The History and Impacts of the University of Newcastle's Open Foundation Program

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision.

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo3.

(signed)

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the history and impacts of the largest and longest lasting enabling program in Australia, the Open Foundation Program (OFP). The thesis develops Bourdieu's idea that social reproduction is not static but allows spaces for people to acquire cultural capital and transform their habitus through the field of higher education. The thesis takes a multi-layered and mixed methods approach using oral history methodology to recount the memories of 38 staff of the University of Newcastle and analyses 350 student survey responses which include quantitative and qualitative data. The history chapters cover a forty-year period from the program's origin in 1974, providing insights and reflections on key events and personalities that shaped the direction OFP took and examines the contributions the program has made to the lives of students, the University of Newcastle and to the regions in which it is taught. Analysis of the student data indicate reasons for enrolling, most frequently to satisfy issues relating to self-identity and reflecting their capability. Stories of what became of Indigenous students, early school leavers, students with a (dis)ability – or, significant abilities, and Distance students, elaborate the transformations in the lives of people who might be considered the most educationally disadvantaged. The thesis also traces the career destinations of completing students and highlights the outcomes, not all economically advantageous, but mostly considered life changing for these students. The experience of studying OFP, most frequently expressed as embracing the joy of learning, resulted in one sixth of respondents continuing to postgraduate study. These findings suggest that, with well over 26,000 successful completions, OFP has transformed the lives of many people in the Hunter and Central Coast regions. The findings indicate the benefits of andragogy and that funding this area of education continues to be justified.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Enabling programs are entry-level university programs which have existed in Australia since the 1970s to widen university access and participation to previously underrepresented groups.[1] As I complete writing up this thesis in the 44th year of operation of the University of Newcastle's mature-age enabling program, the Open Foundation Program (OFP), the overriding and most obvious features of this program are its continuity and longevity. What began as a pilot program in 1974 with eighty offers of enrolment, thirty-one people completing and twenty-eight taking up offers to enter university,[2] has become one of the largest and long lasting enabling programs in Australia with well over 26,000 successful completions to date[3] (See Appendix 10). Using documentary evidence, oral histories and a survey instrument, the aims of this thesis are to explore the history of the OFP by giving voice to key personalities involved with OFP from its early years and examine the impact of the program on students, staff, the University of Newcastle (UON) and the regions in which it is taught. This history, which covers the period from 1974 to 2014, and these impacts, assist in understanding the program's growth and durability, of which no longitudinal studies have previously been undertaken. The thesis presents recollections of staff involved in decision-making roles: a chancellor, vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellors, directors, program convenors; lecturers involved in teaching the program; a variety of student support staff such as learning support, disability support, counselling; administrative staff; and students themselves. Drawing on their memories, it presents a multi-layered account of how the program began and operated over time, and what these insiders see as its chief outcomes.

The central research questions posed to staff therefore explored knowledge of the origins and development of OFP, of personalities involved in administering, teaching and supporting the program, of staff awareness of student journeys, as well as reflections on the program's significance to UON and its regions. The students who undertook the survey provided demographic data and were questioned on what brought them to the program, their experience of studying in OFP, and their lives after completing it.

Central to the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis is the work of Pierre Bourdieu who so eloquently described features of the reproduction of educational disadvantage. The

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[1] Cheryl Bookallil, and John Rolfe, "University-based enabling program outcomes: comparing distance education and external study." *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 56(1) (2006): 90. They comment on the problem of defining what constitutes an "enabling" program. They are also known as 'Bridging Courses', 'Foundation Studies', 'Tertiary Preparation'.

[2] Data collected from paper copies of OFP records held be the English Language and Foundation Studies office at the University of Newcastle.

[3] UON publication *ELFSC at a Glance*, 2013 estimated that 24,142 had completed by the end of 2013.

application of these theories to the Australian case was supported by a range of literature which established the context in which enabling education came to exist in this country and the policies instituted by successive federal governments which affected its operation. Methodological sources included oral history, which provided a means of understanding first-hand accounts of participants. A critique of these oral histories assisted in determining how they could be used, with due consideration of the validity of memory. A grounded theory approach was applied to the analysis of data arising from qualitative survey responses. Documentary evidence such as reports and journal articles written by academic staff and university records relating to OFP were sourced to test claims made by interview respondents about the history and impacts of OFP. Finally, educational literature was consulted to analyse why people enrol in tertiary preparation courses and to explore the experience of students who might be classified by conventional categories as disadvantaged. Each of these distinctive literatures is reviewed in the relevant chapter.

This survey of the relevant literature revealed a need for original research into the people who attend and conduct enabling programs as a means of testing the many theories and hypotheses in circulation. Up to this point in Australia, such studies have been restricted in scope to specific groups or short periods of time. This study was developed to provide insiders' accounts of Australia's longest running enabling program, the OFP, over its first forty years. It is timely, as the federal government considers changes to the funding structure of enabling education, which could reduce its accessibility. This thesis demonstrates the importance of such programs and the effects they can have on people's lives. It is innovative in providing insights into the aspects of the program and its outcomes that are invisible within the institution's accounts.

The significance of this research lies in the recognition that while enabling programs can be viewed as fields of consumption as universities strive for market share and to access equity funding, they are important sites of transformative learning for mature age students. Widening participation in HE through the provision of enabling programs is an effective means of implementing social justice and equity initiatives as it allows those who have the will to succeed an opportunity to do so. Further, as lifelong learning becomes normalized, more attention will be paid to meeting the specific learning needs of mature age students, the teaching of whom is classified as andragogy, not only at the point of entry but throughout their degrees. The entire sector can learn from the attention to enabling programs' tailoring of curriculum and learning environments to the needs of adults.

Key to this original contribution is the use of first-hand accounts collected from staff who administered and taught in OFP and the students who studied within the program. By providing oral accounts of their recollections of the origins of OFP, vivid memories of the program, their observations on its impact on students, UON and its regions and their own philosophy of teaching, staff enabled new insights to be drawn. In order to manage the

larger number of student informants a hard copy survey was used as an alternative to oral history interviews. The information collected in this way was drawn upon to reveal their motivations in returning to study, their experiences in the program and its longer term impact on their lives.

The hypothesis for this research is that enabling programs are worthwhile because they provide a context in which students can acquire cultural capital and a habitus that allow them to feel comfortable within the HE field. Although not all will complete degrees or go on to graduate careers, the experience is valuable to the majority in terms of personal satisfaction, self-growth and identity formation.
The theoretical foundation of the thesis is informed by Bourdieu's concepts of field, cultural capital and habitus, which, in combination, provide an explanation for practice, the dynamics that exist between human actions and social structures. Bourdieu's theory of 'field' highlights the importance of examining specific features of context. Understanding the power relations and cultural practices that occupy certain locations reveals how certain practices, rules and discourses predominate. The enabling space within higher education constitutes such a field, as it has a unique history and dynamic.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is used as the theoretical basis from which to explore the changes that take place in people's lives in consequence of studying in OFP. While students come to the course with cultural capital related to their past lives, they gain embodied and institutionalized cultural capital specific to the Higher Education field. In various publications, Bourdieu referred to cultural capital as a currency the possessors of which could invest or exchange for other valued social products, such as reputation or economic benefits.[4] For OFP students who transition into professional careers, this currency is particularly obvious. However, Bourdieu also sees the acquisition of cultural capital as a 'game' that one must learn to play if they are to succeed in social life. To use a card game as metaphor, holding the cards as a material possession in order to participate in the game is essential, but becoming competent at playing it is also an objective. Bringing in the third of Bourdieu's concepts, the latter capacity is an example of habitus, which becomes important because fitting in and being comfortable within a social space, in this case, higher education, is a matter of academic socialisation. Habitus includes dispositions and tastes one acquires from experience. It may be unconscious, but nevertheless guides social behaviour because it is internalized and provides a feel for the game of social life.

Students' self-identity is often changed by undertaking OFP, in turn changing their habitus. These changes highlight the important role tertiary entry programs play in Australian life both for individuals and their communities. As both embodied and cognitive, habitus can be

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[4] Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste,* trans. R. Nice. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, 142); Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education,* ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986): 244.

transformed by education, although for some students, a divided or cleft habitus results. Bourdieu's unpacking of the three concepts: field, cultural capital and habitus, thus provide useful theoretical tools for the examination of the OFP experience.

The theoretical concepts of the thesis are established in Chapter 2 with a discussion of the relevant work of Bourdieu and those who have drawn upon his ideas. Chapter 3 outlines the position of enabling programs and the wider areas of adult education within the field of HE in Australia. It discusses the policy initiatives that have aimed to introduce equity and widen participation in HE among many disadvantaged groups in Australian society. Finally, it discusses the concepts of the transformative learning that students identify as part of their OFP experience and the lifelong learning that has become a feature and sometimes an expectation of people's professional development.

Chapter 4 details the methodology used for this research. It begins by tracing the process of gaining ethics approval and presents the advantages and disadvantages of collecting the oral histories that inform several chapters. The 38 oral histories conducted with staff of UON were manually analysed to detect themes and patterns that arose from a consistent set of questions addressed to respondents. The oral histories revealed these insiders' memories of the origins of OFP and their perceptions of impacts the program has had. This chapter also provides details of a student survey with 350 respondents drawn largely from the Potential Enabling Program Participant Research (PEPPR) Register. The survey responses were coded using NVivo software to create adult and child nodes for further investigation. It explains how the data were sorted into categories including age, sex, possible disability or Indigeneity, prior educational qualifications and courses undertaken, and the grounded theory approach taken to investigate reasons people enrolled in OFP and details of their OFP experience. In addition to the statistical information from the surveys, qualitative comments provided a rich source of information about the transformations that occurred in these people's lives.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide a history of OFP divided into the first two and then subsequent decades of the program. The history covers the program's origins, the influence of Dr Brian Smith, the founder of OFP, and difficulties in establishing the OFP during the 1970s. The 1980s was characterised by experiments in design and delivery such as residential study weekends, an attempt to broadcast OFP on air and the instigation of the compressed delivery Intensive program. The 1990s was a time in which funding issues required a creative response from UON as it attempted to secure federal funding and succeeded in having OFP included in the university's funded load. Up to 2014, the focus changed to developing a research agenda. The instigation of Attainment ceremonies during the 2000s placed the program more visibly within UON's and the public gaze. Continued expansion of the program across remote locations and through its Distance offerings were also features of this era.

Chapter 7 provides demographic data retrieved from the 350 student surveys and offers an account of the reasons people enrolled in OFP. The most commonly cited reason was to enhance their self-identity, followed by career aspirations and economic advancement. Considering the reasons people enrol and that sometimes they may come to enabling programs due to some 'disorienting dilemma' in their lives or for companionship points to the fact that pastoral care may be integral to student success and that psychological and sociological factors may be at play. The chapter reinforces the idea that there are multiple explanations for enrolling in enabling programs that are not only career or education-related, they are often more deeply felt.

Chapter 8 provides stories of student transformation focussing on a range of analytic groups beginning with the five Indigenous students who responded to the survey. This is followed by the stories of 21 early school leavers in order to show where their educational journey had taken them. Remarkably, the majority, despite their lack of high schooling, transitioned into a range of professional careers. The chapter then examines the experiences of 38 students with some form of disability who responded to the survey. Likewise, the majority of their stories related to success despite all odds. The thesis argues for a rejection of deficit thinking to focus instead on the abilities these students have and how they enriched their own lives and those of others by following their educational dream. Outcomes for Distance education students were also analysed to ascertain the destinations of students whose experience of the program was more isolating than that of on-campus students.

An examination of the career progression of OFP students is provided in Chapter 9. One of the measures of the program is in whether students were successful in professional life. This is born out in tracking degree choices, destinations and an analysis of those students who went on to complete postgraduate study. One of the unexpected outcomes of this research was that in this group of 350 people, around one in six or just under 17% were inspired to continue their education and gain Honours and Masters degrees as well as PhDs.[5] Although not all student respondents who moved into professional careers reported improvement in their economic situation, most did report increased satisfaction with their new job.

Chapter 10 reports on the impacts of OFP on students, specifically on what respondents' qualitative survey responses reported about their acquisition of academic capital and their changed habitus. Responses to the question about how OFP had changed their lives most often resulted in comments about their enjoyment of the program. The majority of respondents also reported entering into enduring friendships during the course of their OFP

[5] The ABS 2011 Survey of Education and Work for people between the ages of 15-64 years reported that only 5% of Australian men and 4% of Australian women had gained postgraduate qualifications. http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20Sep+2012 (22 January 2018).

year and, in some cases, these relationships constituted social capital, which sustained them long after the program was completed.

Chapter 11, based on oral history interviews, examines perceptions of the impacts of OFP on UON and the regions in which it is taught in its face to face mode. These included economic impacts for the university, producing well prepared students for undergraduate programs, contributing to the prestige and reputation of UON and its contribution to meeting the University's equity responsibilities. In addition, attention to the craft of producing enabling andragogy based on delineating and disseminating the salient features of academic capital, the 'rules of the game' in the HE field, and promoting an enabling ethos underpinned by social justice, equity and widening participation, has been ongoing. This has generated a highly motivated teaching and administrative staff who, despite the challenges of significant casualisation and lack of recognition over the years, strive to improve their skills and practices. The impacts of OFP on the regions were also significant. They included expansion of human capital in the regions as a result of professional development, and the general educational levels of the population have been significantly increased. UONs equity objectives have also had flow-on benefits to the regions with a greater number of disadvantaged students and students with a disability transitioning into the workforce. This inclusive agenda has social justice implications. Broader social impacts included giving people hope that they could change their circumstances if they chose to take this educational journey. This alone is a remarkable asset to society.

The Conclusion, Chapter 12, reiterates the main findings of this study and reinforces the point that in times when educational funding and policy are under scrutiny, continuing to support OFP is a means to social advancement. Societies can, and do, change when readily accessible education and a flexible learning experience is offered to its citizens. The thesis begins by outlining the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis employs Bourdieu's concepts of field, cultural capital and habitus to argue that participation in the UON's OFP, part of a specific field of Higher Education (HE) in Australia, is a way in which successful students acquire cultural capital and a specific type of habitus, both of which have transformative potential. Cultural and academic competencies including mathematical, linguistic, written and critical thinking skills are imparted, developed and honed within the program to facilitate passage into undergraduate studies. According to student respondents in this study, more desirable outcomes whether intellectually, professionally, socially, personally or economically were achieved after undertaking OFP. The thesis argues that the concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field must be considered in unison in order to fully appreciate the changes this program brings to students' lives. Following Tierney[1], it demonstrates that cultural capital is something that can be learned or, according to Werfhorst,[2] achieved, rather than something that is automatically inherited or innate as Bourdieu prefers to argue. Along with this acquisition of new types of cultural capital, shifts in habitus and learning to be a 'fish in water' as distinct from one that is 'out of water', are outcomes of the OFP.

This chapter traces Bourdieu and his colleagues' key texts and concepts and how they have been utilised and developed by other scholars in order to obtain a clearer understanding of how they might be understood and applied to the analysis of research on the OFP. Frank refers to Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) as "the Master"[3] who continues to influence academic discussions long after his death. Frank speculates one of the reasons Bourdieu's work has endured is because it creates "openings" that invite alternative explanations or contextual applications. In addition, when considering Bourdieu's legacy, Lamont poses the question, which can also be read as a statement, that Bourdieu is "good to think with?"[4] The refinement of Bourdieu's concepts over his career points to his capacity to continue to observe sociological insights and to assist his readers in understanding the complexity of the social world around them.

An instance of this openness in Bourdieu's work is around his use of the terms cultural capital, habitus and field. Bourdieu and his many collaborators were not absolutely clear on how the concepts should be interpreted, leading to considerable academic debate. Often, following Bourdieu, researchers employ the concept of cultural capital to explain how

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[1] W. G. Tierney "Models of minority college-going and retention: Cultural integrity versus cultural suicide," *Journal of Negro Education,* 68 (1999): 80-91.

[2] Herman G Werfhorst, "Cultural capital" strengths, weaknesses and two advancements" *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 31(2) (2010): 159.

[3] Arthur W. Frank, "Review Essay. Bourdieu, The Master," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 37(3) (2012):319.

[4] Michele Lamont, "Looking back at Bourdieu", in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu's Legacy: Settling Accounts and Developing Alternatives,* ed. Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 138.

people possess particular values or attributes, and bring them to education, thereby guaranteeing the success of those who possess this form of capital and compounding the disadvantage of those who do not. This thesis takes a slightly different position and shows that Open Foundation students already possess a range of values and attributes as mature people, with competencies based on life experiences and/or work skills. By undertaking OFP they gain additional cultural capital, in particular, forms of institutionalised and embodied cultural capital, and in many cases, social capital. This expansion of cultural capital enhances their self-worth and social position, while changing their habitus to one that is comfortable in and embracing of an academic environment. This thesis argues that Open Foundation students are not empty vessels, their pre-existing attributes and skills have helped them to navigate the worlds in which they are embedded. OFP demonstrates that people have the capacity to acquire cultural capital later in life through engaging with structured processes rather than being limited to acquiring it through birth, family, upbringing, social class or early education. It is argued that cultural capital is a much more fluid and potentially empowering concept than Bourdieu allowed for in his reproduction theory.

It will be argued that cultural capital, habitus and field, the specific context in which social practice occurs, are indelibly linked and that all three are required in order to fully understand the nature of the impact of the OFP on people's lives. These concepts provide ways to analyse how people understand their mission to accrue more fulfilling lives through education. Bourdieu offers the following equation to help readers understand the connection between his concepts:

[(habitus + capital) + field = practice].[5]

This suggests that the three concepts shape practice and that capital in its many forms is more closely aligned with habitus but together with field forms the basis for understanding how social practices are constructed. The interplay of these concepts led to the assembly of Bourdieu's "full theory of social reproduction of inequality".[6] In this schema, if capital or habitus were negative constructs, in the sense of students being inadequate, lacking or impoverished, then practice is likely to be severely limited. Similarly, if, as shown in this thesis, students' habitus, cultural and social capital, and field are enhanced through academic study, the practices in which they engage will be positively affected. A more detailed explanation of Bourdieu's concepts is therefore helpful in understanding the impacts of acquired cultural capital and a habitus that comfortably situates people in the tertiary environment.

