past and there's more, I don't know, more assessment, more judgement. Just trying to express her feelings on things a bit more…there's not the same regimentation (Christine's father, Interview 2).

Although Christine was still feeling somewhat uninspired by her university education with her priority being "just to pass" she put this down to not enjoying or seeing the relevance of some of the subjects. Despite this, the contrast between the first and second interview when she was considering leaving the university was stark:

> I think I'd probably be disappointed in myself if I didn't finish. I'm enjoying it…Last time you came I said I'd rather have a job working, stacking shelves or something but that would probably be boring to me now (Christine, Interview 2).

I asked Christine's parents how they felt about hearing Christine's change of heart since the first interview and her father replied "it's very uplifting actually. I feel much more optimistic about Christine's future and her opportunities". Christine's father's frustrations now lay less with his daughter and more with not knowing about how the university

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worked and not feeling involved in his daughter's university world, something which he likened to being invisible:

> I say to Christine, you haven't done anything but then she says, but I've done it at school. But I'm not at school so I don't know what Christine's done at school…what she does behind her door we don't see that either. It's like being invisible, we just can't see what she's done. And when she comes home she sits in front of the TV or on the computer and goes out. And she might do work in her bedroom but we can't see through the door…If she goes on the computer and does school work within ten minutes she's off the computer and it's finished…we don't know what she's doing at uni, we don't know what she's doing in her bedroom (Christine's father, Interview 2).

Despite, or maybe because of, the various conflicts with her parents through the year, Christine was ambivalent about parental involvement during her first-year. Nevertheless she advised that parents should be involved in their student son or daughter's life while at university but she defined the type of involvement carefully. Her comments also indicate a sophisticated reflection of her experiences:

> (parents should) get involved because some kids, I don't like mum and dad getting involved. I like them to show like they're interested in what I do and stuff but I don't like them hounding me…I do get frustrated but I like it when mum and dad ask how are you doing and stuff like that. But some parents can just, they just turn their back and don't care and say you should try harder and stuff like that. Like my friend Jane her mum just is really mean to her and stuff like that puts her down and it just doesn't help her with her work…when you go to university you're becoming an individual you're growing up and you don't need your parents to help you. Like if you go to primary school and your parents hold your hand and walk you to the gate like university you don't want your parents anywhere near it. Because your friends will laugh at you…dad wouldn't like it if mum came to help him and stuff like that (Christine, Interview 3).

Christine living at home meant that the Alternative narrative initially dominated this family's experiences with medical, financial and study tensions making the year a difficult one. However, living together meant that the family was able to work through their difficulties together. As a result, Christine's confidence in herself grew, and a narrative of Metamorphosis occurred in which Christine began to enjoy her course and

the tensions at home reduced with Christine encouraging and enjoying her parents' involvement and interest in her studies.

"THEY'RE AT PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR SEVEN YEARS…THEN THEY'RE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR SIX YEARS AND NOW SHE'S AT UNIVERSITY FOR THREE YEARS"

> Karen lived in a wealthy eastern suburb of Melbourne. Karen's mother left school at sixteen and Karen's father at fourteen. Karen's father was a truck driver and Karen's mother was a housewife. Karen was a first-generation student and attended an outer campus of the university.

Unlike my journey to Christine's home, in travelling to Karen's home I was keenly aware of my unfamiliarity with the area, and the eastern suburbs in general, so much so that I lost my way and was late for the first interview. On arrival at the house I noticed the established trees along the nature strip and a general sense of wealth. I felt very much a stranger and felt the contrast between this suburb and the ones I knew in the west. In a reversal of the usual pattern of researchers being fascinated by people living in poorer areas, I was intrigued to discover what this eastern suburb family might be like, my assumption being that they would be wealthier and therefore different from those families I had met in the west (see comments in Chapter 2 regarding Melbourne's eastern and western suburbs).

On entering the home, I was aware of the age of the house in comparison to John, Steve's and Christine's. This was a turn of the century brick home and the furniture in the lounge room reflected this. I was immediately given tea and cake and was helped to set up the tape recorder.

Despite living in a wealthy eastern suburb and the Archetypal narrative that such a location can imply, the family fitted neatly into the Alternative student narrative in terms of their educational backgrounds. Karen's father felt that university attendance was essential for survival in the context of high unemployment:

> Back in those days they taught you to read and write and then kicked you out
> the door…but things have changed that much that kids today haven't got that

much of a future in my opinion unless they do all of this…if you haven't got an education there isn't much future for you (Karen's father, Interview 1).

However, in contrast to Christine's family whose struggle with finances was a constant and isolating part of their existence, for Karen's parents, the economics of having a daughter being at university was less to do with struggle but rather to do with 'strain' and self-sacrifice. While Christine's parents had struggled privately, Karen's parents' self-sacrifice was not an isolated private struggle, but something they shared with other families in their own social networks:

it's a strain on finances for a lot of people but you've just got to do it (Karen's father, Interview 1).

While Christine was unusual in her friendship circle because she had gone to university, Karen was merely one of many, so much so that there was a sense of being on a collective financial and educational treadmill in which going to university was the norm. Going to university was not a major transition in their lives but merely an expected educational step most people took:

it's just accepted that children do go on. The majority of children from Karen's school have gone on to tertiary education. I think you'd be in the minority if you didn't. So any talk was where are you going or what course are you going to do more so than will we let them go to university. There's been no question of saying well I'm sorry you have to go to work…they're at primary school for seven years, and then they're at secondary school for six years and that happens and now she's at university for three years, and it looks as if that's going to happen too…I'm assuming that this university degree will come into fruition (Karen's mother, Interview 1).

The narrative of Continuation emerged not only in the physical transition from high school to university but also in Karen's mother's perceptions of her daughter's university experiences. By using the personal pronoun 'we' rather than 'she', Karen's mother also emphasised their collective, conjoint experience of university:

We haven't had any ripples...there hasn't been any dramas (Karen's Mother, Interview 1).

Living at home had added to Karen's narrative of Continuation and, like Steve, she enjoyed the luxuries that living at home gave her:

> I don't have to pay anything here which is really good…and I get everything done for me like dinner and washing and stuff…I've never lived away from home so I find it no different (Karen, Interview 1).

While Christine was frustrated because family finances meant she could not have her own car, Karen's parents were financially stable enough to be able to act collectively and quickly to the "devastating" news that Karen would have to travel a long way each day to university:

> because it was such a long way from here so the changes we had to make, we had to provide a vehicle…changed one car for two smaller but newer cars so that she's got a reliable dependable vehicle… it's for our satisfaction to know that hopefully the car's going to get her there and back each day and if she's in trouble she's got the phone to use…peace of mind (Karen's mother, Interview 1).

Similarly, Karen's father spoke of his own contribution in buying a mobile phone for his daughter:

> to carry in the glove box, if there's any problems. There's nothing else you can do…I have to fill her car with petrol every week, that's the only thing that's altered as far as I'm concerned. I thought the travelling would be too much but evidently it's not. She seems to be handling it in her stride (Karen's father, Interview 1).

With the exception of the purchase of a mobile phone and an additional car, so great was the narrative of Continuation, that Karen's mother felt this was symbolised in the way they called university 'school'. She saw her use of the word 'school' as a sign that they as parents had not become used to the idea of the supposed difference between the two:

> we actually still call it school. We haven't got out of that. We say something, going to school, or at school today. I suppose we haven't matured yet, we haven't grown up yet! Because it's new to us…maybe I only think of

university if she was actually going to stay there...but I just think of it as another school that she's going off to (Karen's mother, Interview 2).

Although Karen's parents considered university to be the next and natural educational step to take, this did not mean that that they knew very much about university. Their sense of not knowing was a continuing theme throughout the interviews and revealed not just how little they knew but their curiousity to know more:

> (I) didn't go to university…didn't have any expectations…we don't know much about university life at all… (Interview 1)…I don't know the difference between a lecturer and a lecture and tutorial…You know is there a set pattern, do you hang your coat up? And your bag? (all laugh) like you did at primary school? So I really don't know what goes on at university (Karen's mother, Interview 2).

Significantly, the narrative of Continuation arose not only from Karen living at home but also from university looking and feeling like high school. Like Steve and Christine, Karen attended a small, outer campus of the university and felt that its small size had contributed to her to feeling more secure and to a smooth transition having been made:

> being a smaller campus has probably been good. I've heard other people who have perhaps gone to (names two universities) and feel a bit lost when they first start out (Karen, Interview 1).

Like Steve's father, although Karen's mother had not been to university she had quite strong images in her mind about what it would be like and how this was different to her daughter's experiences:

> more of a big country school…(Karen's mother, Interview 1) I tend to think it's different to what I thought university life was. I tend to just think of Melbourne University because Melbourne was just about the only university when I was at school. And that was all mysterious to me. Big buildings. Whereas this seems friendlier, or I don't know…I don't even know how many people go to Karen's university (Karen's mother, Interview 2).

However, the physical appearance of universities was only one change that she thought had occurred in her life-time. Karen's mother considered university students themselves to have changed:

> In my younger years I always thought of university students that walked around throwing eggs at people…you sort of thought oh the rich people's kids go there but it's different now...the good things that happen in universities which there must be a lot of you never hear about. Highly intelligent people but over the top (Karen's mother, Interview 1).

The university and its students were so unlike her mother's descriptions that this added to Karen's sense of continuation:

> I just see it like going to school. None of that sort of happens (Karen, Interview 2).

Despite not having attended university themselves, like Steve and Christine's parents, Karen's parents had been able to involve themselves in their daughter's university education and in so doing challenged the Alternative student experience narrative which tells of students' parents feeling isolated intellectually from their offspring:

> If I don't understand, especially expenditure and stuff like planning financial go to mum or dad and see if they know and they do and they just explain it to me. So that's how they find out what I do, if I get help from them (Karen, Interview 2).

Her mother added that that they were able to point to useful resources even if they were not able to help specifically with the content:

> sometimes we can't help…that was the same as school, I felt totally useless year 11 and 12. Even year 10 probably. But I think where we're able to help is we can refer her to somewhere else, like a book or library, we perhaps can find out how she can find out…even if we don't know things we perhaps suggest another way (Karen's mother, Interview 2).

However, Karen's father felt he was less able to help his daughter. He felt unable to contribute to his daughter's formal learning in a way he might have wanted to because he

did not have the same level of education as his daughter and in describing his feelings the Alternative student experience narrative reemerged:

> I don't have much to do with it, a lot of the things she does I wouldn't have a clue…Don't even know what they're talking about some of the time (Karen's father, Interview 2).

However, as if to ease her husband's anxiety, Karen's mother pointed out that her husband helped in a different way and in so doing emphasised the collective effort the parents had made to ease their daughter's transition to university:

> David (Karen's father) makes sure she gets there and back each day by servicing her car and topping it up with petrol and is very supportive in that way. Makes sure you know, he worries about her if she goes out during the week, because he knows she needs to have a good night's sleep because she's got a big day today so he's concerned (Karen's mother, Interview 2).

Helping their daughter with her university subjects was something they were pleased they were able to do. However, Karen's mother was critical of their own parenting and seemed to have internalised the Alternative student experience narrative in which 'parent without university education is problem'. While academics are used to hearing other academics make claims about students' and parents' lack of cultural capital, what is more unusual is hearing parents themselves articulating this. I found it profoundly disturbing to hear Karen's mother's apparently having accepted the lack of cultural capital argument and connecting this to where she believed she and her husband 'went wrong' in bringing up their two children. I wondered how much she believed what she was saying and how much she thought it was what I wanted to hear. The poignancy of her comment lies in the internalisation and articulation of their own presumed lack of cultural capital which comes, not from the voice of an outsider pointing out someone else's perceived deficit, but rather from someone who considers they as a family do not 'possess' it:

> we're perhaps not a terribly outgoing family. Like even one of Karen's friends I remember back in primary school they'd go to restaurants and she, this little girl, would say we had Cordon Bleu last night and I thought Karen wouldn't even know what Cordon Bleu was, I hardly know what Cordon

Bleu is. But this little girl grew up like that…and we don't sit around and talk about the government at home. Like we don't sit around the tea table and discuss politics so therefore you haven't heard it in the home. And that's why you say you're expected to know a lot more than you know. It's just your poor upbringing probably. Your lack of it…she could read the paper a bit more…that's where I think we've fallen down a little bit…we haven't travelled a great deal with our children…so perhaps they're not as aware of places and geography…we don't have a lot of visitors, we've never had a lot of visits…you tend to feel guilty…parents do. They feel as if it's up to them to have done everything for their children that they should have (Karen's Mother, Interview 3).

While the narrative of Continuation remained strong, there were also signs of a narrative of Metamorphosis. For example, Karen's status as a university student and adult and child was being constantly negotiated and reframed:

she has matured a lot but she's still our baby. The fact that she still does come home and I still do her washing, I can't see the changes. But I realise she's an adult and she's doing quite well…life just goes on and all of a sudden you think oh she's not a baby any more (Karen's mother, Interview 2).

One moment in particular signified to Karen's mother a change in her daughter's status and her own as a parent. Having obtained her driving licence, Karen told her mother that she no longer needed to go to basketball coaching with her:

 (she said) you don't need to come any more (Karen's mother, Interview 3).

Her daughter's new found freedom was interpreted as a strong signal by Karen's mother that her daughter had changed:

she's a young adult, she doesn't ask if she can go anywhere, she just does, tells you she's going or whatever. She says I'm 19 after all…she doesn't need me like she used to…and that's good because she's matured, she's grown up, she makes her own decisions (Karen's mother, Interview 3).

Other evidence of change was that the university communicated by letter to Karen rather than to them as parents. This led Karen's mother to accept, albeit reluctantly, the

prevailing wisdom of separation, so strong within the Archetypal and Alternative student experience narratives:

> I don't mind not…because I think well that's her life that's what happens there it's her concern. Because we're gradually letting go of any control or overseeing of Karen (Karen's mother, Interview 3).

In a similar vein her father said,

> we can't tell them what to do any more. Their life's in their own hands isn't it? (Karen's father, Interview 3).

Despite their apparent acceptance of their daughter's change of status to adult, Karen's father continued to protect his daughter from potential harm, something he reasoned was to do with his country upbringing and his concerns about city living:

> I think bringing children up in a big city is different. You worry about them more…I see a lot of dangers where the kids don't today. Like Karen will go up the road here some nights to baby-sit. If I'm about I'll go out and stand at the gate 'til she gets up there because you just don't know. But she doesn't see any danger, I don't want you standing at the gate looking. But you do worry about them a lot more (Karen's father, Interview 3).

Karen saw her parents as instrumental in helping a seamless transition to university to occur so much so that she stressed the importance of a conjoint experience in the advice she would give parents whose son or daughter was about to start university:

> to try and keep involved with them like I think it helps sort of me coming home and saying now and then now what was my day like or just talking about it or mum and dad asking me questions about uni. I think that sort of keeps me more interested in it. I think parents being involved still if they can be it's still good. Cos then it's not that major step from high school. Just try to keep involved (Karen, Interview 3).

Karen's parents felt that they had less involvement in their daughter's life than when she had been at high school and this had been highlighted by the one key metamorphosis in the family's life which was Karen obtaining her driving licence. With this exception, the

year of university had been an undramatic one. Having expected greater changes and therefore greater trauma, the narrative of Continuation which dominated this family's experiences was helpful in maintaining a stable home life.

"YOUR FIRST-YEAR IS PROBABLY THE WORST YEAR. THE LONELINESS, DEPRESSION THAT HITS YOU"

> Francesca lived in a rural region of western Victoria. Her father was an engineer and had attended a technical college. Francesca's mother worked part-time as a receptionist. Francesca was a first-generation student and attended a small outer campus of the university.

If Karen's family's experiences of university were notable for the seamlessness and simplicity with which they had made the transition to university, Francesca's was marked by struggle and complexity. The family lived in a part of Victoria I had not visited before and its isolation and beauty were striking. Francesca's parents were Italian by birth but had lived in Australia for most of their lives. In the first interview Francesca's two sisters were present although they said very little. I had the impression that they were curious about what the interview was about but were also there to support their sister, thus emphasising the closeness of the family and their involvement in Francesca's first-year.

Francesca's mother spoke from within the Alternative student experience narrative when she commented on her father's desire for his family to be educated:

> (he) is illiterate…he just was never sent to school…he was needed to work on the family farm…there were ten children and some of them got to go to school for quite a few years and others didn't go at all and it was very cruel. So coming from that background where education was highly prized (Francesca's mother, Interview 1).

In the Archetypal student experience narrative parents often encourage their offspring to attend the same or similar institution that they themselves had attended. However, Francesca's father demonstrated how the advent of the massified system of education had added a new type of educational inheritance. Her father had attended an institute of technology completed a diploma in engineering. This institution had since become a

university and his daughter attended it, albeit at a different campus and Francesca's father saw a definite educational and generational link between the two:

> There's a commonality. I went there, she went there (Francesca's father, Interview 1).

Indeed, his memories of his time as a student were strong and led him to offer advice to his daughter:

> it's a time of growth, helps you overcome your loneliness and do what you're doing…persistence is more important than IQ. Effort, time, reading is important or you won't pass. I remember people doing exams and hardly reading anything…I discovered that different subjects require different emphasis (Francesca's father, Interview 1).