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[5] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) cited in Mary O'Donoghue, "Putting working-class mothers in their place: social stratification, the field of education, and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 34(2) (2013): 192.
[6] Rachelle Winkle-Wagner, "Foundations of Educational Inequality: Cultural Capital and Social Reproduction," *ASHE Higher Education Report* 36(1) *(*2010): 7.

Devine states, however, that Bourdieu is "notorious for not succinctly defining the concepts on which his theory is based and for using them in a fluid manner throughout his writing".[7] According to Prieur and Savage, cultural capital is a slippery concept:

> This slipperiness should not, however, be taken as a weakness, for there is an underlying focus in Bourdieu's conceptualisation. The essence of cultural capital is that it provides symbolic mastery through a whole array of different forms of knowledge, tastes, preferences, properties etc. [8]

Bourdieu himself stated that the core of his work lay in the method and ways of thinking and that he did not like definitions.[9] In an interview he stated "My method is a manner of asking questions rather than just ideas. This, I think is a critical point."[10] But according to Frank, "the gaps, assumptions, and even biases in his writing incite controversy, attempts at revision, on-going searches for updated empirical application reflecting the local contingencies and … alternatives". [11]

A major criticism of scholars who use Bourdieu's theory is that they use only "portions of his theoretical scaffolding", which leads to distortions or misrepresentations of his theoretical constructs.[12] Winkle-Wagner argues that competing and contradictory definitions of cultural capital result in a loss of meaning. She argues that "proxies" are used in place of cultural capital, which confuse its meaning by replacing it with another understanding, such as lack of cultural capital being equated with economic poverty.[13] This denies the complexity of the concept and its full potential as an explanatory tool. Bennett and Silva, when pondering the limitations of Bourdieu's theory on cultural capital, look at the fact that the term has been reconceptualised over time. They argue it was originally "shaped pragmatically in critical interventions into education and cultural policies"[14] but has limitations because it is constructed according to the logics of capitalism rather than broader structural frameworks. Similar concerns are raised with regard to the concepts of habitus and field. With these

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[7] Jo Devine, "Digging deeper using 'habitus' – a fresh approach to understanding student behaviour," in *Profession of Engineering education: Advancing Teaching research and Careers,* eds. Llewellyn Mann and Daniel Scott (Melbourne: Proceedings of 23rd Annual Conference of the Australasian Association for Engineering Education, 2012), 509.

[8] Annick Prieur and Mike Savage, "Updating cultural capital theory: A discussion based on studies in Denmark and in Britain." *Poetics* 39 (2011): 568.

[9] Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 95.

[10] Cheleen Mahar, "Pierre Bourdieu: the intellectual project," in R. Harker, C. Mahar & C Wilkes, eds. *An Introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: the practice of theory* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

[11] Frank, "Review Essay. Bourdieu, The Master," 319.

[12] Winkle-Wagner, "Foundations of Educational Inequality," 7.

[13] Rachelle Winkle-Wagner, "Uses and Abuses of Cultural Capital in Educational Research," *ASHE Higher Education Report* 36(1) *(*2010): 41.

[14] Tony Bennett and Elizabeth Silva, "Introduction: Cultural capital – Histories, limits, prospects." *Poetics* 39 (2011): 427.

criticisms in mind, what follows is an attempt to explicate in more detail what is meant by the concepts Bourdieu uses, to explain how they are connected, and to apply them to the experiences of people who have undertaken the OFP. The concept of field will first be addressed.

Conceptualizing Field

Bourdieu and Wacquant define field as:

> a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined … by their present and potential situation … in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field.[15]

This rather convoluted explanation points to some features of a field: it is a structure that has internal consistency and can be identified as distinct from other structured organisations; and it has specific power relations within its organisational framework, which are a source of production of certain types of capital that could be cultural, symbolic or economic. Swartz's deconstruction of Bourdieu's concept explains that "fields designate arenas where specific forms of capital are produced, invested, exchanged, and accumulated."[16] Swartz argues fields may have specific and opposing interests but in general a field provides a "broader perspective of structural conditions that shape the interactions of actors though they are not aware of them."[17] This lack of awareness stems from the fact that people may not be conscious of the overriding structure as they focus on their immediate circumstances and human agency. According to Edgerton and Roberts, field includes both formal and informal norms that govern particular spheres of activity. They contain their own regulative principles, referred to by Bourdieu as the "rules of the game" or logic of practice, which are "subject to power struggles among different interests seeking to control the capital (and rules) in that field."[18]

Fields are semi-autonomous, can overlap with other fields, and smaller fields can be nested within larger fields such as in the case of family nested within educational or economic fields.[19] Each field exercises power according to its own level of influence on the wider society. The field of education exerts certain influence within society as it is tasked with educating the population. Status and prestige flow to those who are considered intelligent within the culture, just as being labelled a "clever country" reflects upon a whole

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[15] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology,* 97.
[16] David Swartz, "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion: Pierre Bourdieu's Political Economy of Symbolic Power," *Sociology of Religion* 57(1) (1996): 78.
[17] Swartz, "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion," 78.
[18] Jason D. Edgerton and Lance W. Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality," *Theory and Research in Education* 12(2) (2014): 195.
[19] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 195.

population. Education is both a form of capital and a field, which benefits a population and has certain norms and rules within which it operates. According to Swartz[20] fields mediate relations between social structures and cultural life and have five structural properties: they struggle for control over valued resources and for legitimation; they have dominant and subordinate positions; they impose certain rules on actors; they have internal mechanisms, which grant them some autonomy from the external environment; and finally, external influences are mediated through their structures and dynamics. In the case of education, Swartz observes that the education system has the capacity to control recruitment, socialization, careers of participants, and to impose its own specific ideology.[21] Fields such as education will fight to preserve funding and secure resources, which places it in competition with other fields.

The importance of locating a context or field

Bourdieu's work has highlighted the fact that "understanding the social space in which interactions occur is pivotal".[22] He explained that "we take the positions which we are predisposed to take on the basis of our position in a certain field."[23] An example is working class mothers returning to study who bring to this field their embodied history, habituated practice, and their access to cultural capital. While they may have authority in and knowledge of their own households and possibly a certain status within their social setting, this may not translate to the context of HE, which can undermine their sense of self and capacity to feel like a 'fish in water'. The precarious position they occupy in the field of education must then be "negotiated through a matrix of intersected positionings and classifications that are embodied."[24] These women are shaped by this field, which has historical, local, relational and familial contexts, and reflects wider power dynamics. Field "defines a set of roles and relationships that develop over time and their worth or capital is given by the differential rewards and status afforded to those roles by the fields".[25] The power working class mothers are likely to exercise is prefaced on the ability to play the educational game of acquiring qualifications as determined by the institution that may be at odds with the other fields they occupy.

Bourdieu and Wacquant offered three directions for exploring fields: first, look at the field in the context of power; second, set out the structures of relations between those competing in the field; and third, "consider the spectrum of habituated practice and the dispositions acquired by internalising very specific social and economic conditions."[26] Since cultural fields

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[20] Swartz, "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion," 79.
[21] Swartz, "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion," 79-81.
[22] Mary O'Donoghue, "Putting working-class mothers in their place: Social stratification, the field of education, and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice." *British Journal of the Sociology of Education,* 34(2) (2013): 190.
[23] Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in question*, (London: Sage, 1993), 154.
[24] O'Donoghue, "Putting working-class mothers in their place," 190.
[25] Keith Dowding. *Encyclopedia of Power. (*Thousand Oaks California: Sage Publications, 2011), 7.
[26] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 104-5.

"are governed by specific interests"[27] the broader area of education, for the purpose of this thesis, requires a closer analysis as does higher education as a sub-field, and nested within that, enabling programs in the Australian context, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. This thesis draws attention to the unique characteristics of enabling education in Australia, in particular at the University of Newcastle, which as Chapter 5 describes, has been shaped by its history, personalities of decision-makers and other staff, and by the students who have been enrolled in it over more than four decades.

Conceptualizing Cultural Capital

According to Robbins the concept of 'cultural capital' was first introduced to the sociology of education by Bourdieu and Passeron[28] in 1964 and was based on Bourdieu's understanding of American acculturation theory.[29] Robbins argues that Bourdieu began refining his concept of linguistic or cultural competence as his career progressed and that it now requires a reflexive approach. Winkle-Wagner observed that Bourdieu's earlier work in the 1960s defined cultural capital as informal academic standards that are also attributes of the dominant class and included informal knowledge about educational expectations, linguistic competence and specific attitudes or personal style.[30] This reading of cultural capital sees it operating like a hidden curriculum, which is accessible to the privileged who understand its power, but which is not visible or part of the awareness or culture of working class citizens who have been persuaded to believe that education is meritocratic. Coming out of the Marxist tradition that regarded educational inequality as a deliberate act to maintain the supremacy of the ruling class, Bourdieu was looking for ways to explain social reproduction in education and hence focussed on transmission from already advantaged families and the inherited tastes that emanate from the influence of highbrow culture.

Critics of the highbrow approach such as Prieur and Savage[31] and Lareau and Weininger[32] have largely discredited this definition on the basis that society has changed and what was conceptualised in 1960s France "may not be that which operates today."[33] Participation in the *beaux arts*, for example, is no longer necessarily seen as a mark of distinction so in this sense, cultural capital is historically and culturally relative. Identifying cultural capital as exclusively relating to high culture limits its potential as a theoretical tool because it excludes the possibility that cultural capital can be learnt or acquired in other ways.

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[27] Swartz, "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion," 78.

[28] Pierre Bourdieu with J.C Passeron, *Les etudiants et leurs etudes,* (Paris-La Haye: Mouton 1964); Pierre Bourdieu with J.C Passeron, *Les heritiers, les etudiants et la culture,* (Ed de Minuit: Paris 1964).

[29] Derek Robbins, "The origins, early development and status of Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital," *The British Journal of Sociology* 56(1) (2005): 13.

[30] Winkle-Wagner, "Foundations of Educational Inequality," 5.

[31] Prieur and Savage, "Updating cultural capital theory," 566.

[32] A Lareau and E Weininger, "Cultural Capital in Educational Research: A Critical Assessment. *Theory and Society* 32(5-6) (2003): 567-606.

[33] Prieur and Savage, "Updating cultural capital theory," 566.

By the 1970s, Bourdieu had refined his definition of cultural capital. Moving away from highlighting class attitudes and knowledge as well as the informal aspects of acquiring it, he allowed that more formal knowledge acquisition recognised through educational qualifications, broader cultural attitudes and the development of tastes all constituted cultural capital.[34] This suggests Bourdieu's move from structural explanations to those involving human agency, and his recognition that any explanation of how cultural capital might be transmitted had to acknowledge not only social structures, but a combination of structure and agency. His later understandings of embodied cultural capital and habitus were broadened to take into account the agency of bodily attributes, sensibilities and individual perspectives. Key texts that refer to cultural capital highlight the characteristics Bourdieu and his colleagues regarded as important to the development of this concept. The specific quotes that elucidate these ideas are collated in Appendix 1.

Suffice it to say that by 1992[35] Bourdieu had moved toward the position adopted in this thesis, that cultural capital was interconnected with habitus and field. The major themes, metaphors and dichotomies that came out of his primary sources, discussed in more detail below, were that cultural capital was both structural and agentic; it could be objectified, institutionalised and/or embodied; that it was a form of power; and could be considered part of the 'game' of social life.

Structure and agency in cultural capital

Appendix 1 also demonstrates the complexity of Bourdieu and his colleagues' attempts to reconcile structural and agentic characteristics of cultural capital. Structural, or institutionalized, qualities of cultural capital are evident when cultural capital is mentioned in the context of five key factors, beginning with *Family*.

In the case of Family, cultural capital is variously referred to as "inherited" or an agent of socialisation in the form of inculcating tastes, knowledge or competence that enhances one's standing in society. Bourdieu's early work claims that "relationship of familiarity with culture … can *only* be produced by family upbringing,"[36] which suggests that other socializing agents play no role in transmission. Bourdieu also designates cultural capital as "identifiable by the father's occupation".[37] This is also problematic as it assumes nuclear family models with male head of household and denies the fact that it is often women who do the cultural work to ensure that children acquire cultural capital. Other publications

[34] Winkle-Wagner, "Foundations of Educational Inequality," 5.

[35] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*.

[36] Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." In J Karabel and A. H. Halsey eds, *Power and Ideology in Education,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977b), 494.

[37] Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture,* 2nd ed. Trans Richard Nice (London: Sage Publications, 1990a), *74.*

present parents or families more broadly as the source and conduit of cultural capital, depicting them as a "family resource framework."[38]

The second structural factor is *Education,* which as a system, Bourdieu claimed "demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give."[39] He asserts that education systems expect students to have certain skills and capacities gained from families. Those who already have access to cultural capital acquired from family are further advantaged within the educational domain because they can utilise that capital and expand their knowledge and influence; while those who are disadvantaged are afforded fewer opportunities to access the knowledge and resulting credentialed rewards society has to offer. Educational institutions, according to this argument, play a key role in maintaining the status quo[40] in favour of the already advantaged. Education is therefore a resource that offers analytic and cognitive skills and "can, and should be a vital means of access"[41] to cultural capital but can also operate to prevent some social groups from succeeding. This is evidenced in Connell *et al's* argument about the effects of 'streaming and creaming', which they claim increase educational inequality rather than reduce it.[42]

Thirdly, Bourdieu understands cultural capital as an *Economic asset* describing it using terms such as: profit, yield, value, conversion and investment to describe cultural capital as a tangible and scarce resource. In this view it is an object of competition in the same way as Marx's notion of economic capital operates in Conflict theory. While concurring with Bourdieu's assertion that class-based inequalities result from passing on cultural capital, this thesis highlights the way in which such inequalities can be overcome by learning how to acquire cultural capital, it also demonstrates that, as Skeggs argues, respondents see outcomes other than economic ones as equally or more valuable.

The fourth factor is *Class,* a dominant theme in Bourdieu's work that underpins his reproduction theory that explains dominance of one class over another. His early definitions of the influence of, and familiarity with, highbrow culture as an indication of one group's higher position in the social strata is central to his argument about social exclusion and access to knowledge and culture. What is referred to as the "highbrow" definition of cultural capital encompasses experiences such as theatre, concert and museum attendance as well as book reading and owning[43], an interest in art and classical music[44], opera, plays,

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[38] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 210.
[39] Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, 494.*
[40] Alice Sullivan, "Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment." *Sociology* 35(4) (2001), 894.
[41]Stephanie Claussen and Jonathan Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum." *Science Education* 97(1) (2013), 64.
[42] R.W Connell., D.J Ashenden., S Kessler, and Dowsett, *Making the Difference. Schools, Families and Social Division. (*Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 16.
[43] Sullivan, "Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment," 896.
[44] Kalminj, Matthijs and Kraaykamp, Gerbert. "Race, Cultural Capital, and Schooling: An Analysis of Trends in the United States." *Sociology of Education* 69 (1996): 23.

dance performance[45] that may be financially impossible as well as culturally repugnant to working class people. Those belonging to elite status cultures are said to be perceived by teachers as "more gifted than students who lack the distinctive tastes, traits and styles"[46] of the ruling class. More broadly, familiarity with the dominant culture[47] according to Bourdieu, constitutes cultural capital and is a social marker of distinction and prestige.

The final factor is *Structural power,* which has the capacity to include and exclude people from social rewards. Bourdieu argues cultural capital "sets up divisions and hierarchies" and works as a classifying system[48] where it forms part of the relations of domination. It is one means by which the established class order is justified, becoming part of the "self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination."[49] Those with the power to determine social norms and practices also defend its value[50] and attempt to maintain their position within the hierarchy. This makes it a more difficult proposition for those who do not have easy access to cultural capital to acquire it.

These structural elements provide a macro view of cultural capital where its systemic capacity to influence social behaviour is evident. Where accepted social goals and norms become institutionalised and inclusion is prefaced on conformity, which in turn constitutes an inducement rewarded by social structures, then recognising the benefits and effects of cultural capital is required to play the social game. Moreover, consideration of human agency is evident in Bourdieu and his colleagues' treatment of three main areas of human experience: embodiment; linguistic and cultural competence; and exercise of power at the bodily level. One of the consequences of refining his definition meant that over time Bourdieu distinguished different types of cultural capital: embodied; objectified and institutionalised, which provided greater precision in how the term could be understood, as discussed below.

Embodied cultural capital

Bourdieu emphasized that "most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment."[51] He argued that the accumulation of cultural capital and its cultivation,

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[45] Seoyong Kim and Hyesun Kim, "Does Cultural Capital Matter?: Cultural Divide and Quality of Life," *Social Indicators Research* 93(2) (2009): 297.
[46] Lucia Tramonte and J. Douglas Willms, "Cultural capital and its effects on education outcomes." *Economics of Education Review* 29 (2010): 202.
[47] Anna Zimdars., Alice Sullivan and Anthony Heath, "Elite Higher Education Admissions in the Arts and Sciences: Is Cultural Capital the Key?" *Sociology* 43(4) (2009): 650.
[48] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* 89.
[49] Swartz, "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion," 71.
[50] Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 59.
[51] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in John G. Richardson ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the sociology of education*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 244.

assumes that a process of incorporation has occurred that has costs such as time, and perhaps financial expense (as in the case of tuition fees), "privation, renunciation, and sacrifice"[52] but which can be considered an investment. He regarded this work of acquisition as work on oneself, or self-improvement, which had the added benefit of conferring cultural competence.[53] Similarly, Foucault explained power as something that is not only structural, it exists in action and can also be imposed upon oneself. Foucault referred to this as "bio-power".[54]

This suggests that power relations are enacted upon, and felt through, the body. The under acknowledged aspects of the effects of power on the bodies of school students is discussed by Gore[55] who draws on Foucault's analysis of power to explain that the corporeal effects of power on bodies may not be visible and tends to be underestimated.[56] Bourdieu acknowledges this point when he comments "the transmission of cultural capital is no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital" and is less easily detected than "direct, visible forms of transmission" that can be censored and controlled.[57] Adkins acknowledges that Bourdieu's work on the theorization of embodiment is one of the pressing issues of our time because its impact on bodies is not widely understood. Like Foucault, Bourdieu sees power as subtly "inculcated through the body." [58]

Much of the bodily effects of power are evident in student survey responses where their felt experiences often characterised the way OFP had impacted their lives. Some of these responses are reported in Chapter 10 where, for instance, the joy of learning had specific bodily effects. Adkins argues that embodiment is "both generative and practical, but it is also the product of history: it is an enactment of the past."[59] This historical component of bodies is discussed by Bourdieu when he states that embodied cultural capital is "based on long lasting dispositions of the mind and the body."[60] Bodies carry in them learnt strengths and weaknesses that may reinforce resilience or result in avoidance or flight as protective mechanisms. Preferences, attitudes and behaviours that have been historically acquired are inscribed in bodies and become automatic responses. Emotion is also part of the body's knowledge. One of the important contributions of Bourdieu's work is that he takes into account that bodies are feeling entities. As Wetherell comments, Bourdieu saw cultural capital as "a kind of privileged aesthetic sense, appreciation and understanding, as sets of

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[52] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 245.
[53] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 245.
[54] B Smart, *Michel Foucault*. (London: Tavistock, 1985): 85.
[55] Jennifer Gore, *Pedagogy, power, and bodies: on the un(der)-acknowledged effects of schooling* (Hampton Press, 2002).
[56] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* London: Penguin Books, 1975.
[57] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 246.
[58] Lisa Adkins, "Introduction: Feminism, Bourdieu and after," *Introduction, Context and Background. The Editorial Board of the Sociological Review*. (2004), 5.
[59] Adkins, "Introduction: Feminism, Bourdieu and after," 14.
[60] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 243.

tastes and preferences," [61] which would guide and inform behaviour but are also felt experiences.

One of the ways in which bodies feel is through gender. Adkins is critical of Bourdieu's work because it "had little to say about women or gender."[62] She argues that gender, as part of a social field, infiltrates and influences every other aspect of one's habitus because it inculcates bodily dispositions that one has been socialised to exhibit. Adkins draws on the work of McRobbie[63] to argue that social categorizations are inseparable from the female body, but this argument could also be made to explain the perspective of male bodies as social constructs. Social divisions are becoming increasingly genderized, and thinking and experiencing as a woman or a man is an area that separates the collective experience of women and men. Adkins argues gender "can never be understood as an abstract position but as an always lived social relation that will always involve conflict, negotiation and tension".[64] Authors such as Connell have highlighted the effects of male privilege within western culture. He coined the term "patriarchal dividend" to explain the surplus or advantage men enjoy as a group by maintaining an unequal gender order.[65] This advantage can be classified as one means of identifying possession of cultural capital but also of opening up further discussion of the impacts of education for women's bodies.

Another dimension of embodied cultural capital is in the form of knowledge. Claussen and Osborne[66] argue that "knowledge [gained in the formal educational field] enables the individual to understand and engage in the discourse of the dominant groups within society", providing valued skills and behaviours in the form of traditional academic skills as well as "non-cognitive habits that are not usually assessed"[67] yet determine school success and levels of educational and occupational attainment. Cultural "know-how" at both of these levels is, according to Edgerton and Roberts, both "internalized and intangible" [68] that makes it much more difficult to detect and analyse, yet they are part of an individual's "capital stocks" that contribute to their socioeconomic success. Embodied cultural capital is of particular relevance to the argument advanced in this thesis and is evident in the qualitative comments collected from student survey data. Students often reported impacts on their bodies as well as more material or objectified effects as a result of studying OFP.

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[61] Margaret Wetherell, "Solidifying affect: Structures of feeling, habitus and emotional capital" in *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (London: Sage, 2012), 108.
[62] Adkins, "Introduction: Feminism, Bourdieu and after," 3.
[63] Angela McRobbie. "A Mixed Bag od Misfortunes?: Bourdieu's Weight of the World," *Theory, Culture and Society* 19(3) (2002): 129-138.
[64] Adkins, "Introduction: Feminism, Bourdieu and after," 11.
[65] R. W Connell, *Gender*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 142.
[66] Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 64.
[67] Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 67.
[68] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 195.

Objectified cultural capital

Bourdieu states cultural capital is objectified in material items such as "writings, paintings, monuments, instruments" and is "transmissible in its materiality … Cultural goods can be appropriated both materially – which presupposes economic capital – and symbolically – which presupposes cultural capital".[69] He argues it is not the owning but being able to use material goods for specific purposes, in a meaningful way, which conveys advantage for the person who possesses it. Like language, having material goods is not enough, putting them to good use is the crucial factor. They must be "appropriated and implemented and invested as a weapon and a stake in the struggles which go on in the fields of cultural production"[70] as a way to wield power.

According to Jantrasakul[71] this type of cultural capital "closely approximates the portability of economic capital". However, he argues the ability to interpret and consume objectified cultural capital remains embodied, dependent on individual habitus characteristics. When it takes the form of transmissible, material objects such as books and texts, it is the capacity to use these things to advantage rather than possessing them per se that is important to Bourdieu. The objectified form of cultural capital, being assets or resources has received the most attention[72], but the cognitive aspects and behavioural repertoire that derives from its use are also considered to be advantageous to people's pursuits and desired outcomes.

Institutionalised cultural capital

Institutionalised cultural capital refers to academic qualifications that become embodied as skills.[73] The dominance of any forms of cultural capital can be institutionalized in the form of examinations, qualifications, and certification by professional bodies.[74] Qualifications have "legally guaranteed cultural value"[75] and confer recognition of cultural competence that is "officially accredited."[76] Kim and Kim refer to "institutionalized cultural entitlement" [77] that comes with qualifications, the gaining of which is difficult to accumulate and not transferrable in the same way in that economic capital might be passed on. In this explanation, parents cannot guarantee the success or legitimacy of their children who do not possess the same qualifications as they have attained. In contrast, Wetherell argues that institutionalised cultural capital in the form of university degrees and specialist skills can be drawn upon in the same way as economic capital and passed down to children when

[69] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 246.
[70] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 247.
[71] Prapai Jantrasakul, "Bridging the Gap: Understanding Cultural Capital in EFL Classes." *International Forum of teaching and Studies* 6(1) (2010), 38.
[72] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 208.
[73] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 247.
[74] Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 59.
[75] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 248.
[76] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 195.
[77] Kim and Kim, "Does Cultural Capital Matter?" 297.

parents make investments in their children's futures[78] by assisting their children to gain necessary credentials. By conferring qualifications, institutions allow direct comparison of credentials and "conversion of cultural to economic capital at a mutually understood but changeable ratio."[79] Institutionalized cultural capital, then, is a way of imposing recognition on its bearer and also "makes it possible to compare qualification holders"[80] and establish their value relative to a common standard.

Qualifications may also be considered an investment, according to Bourdieu, because of the time and effort involved in acquiring them and guaranteeing monetary value if used for attaining jobs or for promotion. He stated that society was moving in the direction in which "the obtaining of social privileges depends more and more closely on possession of academic credentials."[81] One concern was that only those who already possessed cultural capital had ease of access to gaining credentials. Another was the "hidden 'rules' of engagement in an educational institution that some students seem to know and with which others seem unfamiliar".[82] Just as some people may inherit money and enjoy the benefits of it, some inherit an awareness of what is required of an education system and use it to their advantage. For those who do not have these advantages, the education system is much harder to negotiate.

Cultivating awareness of this inequity, developing policies and acquiring funding to ensure fair access to all is a major priority of many universities. Tierney comments that efforts to achieve this outcome amount to a shift from the burden of responsibility of success resting on the student, to the institution.[83] In recent times, higher education has been called on to be more adaptive to cultural norms enacted by students and to provide more support mechanisms to encourage student retention. The effects of cultural capital are still institutionalized[84] but the pressure to ensure university targets are met in the numbers of people graduating with credentials is an issue gaining increasing attention. Bourdieu's insights into the power institutions can exercise in regard to the conferring of qualifications is pertinent to the equity debate in higher education. An understanding of how cultural capital constitutes an exercise of power is relevant to ways of seeing how it can disrupt the dominance of certain social groups and create a more democratic society.

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[78] Wetherell, "Solidifying affect," 108.
[79] Jantrasakul, "Bridging the Gap," 38.
[80] Jantrasakul, "Bridging the Gap," 38.
[81] Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, 210.*
[82] Rachell Winkle-Wagner, "'Strikes and Gutters': Examining Applications and Interpretations of Cultural Capital," *ASHE Higher Education Report* 36(1) *(*2010): 65.
[83] Tierney, "Models of minority college-going and retention," 80-91.
[84] Tramonte and Willms, "Cultural capital and its effects on education outcomes," 202.

Cultural capital as power

"Power, particularly in the form of domination, stands at the core"[85] of Bourdieu's work. He claims cultural capital is a set of "resources and powers"[86] in which objective power relations are imposed on everyone who enters the field.[87] In the field of higher education, Horvat maintains that cultural capital is useful in "revealing the power dynamics that support current status arrangements".[88] Bourdieu had argued that educational institutions are created to serve the purposes of the elite who are the dominant class in most fields.[89] As such, it is much more difficult for "outsiders" to contend with the norms, values, attitudes and behaviours the dominant class impose on educational settings. McDonough *et al* claim that social distinctions are transformed into educational distinctions[90] but the reverse can also be the case. Once people gain an awareness of cultural capital's power, they may try to acquire more in that particular field.[91]

Bourdieu suggests that cultural capital sets up divisions and hierarchies, it is a classifying system[92] that in itself confers power to those who have that power to classify or categorize people. Swartz argues that when explaining cultural capital as power, "Bourdieu extends the logic of self-interest to the non-material sphere where he identifies prestige, honour, knowledge and educational credentials as forms of capital", all of which are cultural representations of power.[93] The question, according to Swartz, is "under what conditions and at what rates do these distinct forms of capital become mutually convertible forms of power?"[94] In its embodied form, cultural capital may constitute confidence to move outside one's comfort zone and say, pursue higher education. In its symbolic form, power is not perceived as such but as "legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others."[95] Swartz argues it is seeking honourability. This less visible explanation of power draws on Bourdieu's notion of doxa, or practices that maintain power but that are considered "natural."[96] This idea informs his argument that cultural capital is inherited and

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[85] David Swartz in Keith Dowding ed. *Encyclopedia of Power. (*Thousand Oaks California: Sage Publications, 2011), 74.
[86] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste,* Trans R Nice (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 114.
[87] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 230.
[88] E. M. Horvat, "Understanding equity and access in higher education: The potential contribution of Pierre Bourdieu," in *Higher education: Handbook of Theory and Practice,* ed. J. C. Smart (New York: Agathon 2001), 196-7.
[89] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 1984.
[90] P. M McDonough, M Ventresca and C Outcalt "Field of dreams: Understanding sociohistorical changes in college access, 1965-1995" in *Higher education: Handbook of Theory and Practice 15,* ed. J. C. Smart (New York: Agathon 1999), 5.
[91] Winkle-Wagner, "Strikes and Gutters', 63.
[92] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* 89.
[93] David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (*Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 76.
[94] Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 76.
[95] Swartz, *Culture and Power,* 77.
[96] Zimdars., Sullivan and Heath, "Elite Higher Education Admissions in the Arts and Sciences," 652.

flows seamlessly from one generation to another. However, it disguises the advantage of the dominant class, which "has the power to determine norms and practices, including what knowledge will be valued and taught."[97]

As the foregoing discussion has shown, cultural capital "is a signal that is used to maintain class domination and to shape individuals' life chances."[98] Where power is seen as familiarity with the dominant culture, these theories of how power is conferred and exercised explain the difficulties students from low socio-economic backgrounds experience as they attempt to succeed in higher education.[99] These students lack familiarity with the "dominant cultural values and ideas embedded in the curriculum" and lacking in cultural confidence, accept "authoritative pedagogy discourse imposed on them without question."[100] Dominant classes:

> use their cultural capital to maintain their advantage in social, economic and cultural arenas. Cultural capital of the legitimate kind creates advantages in the educational system, in the workplace, in class mobility, in social interaction and partner selection and in other life outcomes.[101]

Eisner remarks that a student's display "of the dominant form of cultural capital is often mistaken in an educational setting for 'natural aptitude'"[102] when in fact the middle class are advantaged due to greater congruence between "dispositional skills and the school's institutionalized standards of evaluation."[103] This enables the middle classes who are already more familiar with educational expectations to more successfully manage institutional encounters and put into effect more favourable academic outcomes.

Wetherell argues that the middle class is "marked out by a deep-seated commitment to self-improvement, deferred gratification and to accruing more and more property in the self."[104] This notion of self-interest is notable because it is also argued that those who possess cultural capital defend its value[105] while the arbitrary aspects of power become self-perpetuating. Bourdieu's view is that education systems prefer to legitimate social inequalities through their control of credentials, which means that they have a "key role in

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[97] Nick Zepke and Linda Leach, "Improving student outcomes in higher education: New Zealand teachers' views on teaching students from diverse backgrounds," *Teaching in Higher Education* 12(5-6) (2007): 657.
[98] Yaish, Meir and Katz-Gerro, Tally. "Disentangling 'Cultural Capital': The Consequences of Cultural and Economic Resources for Taste and Participation." *European Sociological Review* 28(2) (2012): 170.
[99] Zimdars., Sullivan and Heath, "Elite Higher Education Admissions in the Arts and Sciences," 650.
[100] Jantrasakul, "Bridging the Gap," 43.
[101] Yaish and Katz-Gerro, "Disentangling 'Cultural Capital'," 170.
[102] Eisner 1992 in Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 62.
[103] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 197.
[104] Wetherell, "Solidifying affect," 111.
[105] Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 59.

maintaining the status quo."[106] However, cultural capital does not need to be conceptualised as dominative. Andersen and Yaeger[107] argue, similar to post-structural views on power, that cultural capital can be possessed by everyone to benefit people equally. It does not need to be a form of domination or competition but something that can be more evenly dispersed throughout populations. In the case of higher education, when equitable structures are put in place, it can function to enlarge the educated population and increase the overall store of cultural capital. The purpose of the OFP could be understood in this way.

Cultural capital acquisition as a 'game'

At various points in his work Bourdieu refers to the "game" metaphor, such as when he comments that habitus is "the feel for the game", a social game that is embodied and "turned into a second nature."[108] This implies that once this level of cultural competence is reached, it becomes automatic and an unquestioned aspect of social behaviour. In *Distinction* he says there is "no way out of the game of culture," [109] so learning to play this game is vital to one's success and involves competence that is:

> expressed in the language of tact, skill, dexterity, delicacy or savoir faire … In a game, the field (the pitch or board on which it is played, the rules, the outcome at stake, etc.) is clearly seen for what it is, an arbitrary social construct … Entry into the game takes the form of a quasi-contract … explicitly constituted as such in the form of grammar, rules and exercises, expressly taught by institutions expressly designed for that purpose. [110]

This explanation suggests willing compliance and awareness of the game and, also the role of institutions in inculcating its requirements. In *Language and Symbolic Power*[111] Bourdieu articulates an argument about the inherent political nature of participating in this game of culture when he discusses playing political games within fields, while in *Sociology in Question,*[112] he uses the analogy of roulette where he argues that possessing tokens [cultural capital] is a successful way of playing this game. Many of his references to games highlight the significance of families passing on the knowledge of how to play this social game, but also providing the resources for offspring to play successfully.

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[106] Sullivan, "Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment," 894.
[107] Ida Gran Andersen and Mads Meier Jaeger, "Cultural capital in context: Heterogeneous returns to cultural capital across schooling environments." *Social Science Research* 50 (2015): 180.
[108] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 63.
[109] Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 12.
[110] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 67.
[111] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power,* 183.
[112] Bourdieu, *Sociology in question,* 34.

Possession of cultural and other forms of capital combined with a feel for the game are seen to be "generated by middle class habitus."[113] Andersen and Jaeger describe this as the middle class working the system[114] and using their cultural capital to gain advantages on behalf of their children. In turn, middle class children are better able to display their cultural capital creating an impression of academic brilliance and greater talent than they actually possess.[115] Nevertheless, they have learnt to play the education game and use it to their benefit.

Edgerton and Roberts highlight the benefits of possessing a "cultural toolkit"[116] consisting of habits, skills and cultural resources at one's disposal that provide strategies for action to successfully negotiate the rules of the game. They imply that access to this toolkit is not fairly distributed across the socio-economic spectrum so those from low socio-economic backgrounds cannot utilize these skills to play the game. These authors use the analogy of a card game to explain Bourdieu's intent. They say the game is the field of interaction, the cards dealt are the stock of cultural capital and the approach they take to playing the game is their practice and depends on their habitus.[117] They state:

> The value of certain cards and hands and the most advantageous way to play them will vary according to the rules of the particular card game as will any player's relevant knowledge and skill. The value of your cards in context of a particular game, will influence how you play them… at the same time, your skills, knowledge, and preferences as a player will influence how you appraise your cards and the possible options you have, and how you play your cards in turn affect their values… and your position in that game.[118]

In this explanation, cultural capital is the cards in your hand, what you have been dealt, and what you can use to enhance your position. However, the dealer, your class position, determines what cards you are dealt, so the deck is stacked. Reay refers to exclusive and exclusionary practices by which middle class families provide their children with real educational choices, as distinct from illusory choices for their children's futures that is offered to working class children through the notion of meritocracy.