However, despite her father's experience and advice about study and the family's positive attitude towards participation in higher education, Francesca found her first semester difficult. Her expectations of university had not been met and consequently she felt:

> under lots more pressure than ever before, assignments, reports, exams all at once…all much harder than I imagined (Francesca, Interview 1).

Francesca was particularly concerned about lecturers not helping her as her high school teachers had done and in so doing highlighted a major difference between the two educational institutions:

> noone has time to help you to say how things could be improved. I expected the effort I would put in would mean they'd help me (Francesca, Interview 1).

In searching for reasons why her expectations of university were so different from reality, Francesca believed her high school had helped her too much:

> my secondary school carried us and took us to the exam room (Francesca, Interview 1).

Francesca's sense of being 'carried' through to the end of year 12 creates images of collaboration, assistance and support and contrast starkly with her first semester university experience. The shock felt by Francesca when she went to university situates Francesca within the Alternative student experience narrative. However, the culture shock arose not as one might expect from the contrasts in moving from a small, rural high school to a large, city university but in the disappointment that this contrast did not occur. Francesca's high school teachers had spoken of university from the perspective of the Archetypal student experience narrative whereby university is very much about a new and different sort of social life to any experienced before, and about making lots of new friends. Consequently, Francesca had prepared herself for a different and quite specific sort of university experience, only to find herself at a small outer suburban campus with a small student population and a campus environment that felt and looked similar to what she was already familiar with:

> Everyone said I'd make all these friends and go on beer runs and all that stuff and she (her teacher) said that students who live on campus have that sort of life. They go to parties, pubs every night. It's different when you don't live on campus…alone a lot… I expected to go to Deakin or La Trobe and being surrounded by people, lots of buildings, don't know where I'm going, but (names the campus) is so small. It's like a small secondary school. Do you know what I mean? (laughs weakly). So it's different (Francesca, Interview 1).

Although the campus did not feel significantly different to her old high school, Francesca nevertheless still felt "alone a lot", emphasising how size of campus does not necessarily make students feel any less isolated. Francesca's father used his own experiences as a student to advise his daughter how to deal with loneliness:

> the fact that you're really on your own. Your first-year is probably the worst year. The loneliness, depression that hits you. You've got to get over that…I told her how I felt just to show her she's not alone. It happens to other people….you've got to get to know people to feel more secure (Francesca's father, Interview 1).

However, despite advice and support from her family, frustration at receiving less feedback than she had been used to or expected, her disappointment with the campus environment and her loneliness, all contributed to her considering leaving at Easter. Francesca had shared her thoughts with her family and it was her uncle who changed her mind. He challenged his niece in two ways. First, he constructed the first-year as similar to a physical test of endurance, complete with full of traps for the unwary, and by implication, he defined those who did endure the year as psychologically strong. Francesca's uncle rationalised that if the first-year at university seems simple or difficult, boring or challenging, then maybe this is because it has been purposefully constructed that way. He concluded that maybe the whole of the first-year is a filtering system on top of initial entrance requirements, a way to sort out the wheat from the chaff, the committed from the uncommitted:

> My uncle gave me good advice…I wanted to quit because I was alone a lot, not got heaps of friends and I travel a lot, I just wanna get home. My uncle told me that in the first-year they give all the dumb subjects to see who wants to do the course and sort out all the weak ones. He said don't be a weak one like he was (Francesca, Interview 1).

In addition to advice from her uncle, Francesca's father also advised Francesca, referring to struggle as part of learning. Unlike the struggles present in Christine's family, Francesca's struggle related to psychological rather than financial issues. Speaking metaphorically, her father likened being a student to gardening:

> Fruits of their labour. It's a matter of persistence. Lots drop out. Something like 50 per cent drop out…It's no good just digging the soil up, planting the seed and not watering it. You've got to provide the right conditions (Francesca's father, Interview 1).

Receiving advice from her family in this way was significant for Francesca whose unhappiness was made bearable by the fact that she lived with her family. She believed that if she had lived away:

I think I would've got homesick...I'm happy coming home, let alone at the weekend. I've talked to a lot of people up in Albury, things, living on their own, I don't think I could bear it. You do meet a lot of people but I'm happy to come home (Francesca, Interview 1).

The conjoint nature of their experiences was emphasised through the collective manner in which the family felt and responded to Francesca's experiences of university:

we're all conscious of the pressure. We all suffer. Francesca suffers…when she comes home and she's upset about something there's not a lot we can do but offer emotional support (Francesca's mother, Interview 1).

Unfortunately the second interview was marked by an increased atmosphere of unhappiness and at the beginning of the interview Francesca was nearly in tears. I was treading on eggshells throughout the interview and all the time was searching for a solution. I felt obliged to do so both in my capacity as a researcher and in my role as a staff member of the institution at which she was so unhappy. Francesca's mother had noticed her daughter becoming:

more and more disillusioned as she goes on...at the end of last semester and the beginning you know, she's all hyped up and she was going to study for years and years and now she seems, the enthusiasm has waned a little I'd say (Francesca's mother, Interview 2).

Francesca agreed with her mother saying she was finding it hard to make herself go to university, pointing out in particular the difficulty she was having in adapting to the seeming disinterest of the staff in her as an individual:

university in general is pretty much getting me down lately…I'm just not interested any more at all…I hate travelling and that makes me resent the place of course…Everywhere I turn…it seems like…they're too busy or they're not really interested…it's really hard like to handle…Last semester was shock enough coming from x school…this semester is just like another shock…it seems to be getting worse…it's hard to put in your best when you're not getting feedback…there's no 'well done' or 'look at the mark you got' (Francesca, Interview 2).

Francesca pointed out that she was not the only person to be feeling so miserable. She said that two of her friends were also disillusioned. One had deferred and one at another university was unhappy. Francesca related how they had spoken to a lecturer about how they were feeling she had responded by saying that their feelings were "common" for that time of year:

> I don't see that it can be normal. Like, like, if it was normal, I don't know, wouldn't they make it a shorter year or something like that? I don't know. It felt to me like she was just trying to push me in that category, push me aside sort of thing, and not say well what are you worried about or anything like that. So I just felt like it was an easy thing to say, do you know what I mean? (Francesca, Interview 2).

Her mother said she could sympathise with how Francesca was feeling and emphasised how she expected her daughter to make whatever decision she felt was right for herself:

> I think that I would feel exactly the same in her position…she knows what's best for herself and she'll make the decisions and she'll make the decisions that are right for her (Francesca's mother, Interview 2).

I wanted to share my own annoyance about the factors affecting Francesca but chose not to, feeling that it was in some way unprofessional. I found myself torn between the role of academic who is usually physically removed from students' families and being a researcher whose subject of inquiry was the student's family. Having visited the student's family home and met the students' parents I was also confronted by the difference between seeing distress in an individual student within the academic territory of a university office and seeing a student within their own home and with their family. I felt I represented, and was seen to represent, everything that had made her unhappy and as such felt obliged to do something about it. However, Francesca's father once more used his own experiences as a student to emphasise what he saw as the importance of struggle as part of learning, suggesting that the first-year of university was like an endurance test that needed to be completed:

stick it out for this year anyway and get some good results so she can look for something else later on.…I think she's got to make a big effort until October…(don't) live on the past...secondary school is a lot different to university and primary school is a lot different to secondary school and you have to be independent… different people, depending on their station in life have got different hurdles in life before they get their degree…it's the struggle, you struggle. Yeah life's a struggle. The whole of life is a struggle. It doesn't end with the getting of a degree….It's great the struggle. It's important. It's part of our life to struggle. And it's the overcoming of those things (Francesca's father, Interview 2).

Francesca agreed and revealed how despite her unhappiness she really did not want to give it all up. Working part-time had shown her how the locals perceived her social status since she had started university and this seemed to have influenced her decision to persevere with her studies:

if I quit and stuff I know that in three years time or whatever I would just look back at myself and hate myself, I know that…I know it's funny like I'm at work sometimes and older people that come in and say "oh are you working full-time here?" are you sort of thing to suggest that you are not at school sort of thing like that. I feel like saying to them "yes I am (laughs) I am at uni. But I think like that way because they say that. It sort of suggests to me that people do look at a degree as an upper level (Francesca, Interview 2).

Francesca had become increasingly distressed through the interview, fighting back tears and I cut the interview short. Although the tape recorder was switched off we continued to discuss what could be done by and for Francesca to help improve her situation. One strategy I suggested was for Francesca to see me in the Student Learning Unit to gain feedback on drafts of her essays. Francesca agreed to do this. My diary records my feelings as I drove home after the interview but also how the power relationships within this research were shifting around and in ways which made me feel uncomfortable:

Journal entry 8/10/96
Last night I interviewed Francesca and her parents and she ended up crying. She was nearly crying at the beginning of the interview and after the interview, tape switched off, I gave her the advice she wanted but it made her cry. I drove home (one hour) feeling like shit and deciding I had to do

something. So I called X University and got them to send stuff and I got stuff on x course from Student Services and x faculty on x course.

I phoned her mum today but had a garbled phone call in which her first comment was "Did I feel responsible?" I said "yes cos I was the catalyst. If I hadn't been there she wouldn't have cried." But now I wonder what she meant by that. I apologised but she said I should apologise to her daughter, if anyone. Francesca is apparently going to make an appointment to see me - we'll see if she does.

I feel like shit…it raises issues of my role – in the SLU such crying is normal and 'ok' but last night it felt different cos I was in her home with her parents.

Being in the student's family home placed myself, Francesca and her parents on uncommon ground. While many academics speak of encounters with students' parents, these occur on the academic's territory on campus, in their office or on the telephone. Being in the parental home shifted the power relationships such that Francesca's mother was perhaps more willing to ask hard questions and challenge my actions in a way that she might not have felt comfortable doing had the interview taken place in my office or without the parents at all. Francesca's mother challenged me again the next day and the experience revealed how, although I considered myself to be kind and supportive to my students, to a certain extent I too had begun to see crying as fairly 'typical' and my responses to it had become standardised.

Journal entry 9/10/96
Yesterday I phoned Francesca's home and spoke to her mum. I began by saying I'd phoned another university. Before I got far, her mum said, "Do you blame yourself for what happened?" I felt awful. Did she mean she thought I should? Or that I sounded guilty and therefore was doing and saying things that made me sound guilty? I said I thought I was the catalyst and if I hadn't been there she wouldn't have cried. I asked if she thought I was to blame. She said no and spoke of how she doesn't understand why Francesca won't do the things I said which to her were perfectly logical. I spoke of her being too paralysed to be able to. We had a strained chat. She thanked me for calling and that was that. I have put a collection of documents together for her about transferring from x course and called X university who will send her things. I feel I've done all I can for now.

In a confronting experience which made me realise the power of knowing a person in a context where they feel valued and comfortable, when Francesca came to see me in my

office the next week I was shocked to see how she seemed so much smaller in my office than she had in her own home. It was as if her family gave her extra physical size and strength and the university weakened her:

> Journal entry 17/10/96
> It was strange seeing Francesca in my office. I got flashbacks to her living room and 'that night'. She looked smaller and slimmer then. I would have said she was much larger.

I saw Francesca a few times between the second or third interviews. The final interview revealed a narrative of Metamorphosis with Francesca stating that she had:

> sorted things out and reprioritised…everything came into perspective…second semester was good I went and I concentrated (Francesca, Interview 3).

The metamorphosis had occurred through a mix of parental support and some tough self-talk:

> I made a priority that I was going to go to all of the lectures and I'm going to go to all of the tutes and all of the whatever else…to get everything just organised…I don't look at it as if I have to beat this thing. It's just something that's there and I'm going to do it…I'm not going to look at it this thing I've got to compete with. More this thing that I have to do and it's going to help me (Francesca, Interview 3).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that research does not occur in a vacuum and that participants are affected by being part of the research. This was the case for Francesca whose father described the impact that being able to seek help from me with assignments had had on his daughter. For me, his description of what they would say to his daughter demonstrated the methodological strength of having allowed my professional and research roles to merge and the key role played by Francesca's parents in supporting their daughter while she was at university:

> I think you probably helped too. You know when she got into trouble well we'd say go and see Gill and she might be able to help you, you know if

you've got a specific problem. That was important too. You know you had a very important role as well…So your position was very important I think (Francesca's father, Interview 3).

Clearly Francesca's family had been important in helping her to deal with the first-year of university and I asked her parents how they saw their roles. Francesca's father revealed how he had continued to use his past experience to help his daughter cope with the pressures and offered his support gently:

quietly try to be supportive you can only do the best you can you've done all the work, you've done the best you can. Go into the exams put everything in that you can and then after that's finished it's gone and you go on to the next, the next step. You can't cry over spilt milk. Whatever is done is done. You go on (Francesca's father, Interview 3).

Francesca emphasised the importance of having had a conjoint experience of her first-year, describing how her parents supported her while she studied and how she had learned about herself as a result of the year:

I study just in that room there…and Mum and Dad's room is just next door there and Dad would sort of walk in and say How are you going? And just to hear something like that it sort of ok get back into it sort of thing. I guess I'm a person who needs reinforcement all the time…which I didn't think I was but I must be because I think I need it (laughs) It's just good to have people around you I think (Francesca, Interview 3).

Francesca's father spoke of the positive side to his daughter living at home, how this residential decision had been the best for his daughter, emphasising their familiarity with each other as an advantage:

the fact that she was living at home and she got that little bit of support made it easier for her to adjust than it would for students who were at Ballarat and stayed with a different family…they wouldn't be able to talk like they did to their own parents (Francesca, Interview 3).

Living at home and receiving comfort, support and advice from family members were critical aspects of Francesca's year which was marked by a strong narrative of

Metamorphosis during which time her parents experienced a narrative of Continuation in which their lives changed little. Indeed, it was Francesca's strong feelings of security and stability that she received from living at home that enabled her to persist through the year.

"JUST WHATEVER MAKES HER HAPPY IS FINE BY US"

> Louise lived in an inner western suburb of Melbourne. Her parents owned and ran two businesses. Louise was a first-generation student and attended a small outer suburban campus of the university.

In contrast to Francesca's emotional struggles and Christine's financial ones, Louise and her parents' experiences of university were marked by a large dose of good fortune. While Christine could only dream of having her own car, half way through the year Louise won a car meaning that she had not one, but two of her own. In addition, although Louise failed all but one subject in her second semester and therefore decided to leave university, she managed to find, almost immediately, a well-paid, full-time job with good career prospects. It is only fair to warn the reader therefore that I felt considerable, albeit hidden, frustration in my dealings with this family, only because I knew of the struggles being experienced by others.

As Taylor and Bogdan (1998) point out, "In in-depth interviewing, you spend enough time with people to read between the lines of their remarks" (page 109). Cross-checking of events (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998) described in the first and second interviews with the same event or process described in the third interview, showed that Louise and her parents had presented a particular version of events that was happier and simpler than the reality had been. Yet before this cross-checking occurred, I sensed that Louise's parents wanted to present an image of themselves that they considered I wanted to hear, specifically that they were parents who had a hands-off approach to parenting and encouraged their daughter to make her life choices independently. Louise's increasing interest in partying and general sense of disengagement in each interview led me to anticipate that Louise would leave the university. Furthermore, it seemed that Louise and her parents might have thought the same. Their predictions and thoughts and mine about Louise's future however, were never articulated and were only alluded to. Significant therefore, in the telling of this family's first-year experiences, is how the narratives emerged within the context of silencing the inevitable.

Louise's parents fitted neatly into the Alternative student experience narrative whereby Louise was the first in the family to attend university:

> our family is proud of Louise because she's the only grandchild and there's ten grandchildren, that's ever gone on to uni. I mean the others all have good jobs and stuff but she's been the only one so far…we're very proud of her (Louise's mother, Interview 1).

Louise's father left school at fifteen and:

> went back to school at night, at trade school, for another twelve years (Louise's father, Interview 1).

Louise's father considered going to university as an opportunity he had not had but also as something one did to try to be ahead of others in the employment market:

> knowing more than I had a chance to learn, and with the way the economic climate is it's better off to know those things (Louise's father, Interview 1).

Although both parents were keen for their daughter to attend university, her mother also emphasised that life outside university was more difficult than life within it. In doing so, she made what turned out to be a prophetic comment:

> because let's face it there's really nothing much out there unless you do have some sort of qualifications…I think these kids know that and they see that and hopefully that's what they'll lock into...you can be lucky and walk into something and not have all that behind you but you know that's few and far between…I left school at the end of year 10, you see I wasn't under any pressure either. My Dad really wanted me to go to go back to school. I didn't want to, cos I had three older sisters and an older brother who were all working and I was just anxious to get out there and start working so I left and applied for a job, got it and started…but I mean as I say if she comes out of it and decides she's had enough of that and she does put herself into something else, well that's fine by us (Louise's mother, Interview 1).

Nevertheless, having just declared that her daughter was not under any pressure, Louise's mother proceeded to apply pressure in a most direct way, by making a deal with her daughter:

we didn't go to university so we're more than happy to pay her way through…as long as she performs and puts her side into it too (Louise's mother, Interview 1).

This 'we pay, you perform' deal was responded to immediately by Louise's father who seemed to be protecting his daughter from the possibility of failure. Knowing the outcome of the year for Louise makes her father's comment all the more significant:

but that doesn't mean you have to be a winner. If it doesn't work out it doesn't work out (Louise's father, Interview 1).