If education is a game then studies such as O'Donoghue's explain why some participants feel uncomfortable or unable to play the game. She notes, for instance, that working class women:

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[113] Diane Reay, "Education and Cultural Capital: The implications of Changing Trends in Education Policies," *Cultural* Trends 13(2) No 50 (2004a), 83.
[114] Andersen and Jaeger, "Cultural capital in context," 178.
[115] Andersen and Jaeger, "Cultural capital in context," 179.
[116] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 197.
[117] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 206.
[118] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 206.

> take up the only positions available to them in the game of education, against a conscious and yet unconscious knowledge that the game is outside their ken. This is the field but it is also the habitus intersecting, and being intersected by, the field, both always underpinned by accumulated history and access to forms of capital.[119]

Others are able to negotiate the game (field), possessing the skills and confidence (cultural capital) as well as knowing how to play it (habitus).

Conceptualizing Habitus

Bourdieu wrote significantly more about habitus than he did about cultural capital as evidenced by the references to the term in the indexes of his research works. While both cultural capital and habitus contain an embodied aspect, their difference lies in the nature of capital in both a material sense and as value that conveys distinction of some kind, whereas habitus refers to tastes or dispositions that explain actions. The origin of the term habitus, according to Nash, is *habere*, to have, the Latin translation given to the Greek *hexis*".[120] It signifies a habit or disposition to act. Habitus predisposes social groups, individuals and even institutions toward certain ways of behaving. It could be influenced by class, race/ethnicity, gender, family, school or other socializing influences. It occupies both the structural world and can be located in human bodies. As Nash observes, "dispositions to act have an individual, as well as a social line of development."[121]

Bourdieu offers an appreciation of how historical factors influence bodies:

> habitus consists of a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action.[122]

Bourdieu states habitus is "the basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for regularity of modes of practice."[123] Yet it is also difficult to detect because, as Reay argues, it is indeterminate as a concept[124] yet lies at the heart of Bourdieu's theoretical framework.[125] According to Cicourel habitus is hard to pin down because it is not readily observable, yet

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[119] O'Donoghue, "Putting working-class mothers in their place," 205.
[120] Roy Nash, "Bourdieu, 'Habitus', and Educational Research: is it all worth the candle," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20(2) (1999): 180.
[121] Nash, "Bourdieu, 'Habitus', and Educational Research," 179.
[122] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 16.
[123] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 77.
[124] Diane Reay, "'They Employ Cleaners to Do That': Habitus in the Primary Classroom." *British Journal* of *Sociology of Education* 16(3) (1995): 357.
[125] Diane Reay, "'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25(4) (2004b): 431.

seems to be the basis of "everything" people think or do.[126] Bourdieu himself declared that it should be regarded as a method, a way of thinking, and across his writings he offers various ways in which it might be understood. However, defining habitus is problematic because it contains a number of dualisms: it is for example, both subjective and objective; bodily and symbolic.

These dualisms posited throughout Bourdieu's works require deeper analysis: it is both embodied and cognitive; it exists both as part of social structures (institutional and objective) as well as human agency (individual and subjective); it is guided by both past and present attitudes, knowledges or actions; it can be static but may also be transformed under certain conditions. It is its transformative potential that is of particular interest in this thesis.

The embodied habitus

When elaborating the origins of the term Bourdieu informed his readers that the notion of habitus is:

> something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit, while differing from it in one important respect. The habitus as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but one which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to the individual history, and that it belongs to a generic mode of thought … it is like a property, a capital. And indeed the habitus is a capital, but one which, because it is embodied, appears innate.[127]

Habitus is not just mental attitudes or conceptions but is invested in bodies, key aspects of culture are embodied.[128] Bourdieu reminds his readers that the body is in the social world, but the social world is also in the body.[129] It may include:

> complexes of gestures, postures and words – simple interjections of favourite clichés – which only have to be slipped into, like a theatrical costume, to awaken, by the evocative power of bodily mimesis, a universe of ready-made feelings and experiences.[130]

Here, Bourdieu explains that speech and reactions to others and the world around one become part of an automatic repertoire of responses. It can both be read by others (an audience) but, like a cloak or mask, can conceal thoughts and motivations. Like a player on

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[126] A. V. Cicourel 1994 in Diane Reay, "'They Employ Cleaners to Do That'," 357
[127] Bourdieu, *Sociology in question,* 86.
[128] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 354.
[129] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 354
[130] Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 474.

the stage, habitus becomes like a scripted performance that has been learnt without the necessity to think about it. It is either consciously or unconsciously played out at the appropriate time, a response that Bourdieu refers to a "meaning-made-body"[131] where habitus directs understanding and reactions as "second nature."[132]

When one is comfortable with their habitus, or colloquially, in one's own skin, Bourdieu uses the expression of being "like a fish in water … it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted."[133] He refers to habitus as a:

> socialised body. A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world.[134]

Habitus thus reinforces dominant socialising influences and indoctrinates the individual to think and act the way other people in their group deem appropriate. The body in this sense is a conduit for replicating and reinforcing thoughts and behaviours accepted by immediate and generalised others among whom one has been socialised. In some instances Bourdieu refers to class as one source of embodiment where gestures, elevated posture, or slow glances may be internalised as typical, for example, of the middle class,[135] while other kinds of gesture, posture and language use may be constitutive of working class habitus. Bourdieu also refers to education as a source of a particular kind of habitus where the body internalises then exhibits actions and thoughts consistent with being an educated person. This "cultured habitus"[136] can only be created when a person is sufficiently educated to exhibit characteristics consistent with knowledge acquisition displayed via the body.

When a fish is "out of water", however, their habitus is not developed and their bodily discomfort is obvious. People who do not "fit in" whether in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, educational level or any other characteristic are at a distinct disadvantage because they lack the understanding and capacity to operate comfortably in their surroundings. Where people cannot express their habitus through "durable ways of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking"[137] in which they feel comfortable they are likely to disconnect or remove themselves from those circumstances. Bourdieu states that in such cases habitus "excludes certain practices which are unfamiliar"[138] thus setting up boundaries between groups of people on the basis of that discomfort with their

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[131] Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, 43.*
[132] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 63.
[133] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 127.
[134] Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical reason. (*Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998): 81.
[135] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 367.
[136] Pierre Bourdieu, "Systems of education and systems of thought", *Social Science Information,* 14, 1967: 344.
[137] Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, 70.*
[138] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 77.

surroundings or with certain social practices. In this sense, habitus can be constraining as it precludes certain kinds of thinking and action.

As Swartz has noted, habitus as "body language, comportment, self-presentation, bodily care, and adornment" may also be expressions of symbolic power[139] enacted by the body for particular ends. Reay[140] agrees that use of language, physical and emotional displays can be exercises of power through which dominance is indicated. Alternatively, those who do not possess an assertive and authoritative habitus may find they are subordinated, that their capacity to exhibit social distinction is lacking.

Cognitive aspects of habitus

While the bodily aspects of habitus include affective features, Bourdieu also draws attention to "the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus".[141] These "cognitive schemata or structures of perception, conception and action"[142] take the form of "projection, identification, transference, sublimation etc"[143] and he claims it must be understood:

> how the social order collects, channels, reinforces or counteracts psychological processes depending on whether there is a homology, redundancy, and reinforcement between the two systems or, on the contrary, contradiction and tension.[144]

In Bourdieu's theory "cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world are internalised, 'embodied' social structures"[145] thus studying dispositional properties requires some psychological appreciation. Reay's[146] later work advocates a psychosocial approach to the study of habitus in order to appreciate the fusion between psychological and sociological insights.

In Lizardo's view, habitus involved "thinking with the body"[147] where a cognitive unconscious that is socially produced operates. Bourdieu made the point that

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[139] Swartz in Dowding, *Encyclopedia of Power*, 75.

[140] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 359.

[141] Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice,* 78.

[142]Pierre Bourdieu, "Habitus" In Hillier, J and Rooksby, E eds. *Habitus: A Sense of Place*. Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2002), 27.

[143] Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 197.

[144] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Contradictions of Inheritance" in P. Bourdieu et al eds. *Weight of the World: social suffering in contemporary society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 512.

[145] Roy Nash, "A Realist Framework for the Sociology of Education: thinking with Bourdieu," *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* 34(3) 2002: 276

[146] Diane Reay, "Habitus and the psychosocial: Bourdieu with feelings." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 45(1) (2015): 9-23.

[147] Omar Lizardo, "The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's *Habitus,*" *Journal of the Theory of Social* Behaviour 34(4) (2004): 388.

"determinisms operate to their full only by the help of unconsciousness"[148] and that "subjects do not, strictly speaking, know … that what they do has more meaning than they know."[149] In his discussion of the subtle means by which everyday life is structured, Miles takes the view that habitus is not consciously learned.[150] As such, it requires deeper investigation because it is a significant aspect of any transformation.

Habitus reconciles structure and agency/collective and individual

In his desire to move away from specific definitions of concepts, Bourdieu states that habitus is "a method for simultaneously analysing the experience of social agents and … the objective structures which make the experience possible."[151] Habitus is both affected by social structures but also has a capacity to influence choices, albeit ones that may be constrained by social structures. The way is left open for social agents to resist dominant structures where it is not compatible with their habitus. Bourdieu and Wacquant explain "the structure of people's worlds is already predefined by broader racial, gender and class relations"[152] but at the same time "individuals continually make and remake structure through their activities"[153] so a symbiotic relationship exists between structure and agency in which social reality exists twice "in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents."[154] An examination of some of those structuring influences highlights the complexity and intersectionality of these influences on habitus, especially family, class, gender, and race and ethnicity.

Bourdieu argues that structuring influences such as families and school have a substantial impact on people's actions but constitute differing layers of influence that are internalized by individuals:

> the habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences … the habitus transformed by the action of the school, itself diversified, is in turn the basis of all subsequent restructuring … Current circumstances are not just there to be acted upon, but are internalized and become yet another layer to add to those from earlier socialisations.[155]

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[148] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology,* 136.
[149] Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, 79.*
[150] Steven Miles, "The Cultural Capital of Consumption: Understanding 'Postmodern' Identities in a Cultural Context." *Culture & Psychology* 2 (1996): 152.
[151] Pierre Bourdieu, "Vive la crise!: for heterodoxy in social science." *Theory and Society* 17 (1988): 782.
[152] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology,* 144.
[153] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 140.
[154] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 127.
[155] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 134.

While families may be the first social structure that influence individuals, people are continually modified by encounters with the outside world.[156] Reay argues that it is the familial habitus that influences students' expectations and they adjust their actions to "what is acceptable for people like us".[157] Schools also exert some influence on habitus. Nash states, "Certain personal dispositions, elements of the habitus, are associated with relative educational progress at school."[158] It follows then, that an "educated habitus" that includes a positive orientation toward schooling, a desire to be educated, and an identity that recognises these attributes, is likely to contribute to educational success.

Class position is another component of social structure that, as a mark of social position, has some bearing on habitus. Reay comments that what is prioritised differs for different fragments of the working or middle classes,[159] but she warns that class intersects with other aspects of social structure such as gender, ethnicity or family and a focus on it leads to simple binaries of working or middle class, male or female and so on. Debates about the relevance and impact of highbrow culture, for example, have been challenged on the basis that certain criteria attributed to class no longer apply in modern society. Reay's discussion about class access to higher education highlights the idea that middle classes have greater choice in higher education and operate in a culture of certainty because attending HE is what people like them usually do, they pursue advantage in a context in which they feel they fit in. The working class is, she argues, characterised by "uncertainties and flux"[160] and the layers of influence they bring with them to this field is remarkably different from their middle class peers.

Discussions of gender as a structural influence on habitus necessarily takes into account cultural preferences. McNay's discussion of "Gender, habitus and the field"[161] focuses on the corporeal nature of bodies, technologies of the self that refers to the ways people develop knowledge about themselves, and other aspects of habitus, which incorporate lived experience. She comments that the embodied subject is "constituted through dominant norms but is not reducible to them."[162] McNay elaborates how gendered habitus mediates individuals' actions as well as external conditions of production of those actions. She focuses on the binaries that constrain gendered behaviours and structure social space. Gendered habitus is constitutive of the field, confers meaning, sense and value thus forming a relationship between the individual and the social world.

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[156] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 356.
[157] Diane Reay, "'Always knowing' and 'never being sure': familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice'" *Journal of Education Policy* 13(4) (1998), 525-6.
[158] Roy Nash, "The Educated Habitus, Progress at School, and Real Knowledge." *Interchange* 33(1) (2002), 27.
[159] Reay, "Always knowing' and 'never being sure," 528.
[160] Reay, "Always knowing' and 'never being sure," 526.
[161] Lois McNay, "Gender, Habitus and the field. Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity," *Theory, Culture and Society* 16(1) (1999): 95-117.
[162] McNay, "Gender, Habitus and the field," 99.

In Reay's research, gendered habitus combined self-realisation of her female respondents with an identity that focused on community commitments and prioritising others. Her respondents commented on the costs and risks of "reinventing the self,"[163] and changes to their traditional gender roles were strongly resisted by those around them. In another study Reay *et al* found that women, rather than men, felt more out of place in higher education. She commented that their learner identities were fragile and unconfident, which led to a sense of self-doubt and anxiety that was inherently gendered.[164] Feminine habitus is also discussed in Yafeh's ethnographic fieldwork where cultural constructions of femininity and the body such as clothing, hair, voice, food consumption, gestures and whole-body movements are identified as ritualized forms of cultural affiliation.[165] Alternatively, Charlesworth's research describes working class masculine habitus as "characterised by a way of walking, of moving in space, of gesticulating, of swearing, joking, bantering, of laughing, eating, drinking and 'being a lad', of being straight as a die."[166] Wetherell suggests there is "gendering of affective practices and changing patterns in emoting femininities and emoting masculinities"[167] that have consequences for social interaction.

Race and ethnicity are also important determinants of habitus. Reay identifies them as key components that have the potential to reveal "taken-for-granted inequalities embedded in everyday practices."[168] As embodied cultural habits they signify identity and delimit the kinds of behaviour considered acceptable by the dominant group and the choices available to that social member if they wish to remain included. Identifying as people "like us" may also have political implications and enable people to call on the support of the group. Reay argues elsewhere that ethnicity will inevitably intersect with class or gender and that:

> All these compound and conflate binaries of working and middle class, male and female, black and white that most analyses of higher education access are predicated on.[169]

Examining habitus in terms of individual circumstances recognises that "individuals contain within themselves their past and present position in the social structure at all times and in

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[163]Diane Reay, "A Risky Business? Mature Working-class Students and Access to Higher Education." *Gender and Education* 15(3) (2003): 314.
[164] Diane Reay., Gill Crozier and John Clayton, "'Fitting in' or 'standing out': working-class students in UK higher education." *British Educational Research Journal* 36(1) (2010): 117-118.
[165] Orit Yafeh, "The Time in the Body: Cultural Construction of Femininity in Ultraorthodox Kindergartens for Girls." *Ethos* 35(4) (2007): 516-553.
[166] S Charlesworth, *A phenomenology of working class experience. (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 229-30.
[167] Wetherell, "Solidifying affect", 104.
[168] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 353.
[169] Reay, "Always knowing' and 'never being sure," 528.

all places, in the forms of dispositions which are so many marks of social position."[170] As a feature of human agency, individual actions collectively may appear systemic. Bourdieu comments that habitus "is a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions."[171] This leads to Bourdieu's proposition that because it is also individually constructed, no two habitus are identical "just as no two individual histories are identical."[172] It cannot be assumed, for example, that all working class students will enjoy the same tastes and dispositions, yet habitus can sometimes be generalized to include groups.

This conceptual dilemma is evident in the argument that habitus precludes a range of choices for working class students. Reay, for example, argues that:

> Habitus demarcates the extent of choices available to any one individual. Choices are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints the person finds herself (sic) in, her external circumstances … she is also circumscribed by an internalised framework which makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable.[173]

This reading of habitus points to the constraints it imposes on individuals but does allow some flexibility to resist and not be governed by one's habitus. Choices are shaped but are not entirely programmed by the habitus, which Bourdieu also concedes is generative. In this sense, restrictions placed on habitus are not prohibitive of change, it is adaptive. Social reproduction is not inevitable.

Institutional habitus

It is important to bear in mind that the concept of habitus does not apply only to students, but also to institutional approaches. Institutions such as universities are also shaped historically and culturally. Similar structuring determinations affect their activities and therefore influence students in various ways. An institutional habitus that tries to obliterate members' previous habitus is the military[174] that trains people to take on the habitus preferred by the institution. In the higher education sector, Thomas[175] comments that an institutional habitus that is inclusive and accepting of difference, creates greater levels of acceptance among students who may feel marginalized. Alternatively, Thomas argues that

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[170] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 82.
[171] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations,* 82-3.
[172] Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: essays towards a reflective sociology*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990c): 46.
[173] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 354.
[174] E. M Horvat and J. E Davis, "Schools as Sites for Transformation: Exploring the Contribution of Habitus." *Youth and Society* 43(1) (2011): 145.
[175] Liz Thomas, "Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus." *Journal of Education Policy* 17(4) (2002): 431.

an institutional habitus that reinforces inequalities through inaccessible language, assumed knowledge and other measures that favour students from advantaged backgrounds, is also likely to perpetuate those inequalities by advantaging those whose habitus already makes them familiar with institutional practices. Thomas asserts that the habitus of traditional universities causes working class students to expect to do less well.[176] Reay *et al* argue that institutionalised habitus makes the difference between "fitting in or standing out" in higher education. [177] As such, it should be remembered that this silent and conditioned disposition may also be relevant when considering institutional approaches to all manner of interactions within the university context or field. The way in which OFP has disrupted the institutional habitus of UON is reflected in the oral histories collected for this research. Embracing a widening participation agenda has not only been the result of policy imperatives, but the willingness of decision-makers to embrace and facilitate an equity agenda.