The Alternative student experience narrative emerged not only in terms of Louise's parents' educational backgrounds but also in the family not knowing how the university system was organised. The family's concerns and questions concerned not only course content and structure but also to the breaks between semesters. Louise's father questioned the existence of long breaks:

they're not really holidays are they?...is there a reason?…It's like a hidden test. If you don't do it you think you're gonna get away with it you won't down the track…that four weeks off it's a sort of test. Maybe it's not played that way but that's the way it's going to end up (Louise's father, Interview 1).

Louise's parents did not want to interfere with their daughter's course but Louise's father indicated that he wanted to be in some way involved, or at least know that he could be involved in the university as a parent. He was rather disturbed by the prospect of a shift to a separate rather than conjoint university experience:

Do they have university/school council that parents go to or anything? It seems most parents send their kids to university saying goodbye, that's the end of it (Louise's father, Interview 1).

At first, it seemed that Louise and her parents were relaxed and calm about the first-year of university and Louise's transition to it. However, they had one major concern which was that students could defer their place at university. As if to avoid confrontation with their daughter, Louise's parents shifted between the pronouns 'they', 'you' and 'she',

while looking at and speaking to me about the issue. They clearly wanted to make a point to Louise and as such used my presence to emphasise their concerns to their daughter:

> I always knew they could defer if they didn't do well and I thought there's gotta be hard work involved there and there is even with the free time, it's there to study and that's what they should be doing with their free time…but that's what it's for…throw the work on them and then send them home sort of thing but at the end of the day the test was going to be there whether she did it at school or at home she had the time to do it, time was always there and if you mucked around whatever, the deferring thing worries me, to be able to defer, in other words she can slack off in the time they give you and you can fail and defer and come back and do it later which to me doesn't make sense but that's only the system. I've always thought she should be under pressure…if they've got the free time and use it good on them but if they don't, look out, sure (Louise's father, Interview 1).

The concern felt by Louise's parents about the option to defer was not shared by Louise who claimed, (inaccurately as it turned out), that:

> I think if I fail any subjects you know I'll just have to do them again, try harder (Louise, Interview 1).

I was conscious not only of Louise's parents' underlying concerns about their daughter's approach to being a university student but also of my own. For example, I managed to hide my shock when Louise made the following comment about the way she had chosen her course:

> I'd got no idea…I just put it down and thought oh yeah I'll try that…I didn't know that your first preference was the thing that you actually got and when I got it I went oh my God…it was never anything I wanted to do since I went to school, I have to like it cos I'm there (Louise, Interview 1).

It seemed that Louise had made this decision because her parents had accepted the separation discourse which valorises independence and autonomy. By encouraging their daughter to make her decisions independently they had inadvertently led their daughter into a situation that ultimately she would be unhappy with. Louise's mother described their approach to encouraging their daughter's independence in the following way:

Just whatever makes her happy is fine by us. I mean for years it was always teaching and so we nearly fell over when she did a few terms work experience and did a couple off her own back as well in the holidays and then she just decided there has to be an easier way, that was primary school too, easier way of making a living. Plus a few teachers we know they'd say 'oh don't get into this game you're mad' and I think that started to sway her and so then she gradually had a change of heart and she decided on this. We were actually overseas when she got accepted and she didn't know what for, you know because we were ringing and said what it was for and, and I'm like God is that what she chose? I had no idea, you know as I say she was the one who went ahead and did it so we really didn't have any input into what she wanted to do (Louise's mother, Interview 1).

On the one hand I felt angry that Louise had had no input from her parents to make an important decision but on the other hand I was pleased that she had been allowed to make a decision for herself. My anxiety on hearing how Louise had chosen her course can be heard in my response to the above, as can the separation discourse in Louise's mother's reply:

So and you didn't have any input by choice, it wasn't because you didn't want to have input it's just that it was (GB, Interview 1).

Well you know, yes it's up to her. She has to put in the time, so she has to be the one happy with it (Louise's mother, Interview 1).

Although Louise's parents appeared to have taken on board the separation discourse, at the same time they had been encouraged by their daughter to situate themselves within a narrative of Continuation. Specifically, Louise tried to involve her parents in her university world in a way similar to the way they had been part of her primary and high school experiences:

I wanted Mum to see it as well (Louise, Interview 1).

Louise attempted to involve her mother in her university life by taking her to orientation day. Both trying to live a narrative of Continuation, this narrative was displaced by a separation indicative of the Archetypal and Alternative student experience narratives. It was a short and embarrassing experience, keenly felt by both Louise and her mother,

which taught them much about the university's and other students' unspoken expectations of the roles of students' parents:

> I sort of trotted along, I was the only parent that we could see so I just had to scuttle off back to the car…I just assumed it was for me too because it always had been up until that point and so I quickly went off and did some shopping and came back because I said it looks like you know she's mummy's girl. But I thought that's what we had to do (Louise's mother, Interview 1).

> So she comes in on Orientation day and everyone's just looking and I'm like Oh no! And she says all right I'm going (Louise, Interview 1).

While Louise's mother had been denied gaining some sort of insight into her daughter's university world, it had been acceptable for Louise's father to be present on enrolment day. (Cynically put, once the money is paid parents are unwanted). Louise's father had been able to gain an impression of his daughter's university campus in a way his wife had not:

> (I was) impressed. I thought it was terrific…I didn't know what to expect actually, all unis are the same but highly organised you know…it looked good and clean and neat and organised (Louise's father, Interview 1).

Louise began the second interview by telling me she had failed two subjects and she was clear about why:

> I knew I was gonna fail them anyway because they weren't my thing…it wasn't like I was going to cry when I knew I failed them cos I had no feelings…thinking I was going to pass them so when I got the results it was like well yeah I knew that anyway so I didn't get upset by it (Louise, Interview 2).

Louise's mother said she had not been surprised at her daughter's results because Louise had forewarned her:

> Well she had said to me that she didn't think she was going to, she came home from the exams and said no I didn't pass that and didn't pass that so, oh well. What you know you've done your best and that's all you can do. Yeah I wasn't surprised (Louise's mother, Interview 2).

However, Louise's father seemed more uncomfortable discussing his daughter's results in front of me. This discomfort led to him making a contradictory statement, one that seemed to be made to protect his daughter from any negative judgements about his daughter:

> She seems to be getting there cos she failed two subjects (Louise's father, Interview 2).

I took his statement to mean that failing two subjects was better than failing four and was perplexed at the apparent relaxed attitude with which the results had been greeted. Indeed, despite having failed two subjects, Louise was enjoying second semester more than first, so much so that a narrative of Metamorphosis emerged. She was happier because she had made new friends, had a better timetable and was more organised with her work:

> I think second semester is better. Maybe the subjects I'm doing or more friends….the way my subjects are all squashed together…cos you haven't got any free time. You just go there and do your work and go straight home and everyone knows everyone. It's all sort of come together. And there's no groups, like you don't think oh I can't talk to that group, you know. Everyone talks to everyone…doing better at my homework this semester cos I know you've gotta do it. I try to do all my week's tutorials at the weekend for the next week (Louise, Interview 2).

Her father also expressed his observation that Louise was quite happy:

> she's got a pretty good life at the moment. I've never seen anyone with more free time…it seems strange…cos we never stop! (laughs) (Louise's father, Interview 2).

Louise's mother added:

> she is socialising more…going out through the week and stuff too…she's driving now and out and about…you got your licence and you're going out more…she's never off the phone…and she won a car this year…she already had a car so now she's got two (Louise's mother, Interview 2).

Louise's happiness was helped not only by having made friends at university but by living at home. Like the other parents, Louise's mother was very aware of the home comforts she was able to provide her daughter:

> she's just got security being with us. She has nothing else to worry about. She doesn't have to wash, iron, cook, clean, make her bed, do anything except just get up go to school and live her life…she's got no bills to pay nothing (Louise's mother, Interview 2).

Louise's father described why he thought it was better for his daughter to be living at home than away and in so doing, demonstrated a merging of the Alternative and Continuation narratives in which separation and connection could coexist:

> you're under a better influence here too…she could possibly be led astray by a group of young people. I'm not saying that we don't have a good time (Louise's father, Interview 2).

Significantly, in that it emphasised a conjoint experience of university, Louise's father preferred his daughter to live at home, so that she could be influenced by family members and because he wanted the family to stay together:

> it's more the family unity thing. Like, it's better to stay at home for as long as you can and not take off when you're young I believe…I just think it's too costly I think you need older people around you as you grow up…older people are more sensible…more stable you know (Louise's father, Interview 2).

Her mother agreed saying:

> as far as the family goes…we're very close…with grandparents, aunties and uncles, cousins…so I couldn't even envisage her ever wanting to move out. I'd have to go with her (laughs)…I'd say she's got it too good at home, she'd never go (Louise's mother, Interview 2).

Curiously, and despite Louise's father's positive comments in the first interview about his impressions of the campus, the second interview revealed a change of opinion. He

revealed how he felt the physical look of the campus had hindered the university's reputation and impressions of the university:

> There's a respectability about the age…The uni you go to looks like a tin shed[2] compared with Melbourne uni…cos unis are old established places that have been around as long as…it's probably a growth thing in Australia. You've gotta have them. More and more around. So you build them and they're brand new and they build them the way they build them and they just don't look like universities do they, maybe if they put a bigger sign up out the front…the image isn't there…it looks like it needs a crest[3]…It's too modern…but yeah there was only one university when I went to high school and that was Melbourne and that was 'the university' and when you drove past, I had a friend who went there and he took me there one night and I couldn't believe it. People actually come here to be taught things and then you go and see where you go, which is still good cos they had to build it somehow…cos you look at it and say, that's not a university it's a school…the 'of technology' is bad news (Louise's father, Interview 2).

Exactly why Louise's father had changed his opinion about the campus is not known but the earlier pleasure they had felt about Louise being the first in the family to go to university had changed. These changes in attitude seemed to have occurred because of others undermining their daughter's accomplishment of being at university at all:

> Louise: Melbourne University sounds so good and up there and then you say
> Victoria University of Technology and people think that it's
> Louise's Mother: Second rate
> Louise: Second rate

The third interview began by Louise telling me she had passed only one of her four subjects. Ironically, despite the parental eye to watch over their daughter and demonstrating how living together does not necessarily mean parents can or want to control their offspring, Louise's mother acknowledged in the final interview that too

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[2] The outside of the lecture theatre had been architecturally designed to resemble a silo to fit in with the rural surroundings but many local residents and students had considered this to be in poor architectural taste and did not want their reputation as a rural suburb to be emphasised.

[3] Ironically, when a crest was to be introduced by the then new Vice Chancellor in 1991, this idea was rejected by university staff and students as being elitist and a remnant of colonial thinking. It was thought that a new Australian university needed a new and different sort of university symbol.

much socialising had been one reason for her daughter not doing as well as she might have done:

> She's made this good friend and they were between each other's places and Sally stayed here more often than not. I think her mother forgot what she looked like…and they just had a ball. Just had a blast…They go shopping all the time, and you know and do lunch on their meagre allowances (laughter) but you know they just had fun (Louise's mother, Interview 3).

I asked Louise to reflect on her year and what she had learned from it. In doing this Louise revealed her unhappiness with her choice of course. She told of how she saw an old high school teacher who gave his opinion about her choice:

> Oh no. Come and have a talk to me...he said you change now it's OK...He goes that's not you it's not you I know it's not…But I never saw him or anything like that (Louise, Interview 3).

Louise revealed that she had really wanted to do an Arts course:

> I always wanted to do a Bachelor of Arts…Maybe if I had got into a Bachelor of Arts it would have been a different story, still be there (Louise, Interview 3).

and comments made by Louise's parents in the first interview suddenly made sense. By doing a course she had not really wanted to do, Louise had been trying to please her parents:

> the uni thought of years ago it's a lot of kids doing what they want. Like they used to say you can get a Bachelor of Arts in the toilet (Louise's father, interview 1).

Louise's mother agreed saying:

> uni never had a good name as far as that, they were all arty (Louise's mother, Interview 1).

Her father added scathingly:

they were all educated idiots (Louise's father, Interview 1).

A narrative of Metamorphosis emerged for Louise, not while she was at university, but rather when she moved into full-time employment. Now in paid work she felt different both in terms of what she did and how she was expected to behave. I also detected a confidence in her reflections that had not been evident in previous interviews and her comfort with the world of employment:

> I feel sad. I mean I wasted a year kind of. I didn't really waste it, I learnt a bit…I kind of feel like I could have been working the whole of last year...now I realise that when you work full-time the money you can earn. And just how different life is. You come home and there's no homework, no pressures of thinking I've got an assignment to do oh no. You can come home and that's it you're home…I had to grow up a lot more this year…the people I'm around there are a lot older. And so I can't muck around as much as I did and I've got to wear all grown up clothes and stuff like that…last year I was a jeans girl and just everything changes, the way people you associate with now, older and what can you do? Whereas last year you could just wear whatever and speak however, you know whichever way you wanted to and be with people your own age. Now you're just shoved in with these older people and you've got to adapt to that, so it's like a whole different way of life (Louise, Interview 3).

Louise's mother had encouraged the narrative of Metamorphosis through her reaction to her daughter and her friend failing their subjects:

> well I think it tells you something don't you think. I think it's not your thing…she'd done a little bit of partying …she probably could have done more work. Maybe. But she was confident and then to come out and not pass. And that really knocked them for six, the girls. They were both teary. And I just said get over it. I'm over it. Now you've got to move on and decide what to do (Louise's mother, Interview 3).

For the first time, Louise spoke in a more authentic way about how her year at university and in so doing revealed that she had known she was doing the wrong course right from the start:

It wasn't like I'd sit and study. Like I'd do what I had to do, probably the next week's tute work or something but it wasn't like I'd sit there and for ages and read up all the notes. Cos I just didn't think. I just didn't do that…in the first few weeks of school I felt sick. I just felt (makes a vomiting noise)… It made me feel sick in the stomach so that's when I knew I didn't want to do it but I thought I'll just give it a go, you never know you might pass it (Louise, Interview 3).

Louise found university to be similar to high school and as such the narrative of Continuity was emphasised. Although Louise's father was disappointed that aspects of the Archetypal experience were not more evident Louise's parents both considered their daughter continuing to live at home to be a vital part of maintaining family stability. Despite this, Louise's parents were also keenly aware of the presence and expectations of the discourse of separation and as such they tried to blend certain aspects of the discourses of separation and connection but with mixed results.

"I KNOW PEOPLE SEEM TO THINK SHE'S AN ADULT NOW AND SHE IS DOING A LOT OF THINKING FOR HERSELF AND EVERYTHING ELSE BUT I STILL THINK YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE SOME INPUT INTO IT"

> Rose lived on Melbourne's wealthy rural eastern fringe. Her father had been retrenched eight years ago but was working again. Rose's mother did voluntary work in a local non-profit making organisation. Rose was a first-generation student.

On phoning the family to confirm an interview time, I spoke to Rose's father whose accent I recognised as being similar to my own English accent and I was pleasantly surprised to discover that he had lived in the same town as my maternal grandparents before he migrated to Australia. We laughed with each other about the coincidence and I felt an immediate geographical and in turn, emotional connection, to the family, a connection which was to increase as each interview went by.

While Louise's experiences of university were marked by good fortune, Rose's family's experiences, like Francesca's, were marked by struggle. Despite living in a wealthy area, on entering the home, I was struck by the minimal lighting despite it being dark outside and the sparsely furnished lounge room. I was soon to understand its significance. The family told me that Rose's father had been retrenched eight years earlier and although he was working again in a different place of employment (Rose's mother did voluntary work) Rose's mother described her family as "the poorest" in the area:

> financially we're her total (Rose's mother, Interview 1).

Rose's father earned $30 a year too much for Rose to qualify for Austudy. Adding to the financial strain and in turn emphasising an Alternative student experience narrative in which families struggle financially, was the fact that Rose could not earn money in a part-time job because of the two and a half hour train journey from university to home:

> it's very hard for her to get a job when she's got to get here to home…financially it's a drain and books and things like that, I mean she'll

say to me, oh hi mum I'm home, I just want a book for $60 or you know I just want a book for $120 and you're thinking you know and you've got one out there saying Mum I need new shoes. And you know a lot of money. We've seen lots of roll-over money that we shouldn't have used in the sense we haven't really left a lot for our old age (Rose's Mother, Interview 1).

Travelling so far each day was more than a mere inconvenience. It was a signal to Rose's mother that a turning point had been reached in both Rose's and her mother's lives. Rose's mother felt that this turning point marked a shift from being able to protect her daughter in a sheltered, caring world to one where her daughter would have to protect herself. So great were the pressures that they were enough to make Rose's mother consider releasing her daughter, and in turn herself, from the pressures of going to university at all. The shock of urban life and financial strains are similar to the culture clashes in the Alternative student narrative. However, the clash of cultures in this instance concerned not a shift from a poor to a wealthy area as might be traditionally expected but rather from a wealthy rural area to a poor inner city area:

a lot of things happened to her in primary school and just trying to make her go into the real world someone that had virtually not walked down to the school bus on her own, because I used to walk down in the mornings and keep walking and go for a walk. Somebody that had really never been anywhere on her own, for all of a sudden to have to come and go on public transport…She phoned me one day…she'd seen that person brought out in a body bag…she phoned me, she said what am I going to do mum? I don't know if I can cope with this, what am I going to do? And I, I really my, I wanted to say all right come home we'll lock the doors, we'll forget about it, you won't get a job anywhere, we'll just, your father gets $30 a year too much for you to get Austudy, I mean a year, $30 a year and that's because he does overtime (Rose's mother, Interview 1).