Habitus as historically and contextually constructed

Bourdieu saw history as intrinsically significant to the dispositions of the habitus because it governs ongoing practice and people's engagement with the field.[178] People are products of the historical context and circumstances in which they are located, making habitus "the product of social conditionings, and thus of history"[179] so their past socialising experiences may become deeply embedded in their psyche and therefore remain unquestioned because they are habitual. Bourdieu states: "Individuals contain within themselves their past and present position in the social structure."[180] Nash elaborates this connection by stating that habitus "unites the past and present for, while being the product of early experience, it is subject to the transformations brought about by subsequent experiences."[181]

The complex factors that require consideration of a contextual view of habitus are represented in Bourdieu's discussion of "field" (discussed previously). Reay comments, for example, that students are differentially placed within influencing fields and that the multi-layered contexts in which they exist include school, peer group, family, consumer culture, gender, class, ethnicity."[182] According to Devine, Bourdieu "sees every field as a situation of struggle, competition or conflict, the objective for each individual being to optimize their accumulation or retention of capital." [183] This implies that, like taking a subject position, habitus will be differently affected by the domain in which one finds oneself. Bourdieu argued that social actors are bound to social fields by a strong affective grip. They feel an

[176] Thomas, "Student retention in higher education," 433.
[177] Reay., Crozier and Clayton, "'Fitting in' or 'standing out'," 107.
[178] O'Donoghue, "Putting working-class mothers in their place," 195.
[179] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 116.
[180] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 82.
[181] Nash, "Bourdieu, 'Habitus', and Educational Research," 176.
[182] Reay, "Always knowing' and 'never being sure," 527-8.
[183] Devine, "Digging deeper using 'habitus'", 509.

intense emotional commitment to their habitus, such that those who transgress the boundaries set by habitus can provoke "visceral, murderous horror, absolute disgust, metaphysical fury."[184] Flisback notes that knowledge of the field's rules and norms is required for successful negotiation of that space to avoid uncertainty or what Bourdieu has named a "cleft habitus". [185]

Transformative Habitus

An additional feature of habitus is that it is not static - it can change. This aspect does not fit so easily into Bourdieu's theory of reproduction, where he wants to argue habitus and cultural capital are immutably shaped by socialising influences such as class, race, gender, family or education system. In a few isolated references Bourdieu concedes that habitus can be transformed by critical awareness and a desire to change or adapt to new circumstances or experiences. He says "it is not static, not categorically immutable; its properties can evolve by degree in response to changing experiences and circumstances."[186] Moving to a new field, such as for those who enter higher education and have little previous experience of how to negotiate this domain, can have implications for identity. Bourdieu refers to the possibility of multiple identities being created - one that is immersed in previous family, ethnic, class or educational experiences and shaped by them accordingly, and one that must adapt to the new location or field. When this results in a divided or "cleft habitus"[187] such as when mature or working class students experience the "imposter syndrome",[188] the individual will respond contextually to the situation they find themselves in which may cause contradictions or discomfort. Their identity is not fixed, but dependent upon context and the degree to which their habitus situates them as either a fish in, or out, of water.

Bourdieu concedes that habitus is subject to change through what he refers to as "socio-analysis", which can be taken to mean reflective practice on one's social circumstances. He refers to this as "a form of self-work that involves processes of awareness and pedagogic effort."[189] It is significant that Bourdieu includes the art of teaching and learning in his assessment of change because it is this catalyst for change that informs research on the OFP. Reay suggests that when education creates a "cultured habitus" this carries with it the genesis of new, creative responses "which are capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced."[190] The capacity for habitus change is also dependant on the fields in which that change is produced.

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[184] Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 475.

[185] Marita Flisback, "Making Play or Playing the Game? On the Question of a 'Cleft Habitus' at the Doorway to the Art Field." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 10(4) (2014).

[186] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology,* 133.

[187] Bourdieu, "The Contradictions of Inheritance," 511.

[188] R Martins and L Anthony, "The Imposter Syndrome: 'what if they find out I really don't belong here,'" In *Stepping Stones: a guide for mature-aged students at university,* eds Robert Cantwell and Jill Scevak (Camberwell VIC: ACER Press, 2007).

[189] Bourdieu, "Habitus" In Hillier and Rooksby eds, 29.

[190] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 56.

Some concluding comments on field, cultural capital and habitus

This chapter has explored theories of field, cultural capital and habitus to demonstrate their usefulness in understanding the experience of students entering enabling education programs and the programs themselves. Bourdieu's theory of field is useful for considering how OFP, located within the unique field of enabling education that in turn fits within the broader field of HE in Australia is governed by certain kinds of power relations and circumstances, histories and purposes that require contextual analysis. The following chapters provide an overview of the historical development of enabling education in Australia in order to highlight the unique context of the OFP including its prominent role in pursuing equity agendas within the university setting.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is also vital to an analysis of OFP because it explains how students who enter university by non-traditional means can acquire the necessary cultural knowledge to succeed within this domain. While cultural capital may be considered a "slippery" concept, it nevertheless explains how "different forms of knowledge, tastes, preferences, properties"[191] are mastered. It was not until the 1990s that cultural capital began to be incorporated into analysis of higher education and had, until recently, rarely been employed in studies of Australian higher education.[192] This thesis recognises the many facets of the concept of cultural capital: as a structural phenomenon passed on through, but not only by, families, as a substitute for or enhancement of economic wealth, and as a measure of power; but that it can also be understood as constitutive of human agency. The cumulative advantage acquired through education points to the fact that cultural capital can be learned. It is not prohibited from selected sectors of the population such as those who have not matriculated or taken traditional pathways to university entry. The three states in which Bourdieu later conceptualised it: embodied, objectified and institutionalised, provide a clearer method of appreciating the various dimensions of cultural capital, but these are augmented by framing an understanding of it as an exercise of power; as a form of currency that can be used to enhance one's advantage and as a means of learning to play the social game and improve one's position in it.

Cultural capital is not only a component of social structure, something that can be meted out by ruling classes or educational institutions, it is also internalised by human agents and incorporates habitus. It should be considered according to the relevant field in which it is located because particular contexts are vital to understanding its effects.

The concept of habitus is significant when examining the impacts of the OFP because it focuses on the conscious and unconscious responses and dispositions that are incorporated

[191] Prieur and Savage, "Updating cultural capital theory," 568.

[192] E Bullen and J Kenway, "Bourdieu, subcultural capital and risky girlhood." *Theory and Research in Education*, 3(1) (2005): 47-61.

in human bodies. The body acts as a conduit for group behaviour and structures people's perceptions. External environments are encoded in bodies. Where they feel they are a "fish in water" they respond comfortably and confidently to their surroundings. However, habitus also highlights the disadvantage of those who feel they are a "fish out of water" who must overcome a lack of familiarity with their surroundings. Habitus can therefore be constraining and, in the enabling context, prevent either accommodating or assimilating. People who display an educated habitus present characteristics associated with knowledge acquisition. Their body language conveys certain attributes that people lacking such formal education have not learned to exhibit.

This chapter has also explained that habitus is not only bodily, it is also cognitive. Psychological contradictions and tensions of habitus must be understood in order to trace the changes that occur in people's lives. Families, peers, schools, class, race and ethnicity, gender and consumer culture shape habitus. In turn, habitus mediates people's actions. But while their choices are shaped by habitus, they are not totally programmed by it. Habitus is flexible and transformative. Bourdieu has conceded this fact in a small number of instances because as much as he wished to argue that education is a site of reproduction and habitus is influenced by the social circumstances into which one is born, he also had to acknowledge that it is flexible and can be transformed by institutions such as education. So, while one can be bound by the strong affective grip of habitus, that grip can also be resisted. People can learn a new habitus, or they may experience a cleft habitus where they must reconcile their dispositions according to the field in which they operate.

Bourdieu's linking of cultural capital, habitus and field generates his logic of practice.[193] In examining the practice of the OFP, these concepts allow an understanding of both structural impacts and human agency within this field. Edgerton and Roberts observe that people's practices, actions or behaviour "are the consequences of their habitus and cultural capital interacting within the context of a given field."[194] Together, the three concepts provide a "social conditioning formula to explain the way that one's lifestyle may be structured."[195]

The following chapters explain how participants in the field of enabling education observe and adjust to it. In the case of staff, oral history interviews reveal their sometimes ambiguous position within the institutional setting where they are employed to perform a particular role within an institutional habitus that is bound by protocols, rules and regulations as well as advocate for and meet the needs of individual students. In the case of students, the research reveals that a significant number undergo transformative change in their lives and identity as a result of completing the OFP. Their habitus is altered, mostly in

[193] Reay, "It's all becoming a habitus," 435.
[194] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 195.
[195] Winkle-Wagner, "Foundations of Educational Inequality," 16.

productive ways, and they acquire cultural capital, which is a resource they can draw upon to sustain them.

CHAPTER THREE

SETTING THE CONTEXT: THE FIELD OF ENABLING EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

In order to understand how enabling students are located in the broader field of Higher Education (HE) in Australia, some of the significant developments that have occurred over time are highlighted to ascertain the status and position of enabling education in this country. This chapter also discusses discourses relating to enabling education as a consumer item and the ways in which enabling education is variously positioned as andragogy, and within the fields of transformative and lifelong learning, which each provide unique characteristics of this area of education.

The Field of Higher Education in Australia

As discussed in the previous chapter, a field has a distinctive set of rules, power relations and discourses. HE is a structured organisation with a particular set of policies and practices, and performs a particular function in Australian society. The capital cities had universities by 1890 and were established in regional cities, like Newcastle, in the post war period. This extension of access was an important development in expanding educational opportunities. The University of Newcastle became autonomous in 1965.[1] Entry into the Higher Education (HE) sector was mainly through matriculation. In New South Wales this generally occurred at the end of secondary schooling, once students had completed what is now called the Higher School Certificate (HSC). Other more rarely used means have been available such as, completion of a special test, the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT), and some initiative entry schemes that allowed people, by interview, to put their work experience forward to bypass the HSC.

By the mid-1960s, there were concerns within federal governments that university education was not being made available as widely as it should be. In 1964, the Martin Committee reported to the Menzies government on the low participation of women in HE, particularly in the sciences.[2] The term of the Whitlam Labor Government from 1972 to 1975 was an era of massive expansion of the HE sector with the intention of making HE more responsive to national economic objectives. [3] May and Bunn argue, for instance, that the theme of equality of opportunity became a political policy when it abolished university fees in 1974, opening university access to a wider range of talented people who otherwise would not have contemplated a university education. This coincided with the University of

[1] http://www.australianuniversities.com.au/directory/history-of-australian-universities/

[2] L H Martin, *Report by the Committee on the future of tertiary Education in Australia,* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1964).

[3] Eleanor Ramsay, "The national Framework for Australian Higher Education Equity: Its Origins, Evolution and Current Status." *Higher Education Quarterly* 53(2) (1999): 174.

Newcastle's initiative to include a larger component of 'non-traditional students' among its ranks and the establishment of the OFP.[4]

In 1976 the Williams Committee appointed by the Fraser Coalition government advised on increased entry for women, students with disabilities, those of non-Anglo Celtic ethnic origin and Indigenous Australians.[5] As universities became more interested in widening participation, especially after the 1970s, they turned their attention to equity issues and the idea that universities should no longer be elitist, but open their doors to a wider cross section of Australian society.

According to Ramsay, there was an accompanying shift in community expectations in Australia regarding the sector. She remarks that this shift placed "demands upon higher education to accommodate not only greater numbers, but a wider diversity of students in social and educational terms."[6] This created:

> A transformation from an elite to a mass system … to the achievement of more broadly based participation including by those groups in the community which previously have had least access to the benefits from this level of education.[7]

Certain community groups then became the targets for equity strategies. The Labor government of the 1980s continued the commitment to enhancing participation, especially for the disadvantaged.[8] In 1988 the Dawkins Report called for the "need to change the balance of the student body to reflect more closely the structure and composition of the society as a whole." [9] In 1990 the Hawke Labor government published *A Fair Chance for All*[10] that outlined the responsibility of HE to provide opportunities for tertiary entry for all sections of the Australian community. These national equity objectives covered low SES, Indigenous, females (especially those entering non-traditional areas of study), students with disabilities, non-English speaking students, rural and isolated students. [11] In order to comply with government requirements a "flurry of equity-directed activity" ensued. According to

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[4] Josephine May and Rosalie Bunn, "1974-1976: The seeds of longevity in a pathway to tertiary participation at University of Newcastle, NSW," *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 55(1) (2015).
[5] Eleanor Ramsay, "Managing equity in higher education," *The Australian Universities Review* 37(2) (1994), 13.
[6] Ramsay, "Managing equity in higher education," 13.
[7] Ramsay, "Managing equity in higher education," 13.
[8] Eleanor Ramsay, Deborah Trantor, Simon Charlton and Robert Sumner, *Higher Education Access and Equity for Low SES School Leavers.* University of South Australia: Commonwealth of Australia, (18) 1998, 15.
[9] John Dawkins, *Higher education: a policy statement. (*Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1988), 21.
[10] Department of Employment, Education and Training. *A Fair Chance for all: national and institutional planning for equity in higher education,* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1990.
[11] Richard James, "Participation Disadvantage in Australian Higher Education: An Analysis of Some Effects of Geographical Location and Socioeconomic Status." *Higher Education* 42(4) (2001): 455.

Ramsay, their nature and even how equity was conceptualised was shaped by funding and accountability mechanisms.[12]

A number of reports on funding and staffing matters relating to equity followed, but a lack of institutional coordination and leadership and an emphasis on short-term identifiable outcomes held back progress. A key issue was the absence of serious or consistent attempts to analyse the causes of the inequalities that these programs had been established to change. Without significant change to internal processes, the widening of access progressed slowly. [13]

Scholars examined the outcomes of equity programs to identify the groups that were yet to benefit from them and seek to understand why. It was found that Indigenous students and those from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) were the most disadvantaged within the system, as well as students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. Even as the rhetoric of equity was in circulation, economically disadvantaged students were further marginalised by a shift to a user-pays model of Higher Education, from the earlier conceptualisation of education as a 'public good'. [14] Whitlam's free education as a public right was overtaken by Higher Education Contribution (HECS) introduced in 1989 as part of the Dawkins reforms. At the same time, a shift was occurring from the deficit model, which positions students who do not gain entry to tertiary studies through traditional channels as deficient in some way, to a model that caters to diverse needs of students.[15] It would appear that governments were attempting to balance diverse student and equity needs on a budget.

People who have not been able to complete secondary education to university entry standard do not lack ability or potential but may have been impacted by symptomatic factors such as previous educational experiences, geographic location, lack of confidence or inadequate information about entry to higher education. A response to this insight was the expansion of enabling programs. In this regard, OFP was well ahead of its time. Ramsay argued as far back as 1994, twenty years after OFP had been established and was steadily increasing its student intake, that more attention should be given to enabling programs to promote the abilities of students who did not gain HE entry.[16]

Even with such insights, groups who had traditionally been excluded from tertiary education find entering university a difficult transition. Deeply embedded and complex histories of

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[12] Ramsay, "Managing equity in higher education," 13.
[13] Ramsay, "Managing equity in higher education," 14.
[14] Ramsay, "The national Framework for Australian Higher Education Equity," 185.
[15] Ramsay, Trantor, Charlton and Sumner, *Higher Education Access and Equity for Low SES School Leavers,* 1998.
[16] Ramsay, "Managing equity in higher education," 15.

exclusion[17] have created a structural problem in which the university's resistant habitus to non-traditional students marks out these students as different and 'other'. Burke notes that ironically, professionals who work in the widening participation space are also marked out as "different and Other".[18] These staff "tend to work on the periphery of universities, in separate centres, and outside of academic faculties and departments"[19], on the margins of universities. These circumstances make the addressing of educational inequality and exclusion even more difficult. This sentiment is commented upon by interview respondents in Chapter 6. Several long serving academic staff observed the impact of this marginalisation on their careers, not least of all due to their casual status, reduced income and superannuation.

Of course the expansion of the potential fee paying student cohort through non-traditional admission streams is also useful to universities. The widening participation agenda in western nations has encouraged universities to increasingly become sites of "selectivity, marketization and competitiveness".[20] A neoliberal agenda has shifted away from social justice and toward economic imperatives. According to Kloot, "Foundation [enabling] programmes were intentionally introduced to try to disrupt social reproduction and prompt a process of transformation to the university field."[21] He believes they occupy a problematic and contested space within HE as part of a shifting political field.[22] This is particularly evident when successive Australian governments show ideological preferences and threaten funding arrangements. James' research indicated that increasing fees was a major deterrent to tertiary study for people from low SES, rural and isolated areas and that deregulation of the sector would result in the most under-represented groups being most directly and negatively impacted by this trend in funding reduction.[23]

The Field of Enabling Education in Australia

The earliest study to canvas policy and selection methods for students in Australian enabling courses was that of Smith and Collins from UON, in 1977. They noted that all universities were "willing to consider 'special cases' on their merits" [24] and award provisional

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[17] Penny Jane Burke, "The right to higher education: neoliberalism, gender and professional mis/recognitions." *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 23(2) (2013), 110.

[18] Burke, "The right to higher education," 115.

[19] R Jones and L Thomas "The 2003 UK government higher education white paper: A critical assessment of its implications for the access and widening participation agenda." *Journal of Education Policy,* 20 (2005): 617.

[20] Burke, "The right to higher education," 107.

[21] Bruce Kloot, "Exploring the value of Bourdieu's framework in the context of institutional change." *Studies in Higher Education* 34(4) (2009): 472.

[22] Kloot, "Exploring the value of Bourdieu's framework in the context of institutional change," 480.

[23] Richard James, "Submission to review of Higher Education. Equity of participation for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and rural and isolated areas." *Higher Education review Submission 60, Centre for the Study of Higher Education,* The University of Melbourne (2002).

[24] Brian Smith and John Collins, T*he Open Foundation Course*. *A report on a new approach by the University of Newcastle to the selection and admission of mature age students. (*Newcastle: TUNRA for the Higher Education research Unit University of Newcastle, 1977): 3.

matriculation to mature age applicants, although they had varying rules on what the age of maturity might be. Smith and Collins detailed the mature age and special entry provisions of eighteen Australian universities. What their analysis revealed was significant disparity in admission requirements for these non-traditional groups including different weightings attached to a range of entry criteria. The lack of consistency across the field was telling as each university tailored entry to meet their own needs. Entry could be according to educational background, essay assessments (from 500-1,500 words), examinations, motivation and past achievement, interview, referee recommendations, or attendance at special sessions run by the university. Smith and Collins note the "degree of severity of the selection process varies very much."[25] They also showed that the numbers of non-traditional students who gain admittance via these schemes varies from 30 to 200 with little relationship to the size of the university.[26] The details provided about each university indicated that only the University of Newcastle had a dedicated and extensive year long program devoted specifically to preparing these students for tertiary entry, namely the Open Foundation.

More flexible entry provisions meant that older applicants began to make up an increasing share of many universities' intakes from the late 1980s.[27] This expansion and reform of the HE system that was also occurring in countries such as Britain, impacted on students in the sense that they were:

> caught up in a constant balancing act between wanting to study, meeting domestic responsibilities and needing to earn money. In this sense, the idea of student lifestyle, with its combination of independence, dependence, leisure and academic work, was unthinkable to these mature entrants. Being a student for them meant something entirely different from the conceptions and experiences of the younger students.[28]

There was an acknowledgement that financial and family pressures differed from younger students. As a result, access students were likely to take longer to complete HE as they juggled competing demands of family, work and study.[29] This field is also different for mature-age women due to their family commitments and domestic responsibilities making it a balancing act between their own, their family's and voluntary work commitments or caring for elderly relatives.[30] Darab's study of time use among mature-age women

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[25] Smith and Collins, T*he Open Foundation Course,* 11.
[26] Smith and Collins, T*he Open Foundation Course,* 11.
[27] Diane Reay., Stephen Ball and Miriam David, "It's Taking Me a Long Time but I'll Get There in the End: mature students on access courses and higher education choice," *British Educational Research Journal* 28(1) (2002), 5.
[28] Reay, Ball and David, "It's Taking Me a Long Time but I'll Get There in the End," 10.
[29] Reay, Ball and David, "It's Taking Me a Long Time but I'll Get There in the End," 14.
[30] Reay, "A Risky Business?" 308.

demonstrates that social responsibilities associated with marriage and parenting reduce their likelihood of enrolling in HE and that despite equity initiatives, women still perform at least 66% of unpaid work in Australia.[31] Reay observes that women are positioned "very differently in relation to the processes of individualisation from the normative Western male middle-class subject" [32] in discourses relating to gender expectations.

Funston's research also found that it was a different pathway into university for enabling students. Their transition took longer to accomplish and their path was less likely to involve linear movement.[33] Despite the obstacles they faced, enabling students who were provided with a dedicated program achieved academic performance that was comparable to those in mainstream university programs. Where they could successfully negotiate "the cycle of transition to HE,"[34] moving through four stages of preparation, encounter, adjustment, and stability, they were able to thrive, disrupting old patterns of learning and uncertainties.

The Bradley Review, completed in 2008, advocated raising educational achievement for underrepresented groups such as low SES students; Indigenous Australians; refugees; NESB students; and rural and isolated students such that 40% of 25-34 year old people would be tertiary educated by 2025.[35] The setting of targets was aimed at increasing participation and therefore numbers of people with higher education qualifications among the population. This would open up opportunities for people who could be regarded as an untapped resource, as well as meeting equity responsibilities. According to Coombe, this policy direction resulted in a debate between traditional powerful elite universities and newer innovation and technology-based universities that had different agendas and research priorities.[36] However, the Bradley review was a key determinant of economic and social progress, the beginning of an "education revolution".[37] While Bradley set the tone for change in the enabling sector and an emphasis on widening participation, ultimately, the global financial crisis limited the capacity of the government to immediately implement its recommendations.

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[31] Sandy Darab, "Time and study: Open Foundation female students' integration of study with family, work and social obligations." *Australian Journal of Adult learning* 44(3) (2004): 327-353.
[32] Reay, "A Risky Business?" 309.
[33] Andrew Funston, "Non-traditional students making their way in higher education: An Australian case study." *Research Report 35 Youth Research Centre Melbourne Graduate School of Education* (2012), 18.
[34] Martin Harris, "A New Conception of Thriving," Paper presented to National Association of Enabling Educators Australia (NAEEA) Conference, Toowoomba, 2009.
[35] D Bradley., P Noonan., H Nugent and B Scales. *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report.* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2008).
[36] Leanne Coombes, "Australian higher education reforms - unification or diversification?" *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 37(2) (2015), 130.
[37] Katie Hughes and Claire Brown, "Strengthening the Intersections Between Secondary and Tertiary Education in Australia: Building Cultural Capital." *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice* 11(2) (2014), 1.

Lomax-Smith *et al's* base funding review later examined the role of enabling programs.[38] Its purpose was to define principles for a reformed funding model of HE. Concerns were raised that, as the numbers of enabling students increased, funding per student decreased, which could create a disincentive to universities to run enabling programs.[39] Coombe's research found that elite universities were less interested in a social equity agenda and more on preserving their "prestigious brand"[40] while teaching-focused institutions openly embraced the equity agenda. In that year also, the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) was established to promote "aspiration, achievement, accessibility and attainment".[41] It provided funding for a range of initiatives in enabling programs to assist students by hiring liaison officers, dedicated counsellors and other supports that would address attrition.

In 2013 the Australian Federal Government's social inclusion agenda was published.[42] Gillian Triggs called for a reduction in disadvantage and increasing social, civic and economic participation. Part of this was a call for engagement in HE, which was seen as "a means of providing the opportunity for personal and national progress through improving social and cultural capital, community connections, social integration and employment opportunities."[43] Hughes and Brown comment that "mainstreaming higher education is an international endeavour that has economic, social and individual interests at its centre",[44] and that increasing diversity among the student body demonstrates a strength in the sector. Despite these intentions, the Kemp Norton Review of 2014 examined the demand-driven model of funding that placed pressure on the Federal budget and found that the current funding model should be expanded "to include diploma and bridging courses in order to better prepare students with low admission scores for university".[45] The discourse had turned to monetary considerations as well as enhancing educational opportunities and considering the greater good for the community.

By 2013 Hodges et al report that there were 35 university-based enabling programs operating in Australia.[46] Of them, 17 were federally funded and free of tuition fees while 18 charged fees. 10 programs admitted domestic as well as international students and 22 were

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[38] J Lomax-Smith., L Watson L and B Webster. *Higher education base funding review: Final report.* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2011).
[39] Lisa Andrewartha and Andrew Harvey, "Willing and enabled: The academic outcomes of a tertiary enabling program in regional Australia." *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 54(1) (2014): 54.
[40] Coombes, "Australian higher education reforms?" 140.
[41] Hughes and Brown, "Strengthening the Intersections Between Secondary and Tertiary Education" 3.
[42] www.socialinclusion.gov.au
[43] Hughes and Brown, "Strengthening the Intersections Between Secondary and Tertiary Education," 2.
[44] Hughes and Brown, "Strengthening the Intersections Between Secondary and Tertiary Education," 11.
[45] ABC Premium News 14.4.2014 Accession number: P6S344940926414.
[46] Barry Hodges., Tasman Bedford., Jane Hartley., Chris Klinger., Neil Murray., John O'Rourke and Neville Schofield, *Enabling retention: processes and strategies for improving student retention in university based enabling programs: final report. (Sydney, Office for Learning and Teaching, 2013, 21).*

run by universities. The remainder were run by university colleges or with external partners. Hodges et al found that some programs had age restrictions while others did not. The programs were also found to differ in terms of academic entry requirements, mode of delivery, completion times and pathway provisions to undergraduate courses. These attempts to make Higher Education more equitable in Australia by allowing opportunities, particularly for students from disadvantaged groups, to access tertiary qualifications were described by Pitman as less likely to be encouraged by elite institutions,[47] but embraced by others as a way of instituting policies of 'fairness'. In other research on this field Pitman et al found that the pursuit of mass higher education does not equate to a lowering of educational quality. Instead, students who succeeded demonstrated high levels of perseverance, enhancing undergraduate retention rates.[48]

Enabling programs as a field of consumption

Frank states that "a field may represent a market for whatever forms of capital social agents in that field happen to possess or bring to it, or otherwise be in a position to benefit from."[49] In this regard, enabling programs have been referred to as an "untapped market"[50] because they generate income for universities through federal government funding allocations. Zepke and Leach argue that governments throughout the western world expect improved learner outcomes from funding of the sector, this positions people as "capital" and creates intense focus on attrition, which is described as "wastage in public funding and human potential."[51] Drop-out rates of between 33% in New Zealand and 45% in USA were reported in this study.

Sheehy points to the increased reliance on markets to regulate HE. He argues that where markets operate for the purpose of wealth creation, there is a mutually beneficial exchange between sellers who gain profit; and buyers who purchase the goods.[52] Markets are seen to have innate characteristics that bring about certain benefits: efficiency (improved profits), innovation and diversity (new sales or products).[53] In theory, markets are seen as positive because all parties get what they want. Sheehy argues that policy makers in HE favour this direction because they assume it increases resources in the form of human capital; increases choice for students; improves quality of education; and increases participation

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[47] Tim Pitman, "Unlocking the gates to the peasants: are policies of 'fairness' or 'inclusion' more important for equity in higher education?" *Cambridge Journal of Education* 45(2) June 2015.

[48] Tim Pitman., Paul Koshy and John Phillimore, "Does accelerating access to higher education lower its quality? The Australian experience" *Higher Education Research and Development* 34(3) June (2015).

[49] Frank, "Review Essay. Bourdieu, The Master," 325.

[50] Stuart Levy, and Julie Murray, "Tertiary Entrance Scores Need Not Determine Academic Success: An analysis of student performance in an equity and access program," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 27(1) March (2005), 139.

[51] Zepke and Leach, "Improving student outcomes in higher education," 655.

[52] Benedict Sheehy, "Regulation by markets and the Bradley Review of Australian higher education." *Australian Universities Review* 52(1) (2010): 60.

[53] Sheehy, "Regulation by markets and the Bradley Review of Australian higher education," 61.

including marginalised groups.[54] In reality, Harvey and Matthew claim that "the calibration of multiple and compound disadvantage remains problematic."[55] The idea of converting education in the form of enabling programs into a product to be sold is premised on providing sufficient resources to make it effective and treating it as a source of revenue. HE is labour intensive. According to Sheehy, 70% of expenditure is on labour costs. To reduce costs, casual staff are employed and investment in IT is aimed at serving as a substitute for academic labour.[56] Factors such as casualization and marketization of enabling are reflected both in the documentary and oral histories of the OFP collected for this study. Sheehy's critique of the market model raises interesting issues about the purpose of education which, ultimately, is about the delivery of public and social goods rather than about making profits.

Where the knowledge gained from an enabling program is treated as a commodity that produces skill sets including critical habits of mind, it is positioned as creating value, which can be used to obtain future employment.[57] The stock of knowledge gained in an enabling program is seen as an investment that pays dividends in the form of university entry, future academic qualifications and possibly career opportunities. The idea of competing in a market for jobs is institutionalised in the form of careers advisors who offer advice on how to enter these markets.

Another aspect of the consumer argument is Miles' view that constructing education as a consumer good can be linked to identity formation.[58] In this sense, gaining credentials is seen as vital to the assertion of selfhood. Other arguments highlight what is referred to as the "marketized field of education."[59] This sees parents, for instance, as consumers actively engaged in producing educated children. Parents can also transmit skills to children that may yield advantages or profits.[60] The language of "educational currency,"[61] which can be exchanged for economic benefit is used to explain the behavioural repertoires, used primarily by middle class families, to secure advantage for their family members in the education system. This could apply equally to enabling students whose family or friends provide advice and support to assist their quest to gain entry. Having "capital stocks"[62] in the form of access to knowledge about how to negotiate and succeed in enabling programs is like having shares that can be called upon to add value to one's circumstances or identity. However, when researching the field that applies to enabling students, their maturity

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[54] Sheehy, "Regulation by markets and the Bradley Review of Australian higher education," 61.
[55] Andrew Harvey and Catherine Matthew, eds. *Student Equity in Australian Higher Education. (*Singapore: Springer, 2016): 1.
[56] Sheehy, "Regulation by markets and the Bradley Review of Australian higher education," 61.
[57] Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 64.
[58] Miles, "The Cultural Capital of Consumption," 139-158.
[59] Reay, "Education and Cultural Capital," 76.
[60] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 196.
[61] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 197.
[62] Edgerton and Roberts, "Cultural capital or habitus?" 195.

requires a qualitatively different approach to that of younger students where the art of teaching and learning is referred to as pedagogy. For older students, a new term has been coined to define their particular learning field, andragogy.

Andragogy as a type of learning

There are a number of differences between pedagogy, the art and science of teaching and learning, and andragogy, which applies specifically to adults. The concept of the teaching and learning process is said to differ according to Knowles *et al* because adults require mental inquiry rather than passive learning. [63] The curriculum should reflect adult needs and interests and value students' experience. According to the principles of andragogy, teachers are guides only because adult students are self-directed. In addition, andragogy suggests that teachers should show humility. There should be an environment of mutual inquiry in which the teacher also learns in a cooperative and non-authoritarian setting. Adults are constructed as having unique characteristics so the learning environment needs to account for differences in style, time, place and pace of learning. The educator's role "remains meaningful but less instructive, involving coaching, facilitating, and guiding."[64] The focus is on the student as a whole person who has specific developmental needs. It is assumed that adults will learn best when responding to what they feel they need to know. As such, their motivation to learn is internalized, they are less likely to learn for external reasons. The basis of andragogy is humanistic psychology and psychosocial development.[65]

Adult learners are a unique and diverse group. There is a need to foster their personal growth and development.[66] Andragogy advocates learner control over objectives and learning strategies, as well as evaluation procedures and even the timing of their studies.[67] Petty and Thomas explain that for adult learners, education is a complex experience. Their goals may change over time as their obligations change. These authors state that sometimes they are "stopping out" rather than "dropping out" as their studies are interrupted.[68] They often have the intention to return when their circumstances allow. There are many situational factors that prevent them from continuing, which are beyond their control. In addition, because they are returning to study, they may lack self-confidence and self-esteem.[69] They may also have had negative educational experiences in the past, which Clegg

[63] Malcolm S Knowles., Elwood F. Holton and Richard, A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: the definitive classic on adult education and human resource development,* (Boston: Elsevier, 2005): 36-40.
[64] M. Sheila Bartle, *Research Starters: Education*, (online Edition, 2015): 1-11.
[65] Bartle, *Research Starters: Education*, 3.
[66] Sharon Morris Bland, "Advising Adults: Telling or Coaching?" *Adult Learning* 14(2) (2003), 6.
[67] Edward W. Taylor and Anna Laros, "Researching the Practice of Fostering Transformative Learning: Lessons Learned from the Study of Andragogy." *Journal of Transformative Education* 12(2) (2014): 134-147.
[68] Tanjula Petty and Christine C. Thomas, "Approaches to a Successful Adult Education Program." *College Student Journal* 48(3) (2014), 474.
[69] Petty and Thomas, "Approaches to a Successful Adult Education Program," 475.

argues they connect to future aspirations.[70] Her research focuses on the usefulness of reflective practice that orients students toward constructing the "possible selves" they may become in the future.

Strom and Strom[71] argue there are changing role demands that emerge in response to social transformation for these students. The conditions of learning and identity change differ from those of younger students and are negotiated within a broader social context. This context includes current job climate in which positions require more education than that offered by high school diplomas,[72] so there is increasing pressure to update skills to be competitive in the job market. Students need "market value credentials." There is a far greater awareness among adult learners about the benefits of change to their lives through committing to their studies.