Despite her mother's concerns, Rose's father was more comfortable with the location of the campus as he had worked in the area for many years. Similarly and despite the story above, Rose was also more relaxed about studying in the suburb as she had visited her father's workplace many times. In a twist of the Alternative student experience narrative made possible through the massified system of higher education in which university campuses were built in working-class suburbs, Rose's working-class background and

knowledge of working-class suburbs, helped rather than hindered her adjustment to university. Rose knew she had this advantage:

> With dad always being in the engineering field, and always going down to the factory and seeing everyone in the factory and engineers all the time and everything it just sort of, I knew what it was all about before I went in there and knew what basically everything entailed. So that was about all…Dad had a lot of experience going down there and working with the different types of people down there, because it's so multicultural down there, and just going down there some of the things that have happened when he's been around, just in the factory itself where he works and just walking along…just had to expect these things (Rose, Interview 1).

So different was the location of the campus that Rose's father emphasised its difference by contrasting it with where they lived and in a graphic fashion:

> (you're) going to the real world Rosie, this isn't the real world, this is Disney Land (Rose's father, Interview 1).

Although Rose's contemporaries had many financial advantages, knowing and understanding the city or its people was not one of them. The following story highlights the contrasting worlds in which Rose's peers lived and wanted to study:

> I have a friend she used to live round here and Rose and her daughter were friendly when they were very small…and she took her to all the different universities and when she didn't get the marks to do what she wanted and she went to (names a university) and she came back and she said to her mother, she said oh I'm so glad I'm going there, because the majority are blue-eyed blondes like me (Rose's mother, Interview 2).

Reflecting on the importance of university attendance, Rose's father described working-class life in England and in so doing unravelled an Alternative student experience narrative in which university is seen as an escape route from a life of otherwise limited options:

> You're probably the first one in both families that's actually made it to university. So if you like, the working-class cycle, if you want to put it that

way, could be broken….It's (the working-class cycle) the fact that you go to work, and you work in a factory, and a few years ago parents used to pull levers all day, and you finished pulling your levers and you've got enough money to go to the pub Friday and Saturday night, and Sunday you lie in bed and Monday you're back and you pull levers all week and that's all it consisted of. Twice a year, once a year you were allowed to go to a little seaside resort for a holiday and you got there, and usually your mum and dad spent it all in bed, exhausted, so they could go back and do another twelve months pulling levers (Rose's father, Interview 1).

Although Rose's parents were not able to pass on any understandings of what it was like to be at university, other people they knew through school or the neighbours were able to share their knowledge with them. For example, Rose's experience of a 'junior' university had prepared her:

The two junior universities I've done and friends that had gone off to uni. I was very friendly with a big group of kids that were two years ahead of me, and they warned me a lot as well. And a friend, a good friend of mine he's doing engineering at (names a university) and he said this will happen, that will happen and you'll have these subjects and it will be like this and everything. And he's done a lot of warning (Rose, Interview 1).

Similarly, Rose's mother was able to call on a friend for greater insight to help her understand what it would be like during Rose's university years:

A friend of mine is a lecturer…I've always talked to her and she sort of said this and that and she said to me look you know, she can't, she's at university now and she's really got to be an adult now, there'll be no taking care of her. And she'll say to me try and encourage her to tell you all the funny stories, you know try, and then you know we've had the pig on the train[4]…she said we should tape, funny you should be doing this, because she said you should tape everything, it would make a marvellous thesis, I think that's what she said. She said it's just fabulous and she's always sort of said to me, you know encourage her to talk and tell you things (Rose's mother, Interview 1).

Although the family was living an Alternative student experience narrative, this was complicated by those around them expecting to experience something more akin to the

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[4] Rose told of how on the way to university one day, a passenger got on with a dead pig "and started talking to it in Chinese", an experience she found quite shocking.

Archetypal student experience narrative with parents in the local area expecting their offspring to attend one of only two universities, despite there being many others. As a result, Rose and her parents experienced not cultural or intellectual clashes within their own family but instead they experienced inter-narrative clashes with other families which served to emphasise their different financial circumstances:

> I know of one or two cases where the parents have just gone, 'do you need a house to live in, close to uni? Here's some money, off you go, here's a car to park in the driveway in Toorak'. (Rose, Interview 1)...There's another boy down the road…but he only has three contact days I think and they're extremely wealthy and have a family flat in the city…plus he drives, the family have bought him a car (Rose's mother, Interview 1).

Rose's parents told of how their social status had been determined by others through Rose's father's previous employment. They felt that this social snobbery would not have occurred had they lived in the western suburbs:

> In primary school…they didn't want their kids to mix with someone who made ammunition where maybe it would have been different if we'd lived over the other side because she wouldn't have been the only one whose father worked and made ammunition…there was a lot of people, they were very blunt about it (Rose's mother, Interview 2).

Not only had they been affected by occupational snobbery but the anticipated class metamorphosis as described by Rose's father had been potentially hindered by the locals' attempts to downgrade the university Rose attended as not being 'real':

> Different people have sort of said to me, oh you know she's at (names university), do you think she's getting, do you think she's getting a real academic sort of, you know is it really, is it really real, will she get a job because she's there (Rose's mother, Interview 1).

Suggesting Rose's experience might not be a true one, exemplified in the phrase "is it really real?" is a clear attempt to shed doubts on the authenticity and validity of the university her daughter attends and in turn to diminish what she has achieved. In so doing, Rose is denied the status of being a 'real' university student. Rose's parents, and

academics within the so-called unreal university itself, are vulnerable to people's anxieties about the supposed 'realness' of universities. While Rose's mother rationalised the situation as "it's just snobbery really isn't it" (Rose's Mother, Interview 3), the construction of 'the pretend' university is also a way to revitalise and reassert an elite hierarchical system of university education within the massified system.

Despite attempts by others to diminish Rose's experiences, Rose saw her combined knowledge of a local private school and her knowledge of factory life and inner suburban life as advantageous within a massified system of education, giving her confidence to embark on her chosen field at university:

> With Dad always being in the engineering field, and always going down to the factory and seeing everyone in the factory and engineers all the time and everything it just sort of, I knew what it was all about before I went in there and knew what basically everything entailed…all of Dad's family were basically engineers (Rose, Interview 1).

Rose also recognised how the protected school and home environments that her peers experienced before they went to university could be problematic for them when they went to university:

> A lot of the kids that did go (to university), they were usually very popular people and they've gone in and they're just a tiny little nobody, whereas they were like the big fish at (names her high school), they were it and a bit and everybody loved them sort of thing, whereas I'm so and so. That's nice and off they go. They don't really care who you are and what you are. Whereas you used to go around and have on all your regalia and everything, your pocket or everything on, or your captain's uniform, and all your badges you've got so far and everything. And everyone used to say you had so much authority, then you've gone to uni and you're just one of the crowd (Rose, Interview 2).

Her father agreed commenting:

> It's a bigger puddle when you get to somewhere like (names two universities), where there's thousands of kids. Like you only had seven hundred, eight hundred kids down there…but when you go to (names a

university) they're all as good as you, if not better (Rose's Father, Interview 2).

Rose's mother's expectations of her daughter's life at university were situated squarely within the Archetypal student experience narrative in which students are 'way out' and are left to look after themselves. Like the images of students referred to by Sivier (1997) Rose's mother expected her daughter to have a different sort of student experience and she expressed surprise that this narrative had not occurred:

> I suppose I'm surprised...Maybe I sort of expected that if she went there she would be faced with, you know to fit in, she would have to smoke dope…this sort of thing…but I mean because we are so isolated here, I thought perhaps she either wouldn't cope. I mean you live somewhere, where you've got, you're on tank water. You've only got electricity, you don't have gas…I was very, very frightened that she would go in and because her marks were low she wouldn't be able to keep up, she wouldn't be able to make the grade and she would perhaps be asked to leave or she would have to leave. And I thought who picks the pieces up? You know who picks the pieces up now?…We've got all these books and a devastated eighteen year old and what does she do? Where does she go? (Rose's mother, Interview 2).

Instead, Rose was experiencing a narrative of Continuation in which her university experiences were similar to her high school experiences, specifically that she was looked after in a small, friendly environment. It came as a great relief to Rose's mother to discover that when her daughter went to university she did not seem to be lost there:

> I honestly think that because it's small, she's not lost in the crowd. I've even had someone ring me here, the guy you see on a Tuesday afternoon, because he wasn't going to be there…and I sort of feel you know that there's at least some sort of contact (Rose's mother, Interview 1).

Rather than living an Alternative student experience narrative in which she felt distanced from her daughter, Rose's parents were surprised to feel more involved with their daughter's education than ever before:

> You know it's strange. I find that she's actually more talkative and tells me more now than she did when she was at school. (Rose's Mother, Interview

2)…we usually get some sort of report each day on what's happening…It's not too long after it's happened that we find out (Rose's father, Interview 2).

Other involvement in her daughter's life included looking after the domestic space, particularly her daughter's bedroom:

> She was doing an assignment or whatever it is…she had bits everywhere and everything and I went into that bedroom and I really cleaned it up, I spent days cleaning this bedroom up (Rose's mother, Interview 3).

Her desire to be involved at this level of her daughter's life arose from what she felt she had learned through the year as a parent of a university student who lived a long way from university:

> I really feel you've got to be organised, you really have. As the mother, if you're in the house, you've really got to make sure, you can't expect them to be organised, because the pressures of work especially and travelling and everything like that. I know people seem to think she's an adult now and she is doing a lot of thinking for herself and everything else but I still think you've got to have some input into it. I know a lot of kids move out of home or they come from the country and traditionally country kids come to town and this sort of thing. But I think if you can if you possibly can, you've really got to help them be organised. Especially with the travelling she's doing. (Rose's Mother, Interview 3).

Having learned this with Rose, Rose's mother vowed to transform the ways they did things for her youngest daughter who was embarking on year 12. In the absence of parents from whom she could learn about the ins and outs of parenting a university student, Rose's mother emphasised the importance of this year in teaching her for the future and how it would be invaluable for when her youngest daughter went to university. In so doing she suggests the beginnings of this family's new educational inheritance, that is, one which includes university attendance:

> Take all your clothes out of the drawers and just fill them full of pencils and drawing equipment and paper and I think too that's another thing, when she goes into VCE we're more aware now and I really think we'll be having stock piles of things and we'll be more organised (Rose's Mother, Interview 3).

The fluidity of life before and life during university is the antithesis of 'what is supposed to happen' when a student goes to university, at least as far as events unfurl within the Archetypal student narrative. Rose's willingness to return to help out her old high school and conviction that she would be able to revise for her first-year university exams while hiking in the wilderness, demonstrates the strength of her connection to both the life before and life after university:

> During swot vac I'm going away with the year nines. I've been asked to go back. So throw all the books in for all the exams, and while I'm hiking along I can ask the teacher now how do we do this again? (laughs)…I know that he'll help me with anything I've got really. Because he's quite a disciplinarian and very good for people studying for exams and everything. So he'll help me where he can. (Rose, Interview 2). I miss it a lot still. I still keep in touch with a couple of people, very close friends that I had (Rose, Interview 3).

By the time Rose had received her final results of the year, on the morning of the final interview, it was clear that Rose would have to repeat the majority of her first subjects the following year. This caused some tension in the family. Rose's mother felt comfortable that her daughter was allowed to continue at all but Rose's father felt angry, pointing out the strains on the family financially and emotionally:

> well everyone is putting their bit in and it's for her benefit, not ours. You know in five years time when all this is finished it will be oh well thanks very much, I'll write (laughs).

His concern at the length of time it might take his daughter to complete the course and his daughter's relative ease with such a prospect was creating conflict and also raised the question of when does adulthood begin? Rose felt that she was being asked to grow up too quickly:

> You can't go from being so young to so old in such a short time (Rose, Interview 3).

but in reply, and as if to pressure his daughter into taking her studies more seriously, her father said:

> If you went to work you'd have to (Rose's father, Interview 3).

Rose's mother pointed out how Rose's adulthood was expected a little later than his own because of employment starting at a younger age:

> yeah all right, you went to work at fifteen (Rose's mother, Interview 3).

Despite thinking that her daughter had not and did not have to grow up so quickly, she wanted her daughter to be given more time to mature. Rose's mother felt that her daughter had changed and as such a narrative of Metamorphosis emerged:

> you've changed, changed a lot this year, grown up, changed…She's sort of young in her age. Even at uni she's not the youngest but she's in the younger group. And I mean when she started there she was only seventeen, she was nearly eighteen, but she's young and very young and she's got a lot of time to mature and you know and to develop. I just think…as was said to me a very long time ago, I'd rather they were slightly over ripe than slightly under ripe…I don't know if you've been watching on television, the doco on ABC about university. Yes….it opened my eyes to the fact I was always really worried about her and thinking oh she's going to get into drugs and they're all going to be this. And then I started to watch that and they're all kids…they're all so young…does it matter how long it takes? (Rose's Mother, Interview 3).

However, Rose' father felt that there was more to growing up than just a person's age and pointed to the advantages that those with less material wealth can have in comparison to those in his neighbourhood including his daughter:

> I think what's more important than age is, you know, worldly experience I suppose. And what you've been exposed to. You know some kids have had a harder and a tougher life and they're more street-wise. You know they're clever as well I suppose. But they're the fortunate ones I think. Kids like Rose who've been cosseted and had a relatively easy, nice time of life, they're the ones who are disadvantaged when it comes to the push and shove, making your way, you know sussing your way round situations (Rose's Father, Interview 3).

Rose's mother felt quite strongly that the transition to university would have been improved if they had been told what to expect and by encouraging sharing of resources. In so doing, she pointed to the necessity of a collaborative effort being needed to have a successful first-year, if nothing else to make the financial side of things easier:

> We just weren't financially ready…you know I really feel that should you know really get parents and give parents and say to them look this is approximately ho much books will cost you. This is what you know what you really need for them to succeed to get through. This is what you should be looking at. Or even not so much parents but get students before they go in and say look this is what you're going to need…I just think there should be more things like co-ops to pool resources (Rose's Mother Interview 3).

The Alternative narrative was keenly felt and expected by this family with entrance to university being seen as the beginning of a change in class. However, in an interesting twist of this narrative brought about by the mass system of higher education, the university itself was considered by Rose's mother to be for working-class students. As such, any cultural shocks felt by going to university might be felt less by her working-class daughter than her middle-class friends. While Rose experienced a strong narrative of Continuation in which she felt comfortable in her new environment, Rose's mother observed a narrative of Metamorphosis for her daughter in which she felt her daughter had been given the opportunity to grow up. She also predicted a narrative of Metamorphosis for herself if, in the future, her younger daughter went to university, stating that she would parent a university student differently the second time around.

"I HAVEN'T HEARD HER MENTION ANY ACTIVITY ORGANISED BY THE UNIVERSITY…HOW ELSE ARE YOU GONNA HAVE A GOOD TIME WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG?"

Sarah lived in an inner western suburb of Melbourne. Sarah's father was an engineer. Sarah's mother was a housewife. Sarah was a first-generation student and attended a small outer campus of the university.

Although in the west, Sarah and her parents lived in a suburb I had never visited. Their home was a tall, handsome looking terraced house and one which suggested rather more wealth than I had anticipated.

The Alternative student experience narrative emerged with the disclosure of the educational backgrounds of Sarah's parents. Sarah's father was "an engineering fella" who left school "at the equivalent of year 10" and worked in the electrical trade. Sarah's mother went to primary school and did a year at business college. However, Sarah's father had not been happy with his line of work and so studied for a diploma for eight years part-time. His own regret at not having had a university education had been passed on to his daughter who he encouraged to go to university. He said of himself that it would have been better if he had:

> gone back to school for two years, get an indenture or something and do university…I felt with Sarah, I just kept saying to her I recommend you do study in that fashion...just go to university, that's the way to go (Sarah's Father, Interview 1).

Sarah's mother related how university attendance had been rare amongst her peers because most people were unable to afford a university education. Her reference to 'this side of town', is a reference to the western suburbs of Melbourne being known for their poverty, and subsequent lack of opportunity (see Chapter Two). Geographically, the western suburbs were relatively isolated from the rest of Melbourne and universities only

existed on 'the other side of town'. However, one generation later, a university exists in the western suburbs and Sarah attended it:[5]

> my education wasn't secondary like going to year 12 or whatever it was in those days, I just I did commercial and then went to work so I was at work I was a secretary…not many people from this side of town ever went to university. You just didn't go to university. You couldn't afford it for a start (Sarah's Mother, Interview 1).

Within the Alternative student experience narrative, whereby first-generation students can be categorised as 'marginal' (Terry, 1995), there exists the anticipation of the first-generation student's "struggle and an on-going sense of displacement" (Terry, 1995). Sarah's seemingly 'typical' family background of a first-generation student might lead an observer to search for signs of such displacement and struggle. However, Sarah's description of her 'university life' revealed no evidence of the struggle or displacement Instead there emerged a narrative of Continuation:

> no dramas…she's slipped into the university way of life quite nicely (Sarah's Father, Interview 1).

Sarah agreed but was clearly disappointed with what she had found:

> all it's been, you go to uni, you do your work, you go to the classes, you just get, you go and have lunch, talk to your friends there, do more work, come home, that's it, you don't, we do nothing at uni (Sarah, Interview 1).

The sort of 'university life' being described by Sarah is hardly what most academics would desire or expect for their students and, significantly, nor was it the sort of life Sarah's father wanted. In a disappointed tone similar to that of Steve's father, Sarah's

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[5] Sitting on a train returning home in March 2001 I found myself listening in to a conversation between first-year university students from a university in the eastern suburbs. These students were travelling to their rural homes in Melbourne's north west and were discussing the attitudes of their peers who lived in the eastern suburbs to those students who lived in the west. "They said oh dear. When are you going to leave home and move closer?" To the eastern suburbs students the west was too far away to contemplate travelling from and an area that needed to be left behind. The 'western' students were laughing at their 'eastern' counterparts and considered their attitudes to be rather odd.

father related his expectations which were situated within the Archetypal student experience narrative:

> the same sort of pattern…as high school…she comes home and does her assignments or whatever study she's got to do…I really thought she'd get involved in the sporting activities as well as doing education...that's a good part of life to go to university. A big part of her week to have no social life come back out of it…I haven't heard her mention any activity organised by the university other than one or two…how else are you gonna have a good time when you're young?…I know when we were looking around, looked at (names university) see all the functions on, do you see that, look they've got the sporting thing and they do tours to Canada, you can play this sporting team, there was the swimming team was there, the tennis team, mostly it was dancing and tennis (Sarah's Father, Interview 1).

It was not only Sarah's father who had wanted certain aspects of the Archetypal student experience narrative to occur. On discovering that her attendance at a small campus of the university which looked and felt architecturally similar to high school, the archetypal student life appeared non-existent or remote so much so that Sarah tried to create it by setting up a drama club with a friend. However, only Sarah and one other student turned up to a meeting so they abandoned the idea. Further hindering their attempts to create the social life of the Archetypal student experience narrative was their lack of leisure time. Instead, another version of 'university life' dominated and it was one which was unlike the novelistic, privileged and uncommon versions of the sort of university life that Sarah's father and daughter had imagined, seen and heard about:

> I'm the only person out of my group who's actually, who's actually, who's sort of doing anything in the union, working at the resource centre occasionally, and we don't have time to do anything and I don't think there's really much to offer at the campus anyway. There's not much around…we stay in the cafeteria pretty much and that's about it. We just don't have time (Sarah, Interview 1).

A combination of Sarah's choice of course which had many contact hours and the travelling to the campus each day meant that Sarah's social life at university life was very much restricted and this had impacted on her ability to make new friends:

I'm still associated with them (old school friends) and noone from uni, waiting to meet new people. That was what I was looking forward to about uni I think, but it just sort of didn't happen really…a lot of people live too far away to even think about it (Sarah, Interview 1).

Although Sarah sounded deflated about her university life, she was aware of the advantages of attending a small campus and being part of a small course:

a lot of people still say school…still used to saying it from last year…it feels a lot like school…you are spoon fed pretty much by teachers and it's a lot like school. It's not hard. Uni isn't hard type of thing. Like I know people at university (names a university) have it different, difficult, because of how many people they've got in the course but we can easily go and find our lecturer or someone who will be able to understand what you want and that and they're very willing to help, some of them…but that was the same at school and that and yeah, a lot of it's very similar to school…it feels to me that I am there set hours. Really even though it changes…so I feel that it's similar (to school)...The only thing that is different is that we don't have any breaks, which is hard. Long days Mondays and Tuesdays but you get used to it (Sarah, Interview 1).

Use of the word school instead of university also emphasised a narrative of Continuation in which the family felt that not a lot had changed since Sarah had gone to university, something they were disappointed about. Sarah's father said that he did refer to university as 'uni' but more often than not referred to it as school:

I'll lapse back into it occasionally too…it's been going on for so long. It'll just take another few months before we get out of the school idea (Sarah's father, Interview, 1)

and her mother said school:

only out of habit (Sarah's mother, Interview 1).

However, Sarah felt a tension in referring to university as school, a tension that had its origins in Sarah's expectation of what university should have been and her disappointment that her expectations had not been met:

> if you say school you feel you feel like you are downgrading university almost…it doesn't bother me too much if I call it school or uni but it does sound weird when I do say school. I should be saying uni but sometimes it just doesn't feel like what I imagine university to feel like really (Sarah, Interview 1).

To explain what she meant in more detail, Sarah related how she had considered transferring to another university and so had visited a larger university's open day. Motivating her wanting to change universities had been bad organisation during exam time and her surprise at the size of another campus of the same university she attended. Sarah said she felt:

> like we'd missed out on so much just looking at the size of the place and you know we were just amazed how big it was. Like the library is two levels and we've got this tiny one level like I reckon our school library was bigger and had better books in it (Sarah, Interview 1).

Disappointment and frustration were feelings running throughout the first interview. Not only was Sarah's father disappointed at the sort of student experience Sarah was having, he and Sarah's mother were also frustrated at the way in which the university kept them at a distance from their daughter's university experiences. They had been quite unprepared to be invisible and mute in order to allow the student to 'become independent' and had no desire to take a back seat in their daughter's education:

> whoever's in charge could make the effort to meet parents...I think if we're gonna pay, the university has gotta be start to be accountable and be a little bit more community spirited on occasion...the university should write to parents …your kids might not come home and tell you anything but then you know from the university that that's what's happening. Communication (Sarah's mother, Interview 1).

Whether Sarah's mother would be as keen to have communication from the university if the family did not pay for her fees is unclear. However, paying fees clearly situates the university as an institution which has a duty to demonstrate its willingness to keep parents informed about activities, and significantly, their daughter's academic progress. In the same vein and demonstrating how distanced he felt, Sarah's father saw himself as

part of the university experience and as such challenged the dominant separation discourse within universities:

> it would be nice to know a little more about what goes on at the university, because we were always involved, Ann (Sarah's mother) was involved in the school in various support roles, but university's just totally cut off…is the education she's getting good for her? Because as a parent you have a pretty fair idea about what your child likes and capable of doing…and you would get a different perspective of what goes on too so you perhaps add a few words of comment (Sarah's father, Interview 1).

Sarah's mother described her anxiety about not being informed of her daughter's progress and in doing so highlighted the contrast between being a parent of a high school student and university student:

> you sort of think, oh is she doing well?…Do you find out, do you get a report? (Sarah's Mother, Interview 1).

The connection between payment of fees and demanding a different level of involvement, (some might say service) from the university, stands in opposition to the separation from parent discourse in which the parent is expected to remain silent and take a backseat. Sarah's father came face to face with the reality of the narrative of separation when he attempted to obtain information from a lecturer on his daughter's behalf. The lecturer concerned had run a summer program at one campus without, it seemed, informing students at other campuses who might have been prepared to travel there. Sarah's father told the following story in a very agitated and frustrated tone:

> I rang up to find out and the guy…said there wasn't enough interest shown. Now I got a bit put off saying there wasn't enough interest shown, because there couldn't be enough interest shown. How would you seek to get the interest? "Oh we asked people to put their name down and noone put their name down." Well they couldn't put their name down because noone knew it was on! And then he said "oh well we have various ways of finding out". I said what ways do you use and he said "well that's up to me to determine". It's up to me to ask you what they are. I said if we're gonna pay to go to university we want the answers, what are they? (Sarah's father, Interview 1).

The phrases, "we have various ways of finding out" and "that's up to me to determine" indicate the lecturer's insistence in protecting his professional territory and specifically that his professional territory is not to be entered by parents. While the university expressed and emphasised a narrative of separation, Sarah's parents lived with their daughter and therefore were able to observe and hear about different aspects of her university life such as organisational problems at exam time and as a result could judge its operations. For example, Sarah and her father were surprised with how much writing up of practical laboratory sessions she had to do, her father describing it as "almost repetitive work". This critical gaze of the father continued when Sarah's father was curious to know why his daughter was studying subjects that didn't seem to fit in with the name of the course:

> we start hearing about all the components that make up the heart...I think it's a good broad education but I think she's looking, really waiting to get her hands on next year's work (Sarah's father, Interview 1).

Despite knowing this much about their daughter's course, they considered themselves to be very little involved with her studies:

> (I) ask a few questions or just take a bit of interest in some of the things she studies...but really there is no involvement as such (Sarah's father, Interview 1).

Involvement at this level was clearly felt not to be sufficient and Sarah's mother highlighted the level of involvement in her daughter's education that until very recently she had been used to and how this contrasted with her current experiences of being the parent of a university student. On hearing of disorganisation at exam time in Sarah' first semester at university, Sarah's mother commented:

> I mean if that happened in year 12 everybody in creation in Victoria would be screaming blue murder to the VCAB board (Sarah's Mother, Interview 1).

The social life which makes up such a large part of the Archetypal student experience narrative was something Sarah and her father had expected and wanted. However, one particular element of this social life that Sarah had observed had created much anxiety:

> A lot of things seem to be around drinking...you know it's instilled in them at the secondary schools, you know with this drug and alcohol program...so I think it's a bit much that everything is involved. And they have alcohol at lunch time at their special do's don't they (Sarah's mother, Interview 1).

Sarah was concerned about the alcohol too, particularly with the fact that the alcohol available was free. She commented:

> hang on we're supposed to be studying. How can you study with alcohol in your stomach in that? (Sarah, Interview 1).

Similarly, her father said:

> to give away free alcohol I think (is) just ridiculous quite frankly (Sarah's father, Interview 1).

Contrary to the expectation of a first-generation student being hampered by parents who have little idea how to help their offspring while at university, Sarah's parents had encouraged their daughter to continue with her tennis, dancing and social life while at the same time giving hints about how to manage her workload:

> the trick is to mange those assignments a little better I think….instead of just working through until it's finished you've got to say, well I'll allow myself so many hours to do them and then you've got to split that time up into a number of segments and fit in all the parts of the assignment into that, those segments and be very stringent about that. Otherwise you just use up all your time…I mean you might get a certain pass for all that and it's worth 15% of the mark so you're putting too much effort to getting 15% of the mark…She hasn't got time to go back and do her revision on the topic because she still has to pass the exam at the end of the year. So these sorts of things have to be observed really (Sarah's mother, Interview 1).

Their support was not only in the form of practical advice but also emotional support. Sarah's mother had been advising Sarah saying:

> she has just got to try and overcome it by looking a bit more positive at it and you know sort of trying to manage her time better to do her work (Sarah's mother, Interview 1).

I asked how did she achieve that and her mother replied in a way which emphasised their conjoint experience:

> Worry! Worry! We'll have a worry now! (Sarah's mother, Interview 1).

Studying for a degree was not something that was done in order to achieve some sort of personal or intellectual metamorphosis but rather to find employment:

> I know a lot of people are only sticking with the course they've got or staying at uni even if they hate it, it's because they want the degree cos they'll never get a job without the qualifications needed…it always sounds better if you've got a degree (Sarah, Interview 2).

Her father agreed saying:

> There's a mindset amongst the community and that's the way it is (Sarah's father, Interview 2).

The potential transformative power of having a degree was also recognised by Sarah's mother who, when I asked if she thought people with degrees were perceived differently to those who did not, replied:

> I presume that they would…they've worked all those years they've got to get something out of it don't they? (Sarah's mother, Interview 2)

I asked if she thought this mattered to which she replied:

> it shouldn't, but it does (Rose's mother, Interview 2)

Sarah's father agreed saying:

> it's just another of those things that human beings tend to do. They categorise people…lines of demarcation…I'm saying does it make any difference if you're a negro or not and despite everybody's good intentions it wouldn't pay to be black here really if you had your choices. Life is a hell of a lot tougher…a degree and a trade fall into the same lines with discrimination…I reckon there would be a lot of kids who would love to have left school at year 10 and got an apprenticeship as a baker or seamstress or whatever…instead of staying on because of the perception that everybody should have a university degree. But once they get there, I think it should be considered an elitist group. I have no problem with that…provided that they earn it and then provided that they go and use it sensibly (Sarah's father, Interview 2).

The second interview also revealed that Sarah was concerned about what she now believed to be a heavy workload:

> there's a lot more work…There's not enough time. We're being overloaded with work literally (Sarah, Interview 2).

Indeed, the second interview was significant in that Sarah and her parents spoke of little else other than Sarah's workload, results and study. Clearly Sarah was enjoying her course and working hard and this had resulted in a new-found confidence based on having achieved excellent results. However, by the third and final interview (which at the last minute Sarah withdrew from to take up some much needed part-time work), Sarah's parents revealed that there had been rather more stress in the first semester than they had revealed to me at the time. They had also noticed a change in their daughter through the year:

> first semester was a lot of tension and trauma...but this time it just sort of all flowed through didn't it?...there wasn't this sort of carry on I thought as before the first exams and she's more confident (Sarah's Mother, Interview 3).

Her father commented:

> success seems to be really building her up to start other matters with
> confidence…It's confidence. It's always been holding her back…now it's
> starting to come out…That competition has gone out of it. I suspect that's
> why she's doing better. As a result she seems to have been the best in the
> course (Sarah's father, Interview 3).

Sarah was clearly revelling in her studies as highlighted by her father's description of
when he came home from work to find his daughter studying:

> I'm used to her studying when I come in. I sort of came in last night. I said
> are you studying and she said no but I wish I was (laughter). I said are you
> serious?…She said oh no I miss it (Sarah's father, Interview 3).

Sarah's father reflected on the year as a parent of a university student and highlighted the
delicate nature of parenting his daughter through the year:

> You have to be a bit careful I think on how far you push them in the direction
> you want them to go…It's very very important they do a subject or a course
> and that they are doing the one that they chose, not the one that you chose.
> That I think is a fundamental part of it…you've got to be careful with…your
> own prejudices and mind-set (Sarah's father, Interview 3).

Sarah's father was keen for his daughter to experience the social life associated with the
Archetypal narrative, so much so that when the narrative of Continuation dominated most
of the year, both he and his daughter were very disappointed. However, the other part of
the Archetypal narrative in which parents are expected to maintain a distance from the
university created much tension for Sarah's father. By the end of the year a narrative of
Metamorphosis emerged in which Sarah and her parents felt they had tackled the issues
most important to them and had done so together.

Chapter Four further develops the ways that living at home for first-generation students is
constructed as problematic within the literature. It focuses in particular on how specific
notions of adulthood have been pivotal in this negative construction. The chapter also
examines examples of the language currently used in university brochures and pamphlets

and Internet sites written with parents in mind and suggests that the statements made within these encourage an unnecessary psychological and physical distancing from their student offspring.

CHAPTER FOUR

Degrees of Separation

It's very hard that one minute they're at school and they're still being treated like children virtually and then within a matter of months they're at university and all of a sudden somebody says, hey you're an adult now (Rose's mother, Interview 1).

The previous chapter demonstrated the conjoint nature of the families' first-year university experiences and revealed how the various narratives identified within this study emerged, disappeared and intertwined in their lives. This chapter returns to the theme of how universities deem as abnormal or problematic, the first-year experience as a conjoint experience, preferring instead to perpetuate a discourse and narrative of separation.

As the epigraph indicates, the proffering of adult status by the academy to first-year university students can come as a rude awakening. However, it is precisely this new status that is the most obvious sign of the discourse of separation in action. This discourse has wide-spread acceptance to the point whereby, as Dickerson *et al* point out, many families have accepted it as the norm and work hard to accomplish it:

> One discourse specifies that there is a clear transition from adolescent to adult that requires teenagers to "separate" from their family, from parental ties, and from the narratives parents might have for them. Only through this "separation" process can an adolescent reach an "identity", a sense of self, and a place in the world…Most people (including parents and teenagers) consider separation as a necessary step in development, equivalent to leaving home, usually accomplished by going away to school or getting a job. This step is seen as an accomplishment, one that indicates "growing up". (Dickerson *et al*, 1994: 3)

Such thinking has it roots in western developmental psychology in which physical and psychological separation from parents is deemed necessary for independence. In the

university context, the construction of university students as independent individuals and the associated plot-lines are reinforced in universities by the fact that the concept of *in loco parentis* does not apply as it does in earlier schooling (Dannells in Upcraft *et al*, 1993). Schnaiberg and Goldenberg (1989) have attributed the commitment to the separation from parents to three major factors. First, to postwar childrearing ideology which emphasised the encouragement of young adults separating from their parents. Second, to the focus on individual development and 'disengagement' of young adults from their families and third, to the legitimation of parents focussing on their own needs rather than 'living through the children' (page 259). Within this construction of adulthood, parents need to be got away from as they are considered to be restricters of freedom and therefore of independence.