Transformative learning

While the principles of andragogy still have much to offer, it has been argued that transformative learning (TL) has replaced andragogy as a means of explaining adult learning.[73] TL highlights the change that is brought about by embracing education. According to Mezirow, the foremost commentator in the area of TL, there are "significant phases of reassessment and growth in which familiar assumptions are challenged and new directions and commitments are charted."[74] He states that sometimes people undergo life crises that require them to re-evaluate their lives. Education can be one means by which they attempt to resolve their personal problems. It is likely that a new perspective of self may emerge, along with new relationships. Mezirow claims that along with this, new life options become apparent. He calls it "beginning again".[75]

Mezirow claims that people undergo a fundamental shift in their perspective as learners and come to see themselves differently. He refers to this as "conscientization."[76] He says this critical consciousness is a prerequisite for liberating personal development. Drawing on the work of Freire[77] who sees adult education as a catalyst to transform people's frames of reference, Mezirow advocates close analysis of the dynamics of transformation. He has identified three phases: first, alienation from prescribed social roles; second, reframing or

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[70] Sue Clegg, "'My past is a double edge sword': temporality and reflexivity in mature learners." *Studies in Continuing Education* 35(1) (2013), 17.
[71] Paris S Strom and Robert D. Strom, *Adult Learning and Relationships*. (Charlotte North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, 2011).
[72] Paris S Strom and Robert D Strom, "Collaboration and Support for Student Success." *Education Digest* 79(3) (2013): 50-56. *Monograph* 53(1) (2005): 75-95.
[73] Michael Newman, "Transformative Learning: Mutinous Thoughts Revisited." *Adult Education Quarterly* 64(4) (2014), 346.
[74] Jack Mezirow, "Perspective transformation." *Adult Education Quarterly* 28(2) (1978): 101.
[75] Mezirow, "Perspective transformation," 102.
[76] Mezirow, "Perspective transformation," 103.
[77] Freire Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (*New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

redefining problems; third, contractual solidarity where people participate in society on their own terms as defined by their new meaning perspective.[78] Increased competency and a supportive social environment are seen as necessary to build self-confidence as these students engage in "structural reorganization of their lives".[79]

When he had further refined his idea of transformative learning, Mezirow remarked:

> For learners to change their 'meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions)', they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation … the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings."[80]

This process, characteristic of habitus change, requires acquisition of new meaning structures that ultimately influence behaviour and interpretation. Mezirow argues that meaning structures will change as individuals add to and integrate new ideas.[81] However, they may have learning styles and life experiences that enhance their learning or they may have "deeply entrenched beliefs that hinder learning in the academic environment".[82] This means there is a need to dislodge "poor or ingrained strategies".[83] These students need to see the purpose of what they are learning and to be convinced of its authenticity.

Dirkx explains that Freire and Mezirow described learning as "a process of constructing or reconstructing meaning [which was] intimately bound up with a person's growth and development."[84] It involves "complex processes of elaborating and remaking ways of understanding the self,"[85] where a shift occurs from accepting things as they are, to a heightened form of consciousness. According to Dirkx, these shifts are fostered through academic study that challenges "some aspect of our being in the world."[86] Dirkx argues this can be a very emotional experience for the student and as educators, they should "pay

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[78] Mezirow, "Perspective transformation," 105.
[79] Mezirow, "Perspective transformation," 108.
[80] Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 167.
[81] Jack Mezirow 1995 in Susan Imel, "Transformative learning in Adulthood." *ERIC Digest No. 200*. (1998): 1-7.
[82] Cari Kenner and Jason Weinerman, "Adult Learning Theory: Applications to Non-Traditional College Students." *Journal of College Reading and Learning* 41(2) (2011), 87.
[83] Kenner and Weinerman, "Adult Learning Theory," 93.
[84] John M Dirkx, "Self-Formation and Transformative Learning: A Response to 'Calling Transformative Learning Into Question: Some Mutinous Thoughts,' by Michael Newman. *Australian Education Quarterly* 62(4) (2012), 400.
[85] Dirkx, "Self-Formation and Transformative Learning," 400.
[86] Dirkx, "Self-Formation and Transformative Learning," 401.

attention"[87] to the transformation taking place. This research speaks to the complexity for both learner and teacher in the enabling space. While learning can be a liberating experience for these students, it can also be challenging for all involved.

Lifelong Learning

Lambier claims there is a "new learning society"[88] influenced by the current information age where a "reorientation of our being in this world seems to be required."[89] The "call for permanent education has become an institutionalised one"[90] in the sense that gaining further education, apart from the skills required to perform new jobs, has become an expectation in a rapidly evolving world. Gaining further education is also a form of status in which Lambier argues there is a problem of duality between those who learn and those who do not.[91] This compulsion to learn is one in which we are "expected to be willing to learn for years to come, because resisting to do so is putting oneself outside our complex and rapidly changing lifestyle".[92]

Many educational institutions encourage a lifelong learning philosophy when offering integrated pathways into HE. Most Australian universities now have enabling, or tertiary preparation programs, which encourage a diverse range of non-traditional and mature students to enrol. At the University of Newcastle enabling students who return to study are said to "add richness and depth to the student experience"[93] by contributing to the diversity of the student population. The idea that learning is not just for the young or for promoting acquisition of qualifications, but has a wider application including self-realisation and intrinsic satisfaction is a common theme in this literature.

Enabling education demonstrates that age is no barrier to learning and that "learning is an internal act of meaning making"[94] that can be embraced by people of any age. Where this philosophy prevails, the "transitional shock" of entering a field that is unfamiliar is lessened. Notions of "reclaiming learning" are explored by Burke and Jackson[95] who argue that breaking down educational barriers and embracing new technologies are hallmarks of modern society.

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[87] Dirkx, "Self-Formation and Transformative Learning," 404.

[88]Bert Lambeir, "Education as Liberation: The politics and techniques of lifelong learning," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 37(3) (2005), 349.

[89] Lambeir, "Education as Liberation," 349.

[90] Lambeir, "Education as Liberation," 350.

[91] Lambeir, "Education as Liberation," 350.

[92] Lambeir, "Education as Liberation," 353.

[93] Lisa Vandyke., Cathie Shanahan and June Wieland, "University of Newcastle: Laying the foundations for lifelong learning." *VOCAL* 9 (2011-12), 68.

[94] Jane West, "Deep and lifelong learning: When theory and SoTL intersect." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 13(4) (2013), 13.

[95] Penny Jane Burke and Sue Jackson, *Reconceptualizing lifelong learning: feminist investigations. (*Abingdon, Routledge, 2007).

Some concluding comments on the importance of field to Open Foundation

This chapter has provided a brief outline of developments in enabling education in Australia. It has shown that key reviews and policy changes over time have led to a situation in which enabling education has become a warrior for equity initiatives and the discourses of widening participation, and a shift to the concept of lifelong learning encourages and normalises older students entering the field of education. Research into the particular needs of mature students has resulted in the concept of andragogy, which while acknowledging the art of teaching and learning, also highlights particular needs of older people. The burgeoning area of transformative learning focuses on the importance of self-identity and the impact of change education can bring to people's lives.

In addition, this chapter raises the issue of enabling education as a possible new target of consumption where the (regrettable) focus on students as a source of profit within conditions regulated by the market has become a dominant theme in Australian education. The current debate surrounding possible imposition of fees for enabling courses is a case in point where, according to some respondents, financial gains to the institution are considered a priority over educational and equity agendas. The following chapter addresses the methodology for this study and later chapters discuss the history and impacts of one enabling course, the Open Foundation.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

So far the thesis has presented the theoretical and educational contexts within which the research is set. This fourth background chapter presents the methodology employed in addressing the two central aims of this thesis: to explore the history and to uncover the impacts of the OFP. To accommodate these twin aims of the thesis, a mixed methods approach was employed, which includes forms of data collection associated with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.[1] According to Silverman, multiple methods, also referred to as methodological triangulation,[2] can corroborate (or contradict) each other. Results produced by mixed methods are deemed to have greater reliability than those collected from a single method. By synthesizing and integrating different methods, this project was able to consolidate the multiple layers of interpretation offered by participants according to the differing roles they played in the running of, and participation in, the program. In addition, this research provides quantitative data for demographic purposes and qualitative data to capture people's stories and perspectives to demonstrate the degree to which OFP has been effective in the decades it has operated. Commentary on the methodology will begin with a discussion of the ethics approval process. It will draw out the strengths and weaknesses of the various methodological approaches by firstly exploring the oral history method with discussion of the use of generative questioning techniques to draw out responses. Secondly it will discuss the quantitative and qualitative methods employed in collecting the student survey data and the NVivo software used in its analysis. Finally, the chapter will demonstrate the benefits of taking a grounded theory approach to examining findings in this project.

Ethics approval

Gaining ethics approval for this project was quite rigorous as the respondents to the survey may have included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) and students with disabilities. In these cases the National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) was required. The ethics application process required a peer review, which was obtained from the Deputy Director of the University of Newcastle's English Language and Foundation Studies Centre. Each year a progress report is required. Ethics approval H-2011- 0015 was granted by the university's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in 2011 to proceed with a qualitative and quantitative study of the OFP.

Consent forms for the oral histories were accompanied by an information statement detailing the intent of the research. Respondents in the oral history research component

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[1] John W Creswell, *Research design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed methods Approaches.* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 208.

[2] David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research* 2nd ed (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 121.

were given the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any time. They were asked to consent to discussing their memories of OFP in an interview and/or through written correspondence with the researcher. Their details were to remain confidential to the researcher unless otherwise agreed and any questions about the project were to be answered to the respondent's satisfaction. They were also asked for consent to have their photograph included in the dissertation as a matter of historical record. Additionally, they were asked to complete a form granting "Permission to Archive" their interview and to allow their name to be listed and acknowledged in the thesis. The survey forms distributed to students were accompanied by an information letter and the form was prefaced by an instruction to answer as many of the questions as they were able, that no question was compulsory and the survey was anonymous.

In the ethics application, the research was justified on the basis that it would explore the history of the program: its philosophical beginnings; early pedagogical considerations for curriculum design; how the program evolved from small beginnings and critical lack of funding to one that is supported by federal funding and now provides substantial student numbers to first year undergraduate intake. The study would highlight the contribution of personalities and staff; examine the contribution Open Foundation has made to the University of Newcastle and to the regions it serves; discuss the establishment of the first two conferences of the National Association of Enabling Education Australia (NAEEA); and trace the expansion of the program over time.

The oral histories from a range of key participants were to be multi-faceted, collecting information including their understanding of the foundation of the program; administration and decision-making; teaching; student support including learning support, counselling, disability support, and English as Second Language. The research would record insights, observations and stories about OFP. Respondents would be given the opportunity to edit the transcription of the interview once it was completed.

The study would also explore impacts of OFP on the lives of students who had completed it. Collection and analysis of data would provide demographic data about past students, reasons they enrolled, their experience of the program including subjects they studied, degree and career destinations of those who attained an Open Foundation qualification. Students would also be asked to reflect on the way their lives may or may not have changed economically and/or socially in consequence of completing the program.

Oral histories: theoretical aspects

The research comprised 38 oral history interviews comprised of 24 women and 14 men; three of the five Directors in charge of OFP and the wife of the first director, who is now deceased; 20 lecturers in the program; 14 administrators; 9 learning support, counselling, ESL or disability support staff; and 6 people who had themselves been students in OFP as

well as later working in the program. Respondents were all known to the author, in her roles as student and lecturer in the program, as people who had played key roles in OFP. Respondents, all volunteers, were approached "not because they present some abstract statistical norm, but because they typify historical processes."[3] It was hoped that they would provide a diverse and comprehensive account of how the program originated, developed and functioned. No-one who was approached declined to participate. These respondents could also provide what Grele refers to as an eye-witness account of "events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction."[4]

But the "insider" status of the researcher must be acknowledged. Positionality of both interviewer and respondent are a fundamental part of the research process. Armitage and Gluck argue there is no such thing as a transparent interview.[5] In one interview the respondent often acknowledged my understanding of certain events or situations by saying "you know", and I did know what he was referring to because we had been colleagues for many years. However, I was also careful to have him elaborate all those instances so it was on the record. Use of probing questions and gently guiding the direction of the interview to maintain a focus assisted the rich findings that were produced. While it is the case that someone who has insider knowledge may be less objective, my insights and involvement with the program allowed me more readily to identify key people and to develop significant areas of questioning.

Advantages of being an insider-researcher are identified as: having greater understanding of the culture being studied; not altering the flow of interaction unnaturally; and having an established intimacy that more readily allows the judging of accuracy.[6] It takes a long time to acquire the knowledge insiders have of organisations and people and these researchers know how to "best approach" their respondents.[7] It also gives a nuanced perspective for observation and interpretation, an equalized relationship between researcher and participants, legitimacy in the field, expediency of access, insights into linguistic, cognitive

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[3] Ronald J. Grele, "Movement without aim. Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history," in *The Oral History Reader,* eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2003), 41.
[4] Ronald J Grele, "Directions for oral history in the United States", in D.K Dunaway and W.K Baum eds. *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1996), 63.
[5] Susan H Armitage and Sherna Berger Gluck, "Reflections on Women's Oral History: An exchange," in *Women's Oral History: The frontiers Reader ed.* Susan Armitage (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 81.
[6] A Bonner and G Tolhurst, "Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation." *Nurse Researcher* 9(4) (2002): 7-19.
[7] Smyth, A and Holian, R. "Credibility Issues in Research from within Organisations". Eds. P. Sikes and A. Potts. *Researching education from the inside*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008.

and psychological principles of participants, detection of actual behaviour versus their performed selves and identification of unusual and unfamiliar occurrences.[8]

The disadvantages of insider-research must also be acknowledged due to potential bias and loss of objectivity. Also problematic is the possibility of gaining access to sensitive information[9] that must be dealt with in an ethical manner. Insider status has been identified as having some complications: it may compromise the researcher's role or place expectations upon their research, it may overload them with information or constrain them, it may result in selective reporting, it may place the researcher in an uncomfortable position due to political issues within organisations.[10] However, there are also methodological issues with being an "outsider-researcher" so arguing for one type of research over the other is a "false dichotomy" as both have advantages and disadvantages.[11]

The most relevant research technique to draw out the historical circumstances of the development of the OFP was oral history method. It has been claimed that "There is no history without oral history."[12] This argument is based on the fact that oral history is the oldest form of historical knowledge where the narrator acts as a witness or "mediator in the chain of history."[13] Histories matter "because they inform and remain embedded in the present or because they are forgotten and become themselves inaudible and invisible."[14] While May's[15] article on the establishment of OFP drew on documentary sources to examine the context in which OFP originated, no oral histories have previously been collected on this topic. By speaking to people who had been present in the OFP, particularly during the early years, it was possible to give voice to that which is "missing or underreported in official records",[16] to understand the discourses, forces and influences that shape the present. According to Thompson, the recording of oral history is important because "it can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place."[17] The use of this method was crucial to collecting the memories of people who had been involved in OFP from its inception. Official accounts of the program could not convey

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[8] Christina Chavez, "Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality." *The Qualitative Report* 13(3) (2008): 479.

[9] Sema Unluer, "Being an Insider Researcher While Conducting Case Study Research." *The Qualitative Report* 17(58) (2012): 2.

[10] Chavez, "Conceptualizing from the inside, 479.

[11] Chavez, "Conceptualizing from the inside, 474.

[12] A Portelli and C Hardy, "Foreword" in *Oral History. The challenges of dialogue*, eds Marta Kurkowska-Budzan and Krystof Zamonski, (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Co, 2009), xi.

[13] Portelli and Hardy, "Foreword", xi.

[14] T Threadgold, *Constructing Community in South East Wales* (London: Report to the Joseph Rountree Foundation, 2007), 311.

[15] Josephine May, "A child of change: the establishment of the Open Foundation Programme in 1974," *History of Education review,* 34(1) (2005): 51-62.

[16] Brian Roberts, *Biographical Research* (Buckingham: Open University press, 2002), 25.

[17] Paul Thompson, "The voice of the past. Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson* (New York: Routledge, 2003), *22.*

the impact of the personalities of the early lecturers on students and colleagues, nor could they draw out some of the illuminating anecdotes that were reported in the research about activities and day to day interactions. Oral histories provide "access to empirical information that may not be available through conventional documentary sources."[18]

As a genre, oral history comprises a dialogic discourse in that some aspects of what is spoken has usually "never been told in that form before."[19] It may have been told as fragments, but not in response to the specific questions posed by the historian or as a whole story.[20] It is a process by which a performance by the actor who was present, is turned into a text.[21] The text can then be shared and dispersed.

Much has been written about the way in which "framing" of stories occurs. Goffman's work on "frame analysis", for example, points to the way people make sense of strips or slices of activity. These strips can support several interpretations and are framed according to a "schemata of interpretation [that] allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label" strips of activity.[22] When undertaking a frame analysis of talk, Goffman notes that much ordinary talk consists of storytelling and replaying tales or anecdotes. It recounts, rather than reports and recreates understandings and information that vicariously places the listener in the position of the person recounting the story.[23] Likewise, the storyteller can be seen as mediating history by telling it according to a particular way of viewing the world. The researcher's job is to relay the voice and testimony of observers, to take on the responsibility of noting, recording, witnessing the story and then recounting it.[24] It also involves an ethical aspect in considering what information is used. The narrative technique used for recalling memories and retelling stories respondents had participated in or were familiar with was, on occasion, quite candid. Some respondents were no longer connected to the university and therefore did not have the same sense of restraint as current employees.

Recognition of the significance of "the narrative turn" in recent decades has become a "core feature of qualitative research methodology."[25] While there are many definitions of narrative, Atkinson and Delamont suggest it is important to take a broad and inclusive view of what counts as narrative. They comment:

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[18] Mahua Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25(4) (2012), 583.
[19] Alessandro Portelli, "Oral History as Genre," in Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson eds. *Narrative and Genre, (*London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 24.
[20] Portelli, "Oral History as Genre," 24.
[21] Portelli, "Oral History as Genre," 32.
[22] Erving Goffman, *Frame analysis: an essay on the organization of experience.* (New York: Harper Row, 1974), 21.
[23] Greg Smith, *Erving Goffman.* (New York, Routledge, 2006), 62.
[24] Portelli and Hardy, "Foreward", xii.
[25] Atkinson, Paul and Delamont, Sara. Eds *Narrative methods. Volume 1. Narrative Perspective, (*London: Sage Publications, 2006), xx.

> there exist as social phenomena an array of spoken and written forms, that provide culturally appropriate ways in which personal experience is shared, knowledge is transmitted, memories are enacted, and testimony is constructed.[26]

Narratives are social in nature and have distinctive forms, styles and genres. They also produce individual and collective identities.[27] Indeed, oral history is a way of reclaiming identity[28] as it situates the respondent in a particular relationship to their surroundings. Each of the respondents in this study had a particular relationship with OFP and thus brought different aspects of its history into focus.