Because separation from parents is associated with independence and is valorised in western society, those students who live at home with their parents are often considered to have a negative dependency (Schnaiberg and Goldenberg, 1989: 251). Schnaiberg and Goldenberg state that the so-called 'crowding' of parental homes, in other words homes in which the young people remain with their parents, has been caused by a "failure(s) to 'launch careers' and become successfully autonomous adults" (1989: 251). The assumption that students' home lives can restrict university students remains common, with Tanya Kantanis (2000) comparing university life and home life as incompatible states and, by not so subtle implication, that living with parents is negative:

> While for many first-year students university contributes to a life of freedom and experimentation, living at home…places them under considerable constraints from parental pressure. (page 6)

Acceptance of, and belief in, the need for physical and psychological separation between parents and their offspring is a central tenet of a number of books written for parents of university students. Primarily written by US authors for the US market, their target audience is middle-class parents whose children are about to or have already left home to go to university. Perpetuating the separation discourse and stating it clearly in the title, is Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger's book titled *'Letting Go: A Parent's*

Guide to Understanding the College Years' (1997). The authors reinforce early in their book their commitment to the separation discourse stating "We all know intellectually that this is a time for our children to separate and assert their independence" (Coburn and Treeger, 1997: 6). However, despite being popularly accepted, the plot-line of separation is not always an easy one to follow and can create much anxiety on the part of parents:

> Like several of my friends and clients, I felt confused and emotional about this phase of parenting, especially as it converged with my own mid-life. This book addresses that intersection and those challenges of mothers and fathers in their forties and fifties whose lives are simultaneously filling and emptying. (Pasick, 1998: xvii)

So central and accepted is separation that for many it has become an expected part of life, so much so that any unhappiness on the part of parents or their offspring in carrying out the separation narrative is something which has to be stoically accepted, like the taking of a bitter pill, for the good of all involved. The plot-line of 'separation is necessary' has been responded to by many authors in the form of self-help books for parents in general or for specific groups such as parents of university students. A key term central to these books is the 'empty nest syndrome' (see for example Olson, 1993 and Schaffer and Fleischl Wasserman, 2001) as is the idea of the family home being treated as a hotel:

> The balance in a family system is altered if any member leaves the fold, but the adjustments can be particularly unsettling when a child goes to college because that child will leave and reenter the family group many times. Your child will breeze in and out of the family home during breaks and vacations, and you may feel more like you're running a respite home for a stressed-out student rather than welcoming your child back into the family unit. (Johnson and Schelhas-Miller, 2000: 143)

The separation discourse also includes a clear Alternative student experience narrative of conflict and stress between students and parents. For example, Lang and Ford (1992) argue that 'minority' students who move away from home experience 'survival conflict' due to their families being ambivalent, jealous or fearful about their child going to university. Davis's (1977) 'factional' story of student life at a North American university also demonstrates the complexities and conflicts surrounding even temporary physical separation from parents:

it wasn't so good to be home. My old high-school friends were scattered all over the place. Most of them weren't around, and I didn't have anything in common anymore with the ones who were. Rick Norton stopped over one night, and it was really strange trying to talk to him. I was trying to tell him that college wasn't all that great, and he kept trying to tell me what a big mistake he had made by staying home. Guess if you haven't been to college you put it up on some kind of pedestal. (Davis, 1977: 87)

The trend to living longer in the parental home has been observed from the 1980's. Frank *et al* (1988), in a study conducted with one hundred and fifty young adults between twenty two and thirty two, found that as many as fifty per cent of the young adults under twenty four years old did not feel confident in making it on their own in life. According to Hartley (1990) and Schnaiberg and Goldenberg (1989) living at home for longer has been brought about by three factors, namely a tendency for people to be educated for longer, to marry later and to be affected by high levels of unemployment. In stark contrast to concerns about the empty nest syndrome therefore, many parents are learning to live with the consequences of their offspring staying at home longer, leading to the terms "crowded" (Greenberg 1985 as cited in Schnaiberg and Goldenberg, (1989: 252) or "never-empty" nest (Hartley, 1990). Earlier, Wearing (1984) called for the need to challenge and redefine the tasks of autonomy from parents, claiming that the prevailing definitions and routes to autonomy are male and middle class and thus serve to propagate male, middle class interests. Wearing also points to the high costs of accommodation contributing to students staying at home longer, pointing out that in 1981:

> Modal rent…was 40-49 dollars per week, which is approximately equal to the dole and to tertiary education allowances…Complete autonomy, or even a high degree of autonomy from parents is impossible under these circumstances. (page 21)

At January 2001, the maximum level of Austudy was $290.10 per fortnight (Australian Senate Committee report, *'Universities in Crisis'*, 2001). In 2002, students who receive Austudy receive approximately $135 a week. A room in a shared house costs a minimum of $70 per week plus bills and food (from Victoria University, 2002), making independent living difficult.

Nevertheless, the separation plot-line remains prevalent and accepted in the ways universities, both overseas and in Australia, operate and in their expectations of students and their parents. For example, the importance of independence whether it be in independent thinking or decision-making, are each considered important by academics but independence, defined as separation from parents, is particularly valorised when it comes to students' relationships with their parents, as can be seen in this statement from the University of California's student handbook (2001):

> For many of us, moving to college is our first time away from home. Moving away from home means different things to different people. It signifies our independence. Some of us embrace it. Others shy away from it. However we react to independence, this is the time when we learn most about ourselves and when we to (sic) grow learning from our mistakes and triumphs.

Despite the marginalisation of students' parents, many universities acknowledge that parents are an important part of students' lives and whether this occurs through newsletters or parent orientation sessions, many universities attempt to engage with them. However, the content of this engagement reveals still further the insistence on the part of the academy to perpetuate the plot-line of separation. For example, the University of Berkeley's newsletter for parents (2001) uses the law to support its separation discourse. Although the separation discourse is tempered with a recognition of parents' existence, the newsletter insists that the parent/student relationship will change, a euphemism for warning parents that their student son or daughter will no longer see their parents as central in their lives:

> Legally they are adults, and the University treats them as such. You still have an important place in their lives, but your relationship is evolving, along with their maturity.

Similarly, the University of Stanford falls back on the law to reassert the separation narrative, constructing and encouraging students as adults and as separate from parents:

> Stanford's approach to its relationship with students is based on a philosophy that recognizes their status as young adults…Our compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, and the practical fact that Stanford is unable to assess the nature of each student-parent relationship, in most cases the university leaves it to the student to decide whether or when to involve parents…The university does recognise however, that there are unusual situations that may necessitate contact with parents. The university views the freshman year as a time of transition and will often choose to be in touch in that year. The vast majority of students handle their new independence with a deep sense of personal responsibility. If, however, a freshman faces serious academic, disciplinary and/or personal problems, the university will often choose to involve parents rather than rely on the student to contact them. (University of Stanford, 2001a)

Although parents are generally kept at a distance from the everyday workings of universities, in the last few years there has been a push to 'orient' or 'induct' parents into the ways of the university. This push appears to have been driven by the increasing number of students living at home and the need to respond to increasingly vocal parents who demand value for their hard-earned dollar. Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of orientation programs, web sites, clubs and email discussion lists that are designed with parents specifically in mind. Take for example the University of North Texas (2001):

> From a university's perspective, a parent's support and interest are critical to a student's successful adjustment to university life. For these reasons, UNT offers a Parent Orientation program that runs concurrently with Freshman Orientation.

The relief felt by some parents when they are allowed a space in which to ask questions about university can be great. Andrea Van Steenhouse (1998) describes her own and others' relief to hear others asking questions they were too scared to at a parent orientation session:

> We were full of questions, many of which we knew we shouldn't ask. I truly believe that each of us was grateful and silently relieved when other parents asked the questions that revealed their own discomfort with letting go. One camouflage parents used was asking why, if they were paying for it, weren't they given access to everything? (page 85)

Although they had been encouraged to attend a parent orientation session and therefore were led to believe their involvement was wanted, Van Steenhouse was also confronted by the separation plot-line. She discovered that the session was less about an opportunity for greater parental involvement but rather for the university to inform them that, as parents, their involvement in their offsprings' student lives would be minimal. She and the other parents became grateful for the potential for any amount of involvement, no matter how small:

> Several were worried that their students at that very moment were registering for classes and it was the first time that the parents hadn't been involved in the process…If we could only be of some assistance, just like always. Just a little. (Van Steenhouse, 1998: 85)

Despite the certainty with which universities proffer adult status to their student population and the apparent popular acceptance of the plot-line of separation deemed as necessary for 'growing up', pinpointing when a person is an adult is no longer as simple as it once was:

> In our society, as in most others, age is a major dimension of social organization. Our school system, to name one example, is carefully arranged around the students' ages, and the behaviour of all students is clearly differentiated from the behaviour of adult teachers. Similarly, to a greater or lesser extent, families, corporations, even whole communities are organized by age…The line between adolescence and adulthood is also being obscured. The traditional transitions into adulthood and the social competencies they implied - full-time jobs, marriage and parenthood - are disappearing as markers of social age…we are less sure today where to place the punctuation marks in the lifeline and just what these punctuation marks should be. (Neugarten and Neugarten, 1987: 29-30)

Although a high percentage of students live at home, on-campus residences are often regarded as the 'answer' to improving the student experience and encouraging independence. Indeed, as Blakey (cited in Haselgrove, 1994) has pointed out, in the UK in the late nineteenth century, student accommodation was made available by benefactors and in the 1950s and 1960s by government grants, both of which were "linked to the institution *in loco parentis*…Their accommodation would be highly serviced with

cleaning, linen service and catering services." (page 72). Having encouraged a separation plot-line whereby parents are marginal to the student experience, great efforts are then made to recreate a sense of home for students. The irony of separating students from parents and then creating an environment like home seems lost on commentators:

> The university pays close attention to having residences become home. (University of Stanford, 2001b)

However, it is a particular (perhaps even peculiar) form of home, that is home by name but without the awkward presence of parents or siblings. Clearly, on-campus residences are not home at all but rather in fact architectural symbols of the separation discourse which act as powerful reminders that undergraduates are expected to live apart from their families. Indeed, on-campus living is lauded by some as something necessary for improving the student experience and where such on-campus living has disappeared, changed or never existed, there are pressures from some to reintroduce it. Robert O'Hara's advocacy of residential, on-campus living is one example of the keenness some academics feel towards such a living arrangement for students and I have heard similar arguments for on-campus living to be made more available at the university where I work and study:

> Residential colleges established on the original British Model – faculty-led, cross-sectional communities within the larger university – have such a dense social structure that they provide cohesive and supportive homes for new students just by their existence…Needless to say, I am an advocate of the residential college model. Anyone interested in it may visit my website for The Collegiate Way (http://collegiateway.org). (O'Hara, 2000)

From the Collegiate Way web site (2000) can be heard cries of a crisis in American higher education whereby perceived problems therein are considered to lie not with curricula but with "the poverty of student life." Residential colleges are regarded as the answer for reestablishing "the transformative effect" that O'Hara believes universities should have on young people:

> If you are a student you should consider attending a university with a system of residential colleges, and if you are a parent you should encourage your son or daughter to explore collegiate universities. If you are a faculty member you should encourage your institution to establish a collegiate system: it will excite students, it will delight parents, it will inspire faculty, and it will transform your university for generations to come. (O'Hara, 2000)

O'Hara provides a list of other collegiate systems in the UK, Canada and US and Australia. O'Hara's collegiate preference is one in which academic staff, dine and live with the students as opposed to the model where the students live separately without academic intervention. Ironically, the cohesive and supportive environments that O'Hara advocates for a residential college are remarkably similar to the sort of cohesive and supportive family homes that the students in this study enjoyed within their own families. However, O'Hara omits a discussion of students' own homes and implies that 'homes' that are constructed by the academy will be inevitably better or more appropriate. Of course, not every student has a positive home life or supportive parents and this is often used to justify the existence of on-campus residences. However, what is reported less often is the misery that some students feel when they do live on campus, whether it be because of home-sickness, rape, alcohol abuse or general taunting by peers.

While many universities' initiatives are focussed on students away from home, authors are increasingly pointing out that many live at home, creating a central irony of middle-class North American parents, (and the same could be said of many Australian parents), who encourage their sons and daughters to be autonomous but find them remaining at home longer. There appears to be two ways to respond to these changes. The first is to continue to mark such individuals and families as in some way deficient, having been unable to become independent from parents. For example, Furedi (1997) comments upon the increased presence of parents on university campuses in the UK as a sign of 'over-parenting'. Referring to such parents as busy bodies he suggests that the desire to remain living at home until one's thirties is a "process of infantilisation" (Furedi, 2001:35). However, the alternative is to reframe such a living arrangement so that it is understood through an alternative narrative, one which is constructed by listening carefully to the experiences of those parents and offspring who live together for longer than others might

consider as appropriate. This would allow for a new paradigm in which to redefine autonomy and reframe the parent/offspring relationship, whether students or not. For example, Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1993) and Hartley (1993) point to the positive role that parents play in the decisions of young people leaving or staying at home with the authors stating:

> recent changes in nest-leaving patterns may have increased parental influence over when their children leave...the growth of pre-marital residential independence and the delay in age at marriage have made living arrangements negotiable between parents and their maturing children for a long period beginning at age 18. (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993: 851)

Schutze in Kreppner and Lerner (1989) offers another explanation for offspring staying at home longer, one which is particularly significant given the students' experiences in this study and which, along with Dickerson *et al*'s call for a narrative of connection, postulates an important paradigm shift for understanding older children's relationships with their parents:

> It is plausible to assume that the tendency of adolescents to remain at home longer is, over and above economic reasons, also due to the increasing possibilities for adolescents to realise their demands for autonomy and independence to a large extent while they live with their parents. They do not have to defer these demands until after they have left the parental home, as was the case for the generation of their parents. (Schutze, 1989: 377-378 in Kreppner and Lerner, 1989)

Avery *et al* also suggest that parents and their offspring each gain from living together for longer with 'trade-offs' made between, "privacy and companionship, on the one hand, and control and independence, on the other" (1992: 375). Indeed, changing attitudes within and between the generations, linked with revised thinking about development, mean that alternative interpretations become possible when it comes to understanding parents and their older offspring living together.

It is useful to return at this point to one of the parental voices at the heart of this study to see how the parents actively constructed their own versions of autonomy and connection. Avery *et al* state that, "parents' resources provide luxuries" (1992: 376) and Steve's

mother was very much aware of this saying "it's easier" for her son to live at home.
When asked what she meant by this she said:

> He's fed, his washing's done for him, he really doesn't do much…He's got
> the use of a car…He's spoilt probably (Steve's mother, Interview 1).

The luxuries in Steve's case included, in the form of his mother, a cook and a cleaner. In
addition he had use of the family car. While many academics might be concerned that a
university student to whom they have given adult status might be reliant on his mother in
this way, Steve showed no such concern. In fact his tone was quite matter of fact. Some
might consider Steve's mother to be encouraging a negative dependence in her son but
Steve saw no inconsistency in being a university student and relying on, in this case, his
mother for support and input:

> I just bring things home and give them to Mum…she's the boss…she'll tell
> me if I need to do anything (Steve, Interview 1).

However, Steve's mother's response to the above comment of "Isn't that awful" suggests
an acute awareness that others might view her involvement in her son's university life in
this way as negative. However, on seeing that I was not perturbed by her revelation she
confidently described her conjoint experience of university:

> We talk about the books and things and we've established that he'll need
> some but all new ones and there's one that he's already got for another
> subject. I tend to like things organised and know what I'm doing (Steve's
> mother, Interview 1).

Within the traditional, archetypal student experience narrative, Steve would be
constructed as highly dependent and dependence itself is constructed as negative.
Similarly, Steve's mother would be constructed as over-protective and of failing to
encourage her son to be independent. However, within the mother's reframing of
autonomy an alternative interpretation is possible: university attendance is a family affair.
Using this interpretation, the image of a negative, dependent son and an overbearing,
over-protective mother dissolves and a positive, conjoint, negotiated university

experience emerges. Such a shift allows an examination of the world of students who live at home which avoids deficit models of students' families, and specifically that deficit model implied in the term 'first-generation' students.

Despite these social shifts, the separation discourse dominates the student development literature with theories of student development focusing on 'stage' theories which are primarily age-related and expect various separations to occur throughout a persons' life (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Nevertheless, some shifts of thinking have occurred which have allowed for differences based on such markers as ethnicity and sexuality (see for example D'Augelli, 1994 and Donnelly and Donnelly, 1997). A further point of contestation relates to Stevens and Kelly's argument that there are problems with situating adolescence "as a natural, biological category" and they question the notion "that adolescence is a universal experience which is continuous and unchanging across time" (page 3).

In attempting to contribute to the development of a new approach, Dickerson *et al*'s work has been most significant to this study. They go beyond a focus on specific identity formations arguing that "adolescence (is) an artefact of a Western, technologically advanced, white culture" and point to the problems created by the popular acceptance of this discourse:

> a separation metaphor might influence them (parents) to take too much leadership in their children's decisions, feeling the responsibility of time and the responsibility of correctness…Involvement in their children's decisions often transforms into pressure: one should take these classes, get these grades, get this job, apply to these colleges. The effect on parents is one of self-evaluation: Have I been a good parent, guided my children in good directions, helped them make good decisions?"…If children do not seem to be making decisions leading to leaving home, the conclusion is that parents have failed. (page 4)

While universities pursue a narrative of separation between students and parents, the students and parents in this study subverted or ignored it, instead encouraging and living a conjoint experience of the first-year of university. Not physically separated but living

together, the families' experiences in this study also provided an opportunity for different plot-lines to emerge for parents and students in relation to growing up, being adult, and parenting a university student. Having rejected the most obvious symbol of adulthood, leaving home, the families considered living together to be a natural, sensible and unquestioned living arrangement. While the culture clashes within the Alternative student experience narrative occur between the students and their parents, and are expected, even appealed to by the university, within the Narratives of Metamorphosis and Continuity the tensions lie between the families and the university but remain unheard or ignored by the university. With the exception of Sarah's father who expressed directly his frustration with being marginalised by one of his daughter's lecturers, the other families felt there was no avenue to voice any of their concerns or to ask questions. Some assumed that this was because they were not allowed to. All the parents felt cut off from the university to some degree and were unhappy or surprised at the extent to which they were not expected to be part of their son's or daughter's university life.

Ultimately there exists an inherent uneasiness with the maintenance of a connection to students' homes and university and a marking of students' homes and those who live in them as problematic. However, the current economic climate appears to have created some shifts in attitudes towards parents, with some universities, albeit grudgingly, designing brochures and forums for them. Universities' communication with parents via brochures, web sites and orientation programs reveal similar anxieties and tensions about involving students' parents. Such communications prepared by academics or other professionals within universities for their students' parents tend to be primarily focussed on providing information such as listing services available to students and stating academic policies. However, the necessary paradigm shift which includes a narrative of connection, has not yet occurred something which is evident in the ambivalent tone expressed towards students' parents. For example, in the University of Pittsburgh's (1998-1999) booklet of seventy six pages, titled *'Transitions: An Introduction to Life at The University of Pittsburgh For New Students and Their Families'*, only one page explicitly addresses parents. However, and importantly, when it comes to recognising any

shifts to a narrative of connection, it does so in a way which in some small way encourages communication between students and their parents:

> Nothing can bring an individual down more than knowing that his or her family is not supportive. Your child is taking his or her step into the real world. At times it can be a scary and difficult place. However, with constant encouragement of parents and family, obstacles become smaller and smaller and much easier to conquer. (page 59)

It appears to be a most reasonable request that parents continue to be involved in their son's or daughter's education, while at the same time retreating when necessary, a piece of advice that Sarah's father wanted to give to prospective parents of university students. However, the Archetypal student experience narrative remains dominant as does the narrative of separation as seen in the following:

> Do not discuss your fears with them…Learn to separate your fears from theirs so that they may go off to college with only theirs…It is all right if you are having more difficulty in letting go than they are. After all, you have nurtured and cared for them all these years. We only suggest that you turn to your friends and family member when you express the difficulties you may experience in letting go. (pages 65-66)

Similarly, in Morrow et al's (1998) Curtin University booklet titled "*Degrees of Freedom: For Parents and Students*", of its fifteen pages only two (pages four and five) explicitly address parents. However, a serious and important attempt has been made in this document to address the issues of both "City" and "Rural" parents and specific advice is given to parents. For example, the booklet explains differences between high school and university timetables, study differences and, significantly in terms of highlighting the place of parents in university students' lives, the non-existence of parent teacher nights and reports. Nevertheless, the emphasis remains on the parent 'letting go", a phrase used twice under the City Parent column but curiously omitted under the "Rural" parent column.

While the University of Melbourne's pamphlet (2001)*'Tips for Parents'* encourages connectivity, it also emphasises separation, presenting a contradictory message to parents:

What helps is a balance between being interested, supportive and caring on the one hand and leaving alone, trusting and giving space on the other (page 2).
.

The University of Ballarat with its large rural student population who must leave home to attend the university, understandably focuses on students being on their own in their brochure *'Parent's Guide to Uni Life'* (2001). Although full of useful information, there is no suggestion of a conjoint experience but rather one of separation: "Now they have to make decisions for themselves, to be responsible for those decisions, and to solve problems as they arise" (page 1).

The content and tone of Monash University's Transition Programme web site (2002a) is a significant indication of Australia moving towards acknowledging students' parents in the transition to university. The web site has a specific section and brochure specifically for parents. However, advice for students within the web site is contradictory with partners of students being told to encourage their student partner to use their support networks outside the university such as family (see Monash University, 2002b) but advice given specifically to students is for them to 'let go':

When you start at Monash you need to start letting go of your old life. You're no longer at school and you can't rely on the support networks you had there. (Monash University, 2002c: 8)

For John and Rose, their high schools were an important source of support as their families were less able to give them certain sorts of advice, itself perhaps another signal of the need to need to find alternatives to the 'letting go' narrative.

The desire to keep students' parents on the margins of their sons' or daughters' student experiences is also clear in other forums. For example, I posted the following question to the first-year experience email discussion list:

Is there anyone out there who does things for parents of students e.g orientation of some sort or another, or is there a list that anyone thinks I might find useful to subscribe to about parents of students? (posted 9/10/96)

One respondent expressed his reluctance at students' parents being included at all in students' decision-making and thus expressed the dominant ethos of maintaining a line of separation between students and parents:

> When we have one-on-one advising sessions for students in April, many parents want to take an active role. I provide several subtle hints at an opening session that it's better for the parents to step aside a little, but it's not always heeded. I suspect if we had Bill Clinton host a Beatles reunion for the parents at the same time students were registering, a lot of parents would still sit in on the advising appointments. (posted 10/10/96)

The respondent's imagined but unlikely scenario, indicates the extremes to which he feels he would have to go to try to separate parents from students and the strength of his commitment to doing this. Underlying this is his acceptance of and belief in the developmental model of separation. Speaking within a discourse of separation, he considers the desire of parents to 'take an active role' as negative and one which needs to be suppressed. His desire to suppress their need for involvement is expressed through phrases such as his 'several subtle hints…that it's better for parents to step aside a little.' Being subtle rather than overt in his requests he positions himself as all-knowing and the parents as ignorant, judged unwittingly on their abilities or otherwise to understand and act out the separation model. Those parents who are able to decode the subtleties and then accept them are marked as normal, in opposition to those parents who miss the subtleties and the attendant expectations, or recognise but reject them.

A posting by another list-serve member detailed below indicates not only the person's desire to keep students' parents on the outside or edges of university but also highlights anxieties concerning parental involvement in students' decision making about university:

> I am interested in finding out if other colleges out there include parents in the advising/registration process for first semester freshmen. We are a small liberal arts college doing our first Summer orientations this year and are wondering if others of you encourage, discourage, or stay neutral on this topic. Some of us feel it's helpful to have the parents' input, others of us don't. I would appreciate any feedback. (posted 15/5/00)

The person's anxiety concerning whether or not to involve parents is expressed through the three key terms used as potential responses to parental involvement, 'encourage, discourage, or stay neutral'. The subsequent responses clearly indicated the strengths of opinion on the topic with the following response demonstrating most clearly the prevalence of the separation model and separation discourse:

> I'm reminded of what a colleague…said happened when he was an undergrad: there was a day for parents, akin to what we have, and the speech to parents concluded with the President saying (something to the effect of) 'go home now, you did a good job raising them, you got them here, they're ours now.' The sentiment is right, I think; it's developmental time; no parents allowed. (posted 16/5/00)

In the above, the respondent claims the student as a possession over whom the parents no longer have as legitimate a claim. A deal is struck. In exchange for an education the parents must hand over their offspring and the parents become redundant.

The scenario described below, although a little gentler in its tone, still reveals the separation discourse indicated through use of the euphemistic term 'independent adults' which could easily be translated as 'no parents allowed' as in the previous example:

> We have a concurrent parent program and the two programs merge throughout the two days but we definitely keep the advising session for students only. However we tell both groups the schedule for the 2 days and encourage them to talk to each other about the students' choices and decisions (there are merge points between all three of the advising sessions). However, we make it clear to both groups that orientation is supposed to prepare them for the college experience and since the students will be independent adults, we want them to have a taste of working on their own and checking in with parents occasionally. This explanation seems to help both students and parents approach the situation with a good attitude. (posted 17/5/00)

The setting up of two groups emphasises in physical terms the separation expected between students and parents with an almost apologetic provision of 'merge points' where the two groups are allowed to be together. Similarly, use of the term 'good attitude' indicates strongly the institution's position that those parents who dare challenge

the separation model would clearly be seen as problematic and presumably be regarded as having a 'bad attitude'.

Administrative systems are an additional signal to parents that the separation model prevails:

> Our community college …treats each student as an adult. In fact, we won't release information to the parents unless we have the students' written permission. Grades, bills and correspondence are sent to the student directly. (posted 17/5/00)

Dickerson *et al* (1994) in showing the way forward to another possible paradigm, argue that the dominance of this separation discourse which requires separation in order to "reach an identity" (page 3). Evocatively using the term 'plot-line' they state that the separation discourse has led to the creation of, "plot-lines that all must follow to successfully resolve the created dilemmas (page 3). They argue that these plot-lines influence people's opinions about what should happen to people at certain ages, "but also how young people and their parents ought to think and behave (page 4). One such example from this study which supports Dickerson *et al*'s contention is found in Louise's parents stressing their refusal to push their daughter into any particular direction. In so doing, they felt they were encouraging their daughter's independence. For example, in the context of Louise choosing to go to university, Louise's father said, "It's up to the individual" and Louise's mother said, "Whatever makes her happy is fine by us". That Louise's parents would not interfere with their daughter's decision-making suggests their belief in a particular type of autonomy in which older offspring are left to make their own decisions, "Well you know yes it's up to her, she has to put in the time so she has to be the one who's happy with it."

Ironically, and as the previous chapter described, Louise had in fact been heavily influenced by her parents' opinions so much so that she chose a course that she thought they would approve of rather than one she preferred to do. Louise's mother had internalised the plot-line of 'student as adult equals separated from parents' and as such

felt uneasy with her daughter supposedly being an adult and yet living under her parents' roof:

> She is an adult and to come through us sort of demeans her in a sense "I'll have to talk to mum and dad before I do that" you know she's out in the big wide world and can vote…She's 18 and I know she's under our roof but maybe if I said no you're not going out tonight but then she would have been surly and we probably wouldn't have got there anyway (Louise's mother, Interview 2).

The insistence by Louise's parents that their daughter make her own decisions can be interpreted as another way of encouraging her to be independent. However, although they were committed to the separation discourse in so far as course choice was concerned, this was not their stance in other areas of their daughter's life. The complexities of the dependency/independency discourse were played out continually. For example, Louise's father recognised the tensions and anxieties of a society which deems eighteen year olds to be different from seventeen year olds, but saw the home and his and his wife's roles in it as important in allowing them to maintain some sort of control and influence over his daughter:

> You're under a better influence here…well she'd have to be under a better influence here because she could possibly be led astray by a group of young people. I'm not saying we don't have a good time but (laughs) yeah you get a better more stable feeling here…it's more the family unity thing. You know. Like it's better to stay at home as long as you can and not take off when you are young I believe. I just think it's too costly. I think you need older people around you as you grow up. You don't need all younger people around you because older people are more sensible…More stable you know. If you can be told every now and again that you have done the wrong thing. If you are with people who don't tell you you have done the wrong thing, you never know and you keep doing it. So if you are sort of around older people, well I've found that down at work with what we do (Louise's father, Interview 2).

Parents who appear on campus or telephone lecturers and ask questions are annoying to many academics because of the demands they make and because of their seeming inability to recognise that students should be independent of parents. In a similar desire to expunge parents from the campus, Willimon and Naylor (1995) describe frustration at the

audacity of parents to communicate with or question the university, seen particularly in the apostrophising of the adjective 'caring'. Underlying their annoyance is a desire to mark out a territory in which certain people have access and others are provided limited or no access at all:

> I, and other college presidents, receive from "caring" parents angry letters, phone calls, and threats of legal action, all demanding acknowledgement of their children's victimisation. I had one late-night call from a parent wanting to know "how can it be possible that my son received an F." Another parent complained that "with such high tuition it is the college's responsibility to provide a lawyer for students when they are arrested by city police after presenting false ID." On an admissions tour, a parent angrily left the campus upon learning that we did not provide cable-TV hookups in residence halls. (Willimon and Naylor, 1995: 17)

The following excerpt posted to the first-year discussion list highlights how parents can be allowed entry into academics' territory but with extreme reluctance. The reluctance arises from an underlying belief in the separation discourse and therefore an unwillingness to engage genuinely with students' parents. The advisor's discomfort and patronising tone indicates the level of her anxiety, made all the more apparent by her failure to recognise or acknowledge the anxiety of the father:

> During our summer orientation sessions, parents are included in the orientation, but during the time advisors meet with their students, the parents have other sessions to attend, like meeting with the college dean. It gives the parents a chance to ask questions they might not want to ask in front of their children. Although I think most parents have their children's best interest at heart, I prefer that parents not find their way to where I'm trying to advise. It's hard enough to answer all the questions the students have without the distraction of others in the room (which sometimes is barely large enough for the students!). I had a rough experience with a parent when I first started advising-the student was doing just fine working out her schedule, she was happy with the courses she had picked (they were all general education courses that all students have to take before graduation). Daddy managed to get away from his session and come find her. He proceeded to sit down and berate her loudly for her choice of classes and the number of hours she was taking. I felt terrible for this poor girl. She took a deep breath and said, "Daddy, I'm happy with this schedule and this is what I plan to take, so please leave me alone." After that I decided that having parents in the room might not be such a good thing. (posted 17/5/00)

Examples such as this point to the dominance and power of the psychological separation model and the set of cultural assumptions vis a vis development embedded in the academic community. In response to the above posting, one person expressed their desire for parental involvement but of a sort that required the education of parents. As such an instructional and yet again a patronising tone is heard:

> Parents are perhaps the most influential persons in our students' lives. They form the foundation of the student's support system. It seems to me that our job should be to help prepare them for the changes ahead, to provide information to them we are afraid the students will forget, and teach them to be supportive without being domineering. We must help them make the transition from decision makers to educators. Who better than parents to teach? It is in our students that we serve their parents. (posted 16/5/00)

Despite the negativity in these postings, another respondent questioned more deeply the values being expressed in some of the postings and recognised the families' feelings and expectations form within a broader cultural context. As such the advisor supports Dickerson *et al*'s (1994) call for a paradigm shift in understanding development and parent/offspring relationships:

> I believe that you have to take cultural context of parenting into account. It is not realistic to tell parents to "go home and we'll take over." What exactly does that mean? How are parents suppose (sic) to deal with that type of sentiment? These questions are particularly relevant when you deal with individuals from non-Eurocentric cultures. Family is very important to a student's success in college. A student's support system changes when they enter college. The student has to be supported in a number of ways. It is our job, Academic Advisors who support First-year Experience programs, to assist the student with developing other support while attending college. How successful are we if we minimize the role of the family? (posted 16/5/00)

The general negativity towards parents is continued in academics' constructions of the marked group 'first-generation' undergraduates, particularly in their attempts to explain away students' poor marks or gaps in knowledge, an image has been constructed about the inside of first-generation students' homes. This image is summarised in the commonly heard phrase, "what do you expect when they don't even have books in their houses." In this single phrase, parents are blamed for not providing an appropriate home

environment for their offspring. The discourtesy shown towards students' families in this phrase and the inherent élitism is largely unrecognised by those who make such statements. It is no surprise therefore that in the absence of encouragement from universities to address parental issues and concerns, increasing numbers of parents have turned to each other for support. Significantly this has occurred through the internet, itself an indication of a cultural change, of traditional boundaries shifting despite rather than because of universities:

> Parents have long been a silent campus constituency, seemingly destined to drop their college kids off, pay their bills, and wait for that rare letter, e-mail message, or phone call home. Now, at a handful of colleges and universities, parents are getting involved by going online and organizing e-mail roundtables, or "listservs", to inform and comfort each other with knowledge and the details of campus life. To some parents, it's a natural use of technology that permits previously unimaginable levels of contact. They can participate more knowledgeably in a crucial turning point in their children's lives – and perhaps even influence what schools are doing. (Clayton, 2000: 13)

The 'silent campus constituency' is clearly no longer as silent as it once was. Many parents see themselves as part of their son's or daughter's higher education in much the same way that they were part of their primary and secondary education. The University of Pittsburgh in the US has set up an electronic mail list exclusively for parents and spouses of students <new-student-families@list.pitt.edu> and Wichita State University has developed an innovative response to the support of their students with the implementation of an accredited, one-semester long course for parents of first year students in an attempt to reduce attrition. Known as the Parents' Course, its proponents claim the course is

> an acknowledgement of the role of parents in their students' education that goes beyond clichés and rhetoric. It is a vital link between parents and the institution which responds to the needs of both first-year students and their parents. (Harmon and Rhatigan, 1990: 86)

In their attempts to reach as many parents as possible the course was developed for off-campus study using articles and audio cassette tapes. However, the tendency to valorise the separation narrative and therefore encouraging parents to maintain a distance is still

very much in evidence, as seen in an article used in the course titled, '*What Can Students Expect to Encounter: Parents can help (Without Getting in the Way)*'.

Such clear attempts at gate-keeping, ensuring that certain perceived territorial boundaries are not crossed too often are also evident at Gettysburgh where limits exist regarding parental involvement:

> about 350 parents, with their children's permission, can access almost everything students can. They peek at online student itineraries, phone bills, college-store charges, unofficial transcripts, description of events, student traffic records, and course profiles. The parents really like this says Michael Martys, vice provost for information resources. We didn't realize how much until we built it in…One of those happy parents is Gary McManinen, whose son Corey is a freshman at Gettysburgh, which sits two hours west of their Philadelphia home. He and his son share a close relationship, so there isn't a feeling of "big brother watching", he says. Gary says it really helped him support Corey during his first-year. (Christian Science Monitor, 2000)

Whatever might be the motivations, important shifts are clearly occurring both in North America and Australia in the way in which some universities are finally acknowledging parents as part of the university landscape, albeit at a distant level. The use of brochures for parents, parent orientation sessions, Internet sites and email discussion lists are all useful and laudable steps forward in acknowledging parents and it is likely that, had they been available to the parents in this study would have found such inclusions of their own needs and questions comforting. However, a word of warning is necessary. What of those parents of students with low literacy in English, with little or no access to the Internet and those not able to travel to the university campus? The usefulness of the systems put in place for parents thus far are limited. If we are to be serious about addressing parents' needs then we also need to be serious about putting in place communication methods which are as diverse as the parent population so as to avoid information for parents being accessible only to particular groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

Families Matter: Reconfiguring horizons

> The task of conceiving different theoretical horizons will enable us not only
> to offer alternative strategies for developing multicultural environments, but
> such horizons also will enable us to reconfigure the social conditions of
> power that give voice to some and silence others. (Tierney, 1992:616)

That attitudes can shift over time is perhaps no better demonstrated than in the journey of
my own thinking in relation to students' parental homes and parental ties. As an
undergraduate I fiercely believed that 'real' students lived away from their parents. That I
believed there were 'real' and by implication 'unreal' students, is itself indicative of the
powerful way in which the separation narrative had influenced my early life. Indeed, as
an undergraduate, so accepting had I been of the separation plot-line that when many
students left the campus at the weekends to go home and be with their families, I made a
conscious decision to stay on campus. I believed that by doing so I would be stronger
psychologically than those students who had returned home and that my student
experience would be more authentic. Nevertheless, I was less willing to acknowledge the
joy I felt when my parents and grandparents made the occasional visit to see me on
campus, or the relief I felt when I went home at the major holiday times and could relax
in familiar surroundings and with familiar people. Using the categorisations that I was
unaware of then but am more than aware of now, I was a working-class, first-generation
student and I followed the only student experience narrative I knew and leaving other
narratives I saw occurring around me, rejected or unexplored.

By the time I embarked on this research approximately ten years later, I was more open
to the idea of students living at home but still rather bemused by it. I imagined that it
must be very difficult for students to live with their parents, so convinced was I that
students and parents are just that, two separate entities. Any coming together of the two
parties must surely, I thought, be asking for trouble. As such, I assumed that the
Alternative student experience narrative would be most evident in the families I studied,
and highlighted by much storm and stress. My assumptions were based on my own,

largely positive, experiences of living away from home and my belief in the supremacy of the separation plot-line. However, in stark contrast to my own expectations and the prevailing wisdom about students, this study has found that not only were the students in this study willing to live with their parents, and parents were happy to have their son or daughter living with them, they did so in ways which helped rather than hindered their transition to university. The families remained connected and experienced university conjointly.

While I had believed that it was really only possible to become truly adult while living away from home, and the literature suggested a similar necessity, the students in this study saw no contradiction between living at home and being adult. Furthermore, rather than attributing becoming an adult to something which a university offered its students, the students' parents saw their offsprings' age and legal status as the signifiers of adulthood and not the fact that they were at university. The exception to this was Francesca's father who believed that being a student was itself a signal of the need to be independent. Significantly however, he did not believe that this independence had to occur away from home and he played a major role in developing his daughter's confidence. Christine's parents were clearly concerned that their daughter was not as mature as they would have liked her to be and this was a contentious issue in the first two interviews. However, as the third interview demonstrated, Christine and her parents had been able to work through their issues together, conjointly.

Indeed, my initial belief that students should live a separation plot-line, stood in direct contrast with the beliefs of the students and parents in this study. The research demonstrated the complexity of the support systems that families offer, a support network that was by no means one-way, with each gaining from living together. They were also active agents in the research process, being open to and making the most of opportunities that arose from being part of the research, including seeking advice and support from the researcher.

Contrary to the typically negative reports of parents of first-generation students, and despite the general reluctance or refusal of universities to engage with parents, the parents in this study tried very hard to support and make sense of what their sons and daughters were trying to achieve by attending university and cared very much about their education. The parents demonstrated their keenness in different ways with some parents wanting to know as much as possible, others just wanting to visit the campus, and others desiring some sort of academic progress report. Francesca's and Sarah's parents played a major role in helping their student offspring to adjust to university. Even when faced with difficult financial circumstances as in the case of Christine and Rose, the families were able to work through their difficulties together. Steve's and Jenny's parents were able to help their student offspring at a very practical level such as providing a car or mobile phone and Louise's parents were able to provide their daughter with financial security in the form of paying her fees. The support was not one way however, with John helping his mother to understand why he wanted to pursue his particular course and interests and all the students contributing to the general harmony and togetherness of family life. Common amongst all the families, and against my expectations, was that living at home with parents was considered to be a help, not a hindrance, to their son's or daughter's transition to and experiences of university.

The research also demonstrated that some of the parents had been significantly influenced by the Archetypal student experience narrative and associated plot-lines of major transition and even trauma, to such an extent that they were disappointed to discover that going to university could be quite uneventful. The sense of continuation between high school and university could be so smooth that some students and parents were openly disappointed at the lack of change in their lives. A powerful source of the Archetypal narrative and sub-narrative of separation came from high school teachers whose descriptions of university life were based on the Archetypal student experience narrative, with other possible narratives being ignored or unknown. Some practical responses arise from this finding. The popularity of the Archetypal student experience has real implications for all those professionals involved. High school teachers, careers professionals and university staff who visit high schools need to be aware of student

experiences which are different from the Archetypal experience and that students' university experiences will vary depending on factors such as how far they have to travel, how large their campus and course are and how happy they are with their course choice. The Archetypal student experience narrative unhelpfully homogenises students and their experiences. Staff who try to prepare their students for what lies ahead at university need to acknowledge this and ensure that other possible student experiences are described and anticipated. Second, acknowledging different university experiences also means that universities need to strengthen their response to them systemically.

The transition to university is not always marked by what could be described as a culture shock or indeed much stress at all. In fact, quite often the experience can be smooth, so smooth that it can feel unsatisfying. The age, architectural feel and location of the university campuses can also contribute to a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the transition. For example, the newer university campuses built towards the end of the twentieth century have not yet found a place in the general population's psyche as resembling a 'real' university with such visual features as a crest, cloisters, extensive parklands and a variety of on-campus facilities. While Steve's mother was pleased that her son was attending a small campus as she felt he would settle in more quickly, Sarah's was disappointed that the small size of her campus meant that social activities were not as available and general resources were not as good. Campus location was also an issue but often not in the way anticipated. For example, although living in a western suburb where traditionally higher education institutions have been absent, John had grown up familiar with a university campus almost on his doorstep and the campus was a familiar rather than strange environment. For Rose, her working-class background, specifically her father's job having been in a working-class, multi-cultural western suburb, helped her to feel comfortable in her new environment in a way that her peers did not. Rose's working-class background helped rather than hindered her transition to a multicultural and urban environment. Both John's and Rose's experiences demonstrate how the discourse of the first-year experience has not yet caught up with the reality of some students' lives.

Despite the ease with which they made the transition, Rose's mother and Sarah's parents experienced snobbery concerning the newer university their daughters attended, with people outside their families questioning the authenticity of the university their daughters attended. This in itself suggests that not only is the Archetypal student experience narrative considered the default experience but so too is the Archetypal university campus. There is a need to acknowledge that a massified system of higher education means that the sort of student life many of our students experience is different not only from that that we might have had ourselves but also from other known current university experiences. It is critical to monitor not only students' but the wider community's responses to the massified system of higher education so that we understand our students as they are currently living their lives and not as some sort of comparison test with what has gone before, or that is nostalgically reconstructed.

Orientation activities offer potent evidence of the prevailing assumptions that students need to be initiated into a new sort of world. For those students who attended small high schools and go to large university campuses or are used to a rural rather than urban environment, or vice versa, the traditional orientation is probably appropriate. Clubs and societies advertising their activities, academics describing their courses and expectations and a number of sausage sizzles and bands can be helpful to many students. However, Abdel and Smyrnios (1995) have pointed out that while most universities conduct orientation programs, little evaluation exists about their worth. The purpose of orientation programs is generally to "narrow the gap between the institutions' and students' needs" (Abdel and Smyrnios, 1995: 1) with an overall institutional aim of reducing the likelihood of students leaving the institution. While these goals are laudable, in tone and practice they seem to be a hangover from the Archetypal student experience with a focus on beer and bands, something which in terms of beer at least, Sarah (and presumably other students) had not been impressed by. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many students choose not to take part in Orientation activities as they see them as irrelevant. Culturally diverse student populations within a massified system suggest a need for diverse types of orientation.

One example of effective evaluation is found in Peter Magolda's (1997) paper. Having designed and implemented orientation programs along the lines of more typical orientation activities by conforming to the usual type of orientation in which he and his colleagues "tended to be overly supportive to offset the inevitable challenges associated with the transition from high school (or work) to college" (page 45), his student evaluations demonstrated that students were very positive about orientation leading him to the conclusion, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it'. However, in a shift of thinking about orienting students he began to think differently. Rather than orienting students he decided to disorient them. In this context, disorientation meant "not in the sense that it befuddled students or threw them into an altered state of consciousness, but disorient in the sense that it caused them to pause to examine their personal assumptions" (page 88). Magolda's thick descriptions of an eighteen-month ethnographic study of a residential college's orientation program, in which he used participant observation and in-depth unstructured interviews and document review to assess and participate in a new type of orientation are fascinating, particularly the attempts made by the staff to 'disorient' the students by devising a series of activities to challenge their assumptions about other people, themselves and the world around them.

For universities which have only or primarily a commuter student population, a reexamination of orientation activities might be required to acknowledge a diverse student population and therefore diverse student experience narratives. Furthermore, orientation activities which attempt to address the needs of those parents who wish to have more of a connection with the university could be designed, not so that the university maintains the current status quo of telling parents to remain at a distance form their student son or daughter's university experiences but rather to discover and discuss how the university can help those parents who wish to help their son or daughter to do so. This would indeed be a challenge as the temptation to request that students' parents bow out of the ins and outs of their son or daughter's education seems very strong.

The findings of this research also give strength to the argument that more qualitative and longitudinal studies are required into the Australian university experience and in a way

which incorporates rather than divorces students' parents or other significant family members. Interviewing the families across the year rather than once revealed how the families worked things through over time and together. The study showed how the first-year experience for the students in this study was a conjoint experience, involving rather than excluding parents and other family members. The parents were interested and supportive of their sons and daughter's university studies and progress and tried to help where they could. This is in direct contrast with the commonly held view that first-generation students suffer from a lack of parental support. Furthermore, the study showed that students were happy to live at home, with Francesca and Louise not being able to contemplate living elsewhere and often finding great solace from the pressures of university by being able to return to the family at night.

This research also points out that a large body of student experience literature is outmoded and, for the most part, has hung on to the Archetypal student experience narrative as the default narrative and reluctantly taken on board, but in a limited way, the Alternative student experience narrative. The need to acknowledge, discuss and research other narratives is paramount in order to better understand a diverse student population and to be able to respond usefully to their diverse needs.

There are inherent problems relying on a body of literature which is highly influential and yet from only one or two places, namely the US and Canada. It is problematic because of terminological differences, educational practices, funding differences and general cultural differences. As a way to begin to address some of these issues, the South African, Swedish, UK and Australian contingents at the 11th International Conference on the First-year Experience in Dublin in 1998, called for the conference organisers to develop a glossary of terms for future conferences as, although we often used the same terms, we did not necessarily share the same meanings.

While problems with terminology can be overcome, it is much more difficult to overcome different education practices, cultures and expectations. The fact that I was initially surprised that so many students live at home in Australia is indicative of the

country and time in which I was an undergraduate. I did not understand this aspect of Australia's educational culture: so much so, I felt I had to write a thesis about it. It makes sense therefore to develop a country's own body of literature about our own experiences without feeling or trying that there is a need to copy someone else's or see theirs as necessarily better or worse.

This research has contributed a shift of perspective to understandings of students, their parents and the experiences of the first-year, but five key limitations should be noted and considered for future research. The sample was necessarily small to provide the basis for an intense qualitative inquiry. As the study was composed of two-parent heterosexual families, it is not known if the same conjoint experience of university exists for single parent or same sex families. Further inquiry could also be made to examine variables such as non-first-generation students and the experiences of a wide spectrum of students and parents with a language other than English. While issues of gender were not a primary factor in this research, it would also be useful to examine gender issues further not only in terms of male and female students but also mothers and fathers of the students. Finally, similar research conducted with the families of students who attend different sorts of universities such as older, larger or more rural campuses would demonstrate to what extent the findings of this study can be generalised or are institutional specific.

The value of this study lies in not only emphasising that students' experiences matter (Haselgrove, 1994) but also that the experiences of first-generation students and their parents, indeed of any student and parent, matter. Furthermore, student experiences cannot and should not be neatly categorised as if we know what it is to be one. Experiences differ depending on the time in history, the country, and as this thesis has shown, are distinguished by highly localised variants such as the eastern and western suburbs of Melbourne.

To lament that many students do not share the Archetypal experience is to ignore and dismiss the experiences they do have. It is not sensible or realistic to expect students to

attempt to live the sort of student life that neither their institution nor other parts of their lives can accommodate, or that they have no contextualised perception of. It is critical that discussions of these newer experiences should not be placed on an invisible, unspoken but pervasive hierarchy of student experiences but rather that they be given as much credence as other student experiences.

The families in this study form part of a forgotten or ignored group, that is, those first-generation students who make the transition to university quietly and with the support of their parents. We need to learn more about these experiences and see how our universities can adapt to them, and from a position of knowledge rather than assumption. It is insufficient to think it is known what it is like to be a first-generation student and to live in the western or eastern suburbs of Melbourne and study at university. Nor is it sufficient to assume that it is understood what it is like to be the parent of a first-generation student. With the exception of Rose's mother, going to university was not a "traumatizing milestone of family life" (McLean, 1998: 35). As Chapter Three showed, even for Rose's mother it was traumatizing not because her daughter was leaving home, for of course she did not, but because it marked her daughter's entry into a world which Rose's mother was unsure would treat her daughter well. The lack of trauma in the families' lives is a positive outcome of a massified system in Australia, that is, not all transitions to university will be a traumatic or a major component of all first-generation students' life experiences. Arising instead is a situation whereby learning to drive and being legally able to drink alcohol can be a much more important focus! University is not necessarily considered to be anything special or different, but merely part of a rather long educational journey that many rather than a few take part in. This is not to deny that many students do find going to university to be incredibly different from what they had known before. However, we need to acknowledge the similarities interwoven through the stories of these students and ask whether or not we think there is a problem. Further, we need to ask what the implications are for our assumptions about what and how students experience their first-year. If universities wish to differentiate themselves from other experiences, then the challenge for universities is how to do this effectively and positively, and if so, for whom.

CONCLUSIONS

The research process and development of this thesis have enabled me to answer the personal question I posed in the Prologue and which initiated this project: "Who or what possessed me to say to my parents 'God I still can't get away from you'?" The key factors were a combination of my acceptance of the dominant life-span development theory, which requires separation from parents to achieve autonomy, and my own class position. Societal expectations led me to believe that in order to achieve autonomy I had to separate physically and eventually psychologically from my parents. I also believed, and was encouraged to believe, that relocating away from my hometown would enable me to 'better myself'.

Both these factors stand in stark contrast to the families in this study who ignored, saw as inappropriate or were blissfully unaware of the dominant separation narrative and stressed instead a conjoint university experience and different student experience narratives. In marked contrast to my own perceived need to move away from my hometown, the participants in the study saw no such need. Through the integration and exploration of the personal and the local, both the researcher's own story and those of the eight families, new narratives emerge which have implications for the more effective ongoing study of, and practical approaches to, contemporary undergraduate experience in Australia. In addition, and importantly for a practitioner in student learning support, the research also increasingly demonstrated the inadequacies and even dangers of assuming a continuity of student experience from one country to another or from one generation to another, whether the assumption is based on personal individual experience or on the received wisdom of dominant theory.

This thesis has shown there is a need to challenge the authority of the dominant plot-line of separation in the higher education literature and to acknowledge conjoint university experiences. It suggests that such a challenge can be effectively based on a 'thick' study of the personal, everyday experiences over the first year of study: a study in which attention and respect is paid to the everyday, and to the ways in which the families

themselves tell their stories. Within such a study, the reflective experiences and changing relationships of the researcher to the material and to her own assumptions form a crucial component. The newly identified narratives in this thesis emerged, disappeared, reemerged and changed within families' conjoint experiences of university. It is the acknowledgement of the narratives' conjoint nature, their fluidity, and often their unpredictability that deepens and sharpens our understandings of not only first-year university experiences as lived by individuals but, significantly, how they are lived conjointly within families. A central contribution is the space it gives to the voices of the parents whom literature has at best marginalised and at worst seen as a handicap to their children's studies.

In the same way that Tierney (1992) called for a "radical reorientation" (page 616) of thinking about and responding to the worlds of universities, this thesis has demonstrated the need for a reorientation of how we think about and respond to so-called first-generation students, their parents, their home lives and parental involvement in universities. It is therefore fitting to end this thesis by returning to Tierney's call to arms from 1992:

> The task of conceiving different theoretical horizons will enable us not only to offer alternative strategies for developing multicultural environments, but such horizons also will enable us to reconfigure the social conditions of power that give voice to some and silence others. In doing so, we will be moving away from a model of social integration and assimilation and toward a framework of emancipation and empowerment. (1992: 616)

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