Events are said to live in people's minds long after they happen and those based on social experiences "shape the inner life of individuals."[29] Sarkar notes constructing stories of self is a creative activity; people need to establish an "acceptable" self; and there are likely to be moments of discomposure[30] when narratives are not coherent. In fact, the respondent's sense of self can affect their responses to the questions.[31] People are said to "smooth over" disjunctures in their stories in order to "establish an acceptable self."[32] In the case of one interview I found I had to constantly, and gently, remind the respondent about the research questions when she wanted to talk about her own life and activities rather than OFP. Anderson and Jack's advice on learning to listen to oral history respondents' comments focuses on the need to be alert to subjective dimensions of interviews. They argue it is not a matter of simply gathering information, but focusing on the process and interaction with the respondent where clarifications and personal constructions of people's experiences can be drawn out as valuable information.[33] Open-ended questions allowed the respondent's experience and interpretation to guide the interview, however, as Yow has pointed out, an interview is a collaborative effort, "not between authority and subject but between two searchers of the past and present."[34]

One of the other significant insights that oral histories allow is capturing the "feeling" of a past time or context that is hard to reconstruct from archival material.[35] Structures of

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[26] Atkinson and Delamont, *Narrative methods. Volume 1*, xxi.
[27] Atkinson and Delamont, *Narrative methods. Volume 1,* xxi.
[28] Portelli and Hardy, "Foreward", ix.
[29] Allan Kellehear, "The Social Self: Experiences and Explanations." ed. Allan Kellehear, *Social Self, Global Culture. An Introduction to Sociological Idea, (*Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 71.
[30] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 593.
[31] Julia Horne, "Capturing the Personal with Oral History," *Journal of Australian Naval History,* 3(2) (2006), 74.
[32] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 593.
[33] Kathryn Anderson, and Dana C Jack, "Learning to listen." Eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003): 169-170.
[34] Valerie Yow, "'Do I like them too much?': Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-versa." In *Narrative Methods. Vol 1 Narrative Perspectives,* Eds. Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 222.
[35] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 584.

feeling is a term coined by Raymond Williams to explain a correlation between material, social and affective structures. He stated structures of feeling are "a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or a period."[36] It is important to note not only what is said, but also how it is said.[37] A story is never just told to someone, it is "within a discursive context and already existing structures of meaning."[38] Personal accounts allow the research to capture a feeling for a bygone time that is hard to reconstruct from traditional archives.[39]

McCalman notes that the "practice of oral history imposes a special accountability on the historian [as their respondents] are both contributors and witnesses, historians of themselves and their times, not originators of texts to be deconstructed."[40] It is therefore important to consider the epistemological and ontological aspects of this type of research. Epistemology is the study of how we know what exists.[41] It is sometimes referred to as the art of knowing. Portelli argues that in epistemological terms, oral history combines narrative form, as it searches for connections between biography and history, and between individual experience and social transformation.[42] Passerini also notes that the subjective dimension of oral histories is an important element in its epistemology.[43] She argues that memory, ideology and subconscious desires are also important considerations. Ontology is the study of what exists,[44] or of reality. Leavy argues that the ontological foundations of research and assumptions about reality should be taken into account because the meanings people assign to events are important.[45] An ideographic or interpretivist ontology applies to this study because it suggests reality is socially constructed and depends on participants. Critical theory is relevant as a theoretical approach because it is "concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them because of educational disruption."[46]

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[36] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*. (Oxford*:* Oxford University Press, 1978), 131.
[37] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 584.
[38] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 585.
[39] Daniel James, *Dona Maria's Story: Life History, Memory and Political Identity (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).
[40] Janet McCalman, *Journeyings. The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920-1990,* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993).
[41] David Holmes., Katie Hughes and Roberta Julian, *Australian Sociology. A Changing Society, (*Frenchs Forest: Pearson Australia, 2012), 3.
[42] Portelli, "Oral History as Genre," 25.
[43] Luisa Passerini, "The voice of the past." In *The Oral History Reader,* eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 54.
[44] Holmes., Hughes and Julian, *Australian Sociology,* 3.
[45] Patricia Leavy, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative research, (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[46] John W Creswell, *Research design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed methods Approaches,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 10.

Oral history method: the interviews

The thirty eight oral history interviews, all carried out by the researcher, were undertaken during 2012-14 and can be considered as a "body of evidence"[47] from which various perspectives on a range of issues relating to OFP's history and its impact on students, the university and its regions could be gleaned. The intention was to build a history from the inside by examining the narratives of the origins and impacts of the program. A range of people were selected for interview because of their knowledge of and association with OFP over, in many cases, a very long period of time. Some respondents had been associated with the program since it began in 1974, others had become involved along the way. These included a former Chancellor who officiated at Attainment ceremonies and whose wife had been a student in the program; the Vice Chancellor who oversaw OFP during its early years; Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic) who had overall administrative responsibility for the program and to whom the Directors had to report; Directors of Community Programmes or what is now known as the English Language and Foundation Studies Centre (ELFSC) that oversees the operation of the OFP; long term and experienced lecturers; other administrators at the operational level of OFP; and support staff for the program, namely Learning Support, Counselling, Disability Support; and English as Second Language (ESL) support who all had a different relationship to the program and students. This multi-faceted approach provided insights into the program from the perspectives of people who observed and participated in it and also allowed them the opportunity to describe and narrate experiences in their own words.

The specific research questions, included in Appendix 3, varied according to the respondent's role in the program, but all related to knowledge of the history and development of OFP as well as impacts on students, staff, UON and its regions. Respondents were asked about vivid memories of the program's operation, and for lecturers, questions also related to the teaching context for this cohort of students in order to complement the information provided by students about the experience of studying in OFP. The role of the interviewer is to "relay the voice and testimony of the observer" of the history being reported,[48] whereas it is the responsibility of the historian to record and report with accuracy the substance of the interview. This was done by tape recording the responses to a set of semi-structured questions. The open structure allowed the respondent to guide the content, but in all cases a similar set of questions were used to frame the interview. Prompts were used when it was felt more information was required. In one sense this aspect of the interviews constitutes a negotiation as the interviewer maintains a line of relevant information and diverts the respondent back to the main theme if required.

[47] Alison Lee., Catherine Manathunga, and Peter Kandlbinder, "Shaping a culture: oral histories of academic development in Australian universities," *Higher Education Research and Development* 29(3) (2010), 308.
[48] Portelli and Hardy, "Foreward", xii.

Certain features of conducting an oral history interview are considered important: rapport; listening; silences and pauses; eye contact; and neutrality.[49] This array of techniques was used when interviewing, however, as Morrissey explains, "there is a danger in too much reliance on tools and not relying sufficiently on old-fashioned intuition as to which tool to use in which situation."[50] Reading the direction and content of interviews required not only attention to the immediate content but to its relevance to the larger project. Horne comments that the skill of the interviewer is demonstrated by the questions they ask.[51] Asking for clarifications, explanations and expansion of vital points is central to that skill. Making the respondent feel comfortable enough to "open up" about the topic and demonstrating genuine interest in the topic and that person's role set the tone for the interviews in this project. Horne also argues that the interviewer's sense of self, their socio-economic status, gender, position in the professional hierarchy can affect responses.[52] I found that all respondents were candid and appeared to enjoy the opportunity to converse about OFP.

It is important to take note, not only what people say in interviews, but the way they say it.[53] This is because people "typically seem to reconstruct the past in ways that legitimize it to the researchers and make sense of it to the narrators themselves."[54] The account is "never just told; it is always told to someone, with a discursive context and already existing structures of meaning."[55] Armitage and Gluck point to the complex and shifting relationship between interviewer and narrator that goes beyond being an "insider" and the interviewer can only expect to get partial "truths" depending on positionality.[56]

Through remembering and reinterpreting the history of the OFP, respondents drew on their own lived experiences as well as recounting their memories of students who travelled this path. Many pauses occurred during the interviews where transcriptions later recorded and bracketed (laughs), to highlight amusing anecdotes or observations about the early years or about colleagues or incidents that occurred along the way. Hamilton and Shopes explain that the value of oral histories comes from "uncovering unknown stories … giving voice to

[49] Louise Douglas., Alan Roberts and Ruth Thompson, *Oral History. A Handbook* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988): 63-7.
[50] Charles T Morrissey, "On oral history interviewing," In *The Oral History Reader,* eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 108.
[51] Horne, "Capturing the Personal with Oral History," 73.
[52] Horne, "Capturing the Personal with Oral History," 73-4.
[53] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 584.
[54] Penny Summerfield 1998 in Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 584.
[55] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 585.
[56] Armitage and Gluck, "Reflections on Women's Oral History, 79-81.

the unheard, the secret … making it, in effect, a form of expose or evidence where no other is available."[57] According to Frisch, oral history is:

> A powerful tool for discovering, exploring and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context and how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.[58]

Participants were aware that the interviews were "on the record."[59] They would become part of the thesis and archival collection. They were aware that their role and contribution to the program would be acknowledged and that the veracity of their first-hand accounts were established. Their contributions provided a "shared authority"[60] to understand events. The interviews were transcribed as soon after the interview as possible to assist recall where responses may have been unclear. Transcripts of all interviews were returned to the respondent for any comment, additions or changes they wished to make to the content. No-one refused to be interviewed or named. These data were manually coded as they logically fell into areas designated by the questions. Relevant material was then examined according to the theme arising from the data.

Memory and oral history

One of the main problems with oral history is its reliance on memory. In some cases, people were reflecting on events that occurred over forty years before. Horne suggests there may be a tendency to "embellish" details or that the effect of "hidden power structures" may influence responses.[61] Memory has been claimed to be easily distorted and therefore unreliable.[62] Even accurate memories could be based on an inadequate understanding of complex matters. As Horne observes "human recall works in mysterious ways."[63] While the brain can store a great amount of memory, retrieving it is not always easy. She comments that people sometimes mis-remember or embellish or invent specific details that never occurred. Memories and stories "shape and colour the culture and the practices"[64] and can be considered as a subjective reality. According to Passerini remembering is an "area of symbolic activity which includes cognitive, cultural and psychological aspects"[65] that

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[57] Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes, "Introduction: Building Partnerships Between Oral History and Memory Studies," in *Oral History and Public Memories,* eds. Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), xiii.

[58] Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 188.

[59] Lee., Manathunga and Kandlbinder, "Shaping a culture," 310.

[60] Frisch, *A Shared Authority (*1990).

[61] Horne, "Capturing the Personal with Oral History," 74.

[62] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 582.

[63] Horne, "Capturing the Personal with Oral History," 74.

[64] Lee., Manathunga and Kandlbinder, "Shaping a culture," 308.

[65] Passerini, "The voice of the past," 54.

necessarily involve broader cultural, social and intellectual milieu. So while a major concern for oral history is the degree to which accurate recall of the past is possible,[66] my research found a considerable degree of consistency among the stories of participants. This provides a measure of authenticity to the data, although memory is not seen as constituting pure recall because events are refracted through layers of subsequent experience and dominant influences.[67] Memory and history are therefore "inextricably entangled"[68] because without observations, recall and recording, history would be compromised by the lack of first-hand accounts. Oral history is "driven by the passion for the personal story"[69] so situating people's presence within it is vital.

Scientific studies on memory also rebut some of the concerns about the veracity of remembered events:

> the process of remembering some facts and discarding others begins immediately … once the information has survived the initial discarding and has been retained, its chances of surviving in the memory are good … While recall of significant events and routines of daily life appear to be consistently reliable, but is much less reliable for precise dates, statistics etc"[70]

Matters of reliability and validity have therefore been addressed in various ways to establish the credibility of this type of research. Scholars now argue that this perceived unreliability:

> Was also its strength, and the subjectivity of memory provided clues not only about the meanings of historical experience, but also about the relationships between past and present, between memory and personal identity, and between individual and collective memory.[71]

Written sources are themselves often based on interviews or registrations of particular information based on oral communication. The simple act of recording material in written form does not lend it more legitimacy than oral versions. All accounts are subject to "interpretive reconstruction."[72] Young reflects upon the tensions in oral history evidence and asks the question "Whose story counts?"[73] Her concern is when competing stories present differing views that appear inconsistent. However, as Foucault has demonstrated,

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[66] Trevor Lummis, "Structure and validity in oral evidence," Eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader (*London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 273.
[67] 'Editorial', *History Workshop,* 1979. No 8, p.iii cited in Lummis, 273.
[68] Hamilton and Shopes, "Introduction," vii.
[69] Hamilton and Shopes, "Introduction," xi.
[70] Douglas., Roberts and Thompson, *Oral History. A Handbook,* 22-3.
[71] Thomson, Alistair. "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History," *Oral History Review* 34(1) (2007), 54.
[72] Douglas., Roberts and Thompson, *Oral History. A Handbook*, 21.
[73] Hilary Young, "Whose Story Counts? Constructing an oral history of the Open University at 40," *Oral History Society Journal,* 39(1) (2011), 95.

there may be regimes of truth[74] that all claim to tell one truth but which must be examined as discourses that intersect and may all present versions of an event.

Memory allows for the exploration of the relation between material facts and personal subjectivity.[75] At the same time, it is personal experience of events that preserves history.[76] As Lummis states "oral accounts from those who experienced the specific situation provide unsurpassed and irreplaceable evidence for actual behaviour.[77] It should be recognised, however, that these accounts can be politically motivated: "memory becomes itself a significant political arena."[78] It can be considered a re-presentation of events but also can "reveal and shape what is known among and by others, even as it can also participate in a broader, often political process of public meaning-making."[79] A device that was used to ensure that the respondent was satisfied that all areas they thought significant had been covered in the questions was to end with the query: "Do you think there is anything I have forgotten to ask you about either the history or the impacts of OFP?" This either prompted an assessment that I had covered all relevant aspects, or, a review of the project that emphasized the importance of something of particular interest to that respondent, or elaboration of something that also required mention. In one case, for example, a staff member wanted greater discussion of the contribution of approaches and personalities of teaching staff to the success of students that she felt was not sufficiently addressed in the questions. Respondents' subjective accounts added rich insights into events that were not the substance of official reports but which detailed important factors in the foundation and success of OFP.

Analysis of transcripts

Interviews were transcribed as soon as practicable after the interview by the researcher so immediate knowledge of the context and expressions used by the respondent were accurate. The interviews, along with photographs of respondents were loaded into NVivo for future coding and analysis, although for the purpose of this thesis, manual analysis of data was undertaken due to demands associated with the coding process given the volume of data collected. Because similar questions were used for each respondent, data could be extracted according to answers provided to specific questions. The intention of recording this information was to build a systematic historical study that would provide archival material to be held by the university's Cultural Collections. While the questions were intended to be unstructured to allow participants in the study to take the discussion where they wished, there was still a continuity in the line of questioning in the sense that the same

[74] Michel Foucault, ed *I, Pierre Riviere, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother: a case of parricide in the 19th century* trans. Frank Jellinek (Lincoln NEB: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).
[75] Hamilton and Shopes, "Introduction," ix.
[76] Lummis, "Structure and validity in oral evidence," 276.
[77] Lummis, "Structure and validity in oral evidence," 282.
[78] Portelli and Hardy, "Foreword", x.
[79] Hamilton and Shopes, "Introduction," xv.

areas were covered for each participant but adapted to their particular role in the program. Comparative analysis of the narratives was therefore easy to undertake because the sequence in which the questions were asked was consistent.

This thesis contains many photographs of the oral history participants taken by the researcher at the interview. Permission was sought from them to include their photograph in the dissertation as a means of acknowledging their contribution to the program. Most respondents were agreeable to this request. It has been suggested that photographs themselves are densely coded cultural artefacts,[80] which may evoke memories long after that subject is deceased, but the prime purpose of including them was to honour the respondents, as well as to further underscore the individuality of their narratives, as well as to highlight the immediacy and centrality of their persons to the oral histories.

Survey data

Survey instrument

In order to complement the information gleaned from staff and provide deeper insights into the impacts of OFP, past students were included in the research design. Their presence in the research provided an important perspective on OFP's effects and operation. Detailed and specific information about the survey group, all of whom were students who had undertaken OFP and agreed to participate in the research, can be found in Chapter 7. The survey instrument is available in Appendix 3. The oral history methodology for uncovering the history and impacts of the OFP from staff was suitable for a small number of informants. The choice of surveys to gain information from former OFP students however was premised on the fact that they allowed for "efficient collection of data on large numbers of people."[81] This method allowed for both the measurement and statistical analysis of quantitative information derived from standardized questions that had a fixed choice (such as age or sex), and the gathering of qualitative responses to open-ended questions that drew out more detailed and personalized responses. The qualitative data was evaluated using NVivo software (discussed in more detail below). The conceptual characteristic of quantitative data is that it is "concerned with discovering facts … [and] assumes a fixed and measurable reality."[82] Large amounts of data were then accessible for comparative analysis.

The success of surveys lies in the art of questioning. The intention was to gather demographic data and reflections of former students on their experiences before, during and after completing OFP. The responses to be quantified included age at time of enrolment, sex, country of birth, prior educational qualifications, whether they identified as Indigenous or had a disability and what year they enrolled. The project sought to reveal whether students went on to undergraduate study, what undergraduate degree they

[80] Portelli and Hardy, "Foreward", ix.

[81] Anthony Giddens, *Sociology. (*Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 50.

[82] Holmes., Hughes and Julian, *Australian Sociology,* 409.

pursued, what career they entered, and whether taking this pathway had improved their economic situation. In addition, they were asked which offering and campus they attended, which subjects they chose to study in the program, how they found out about the program, why they enrolled, their experience of OFP, whether they made enduring friendships, and about other impacts such as whether completing OFP had affected their social or familial relationships.

An important qualitative question asked whether the program affected their life and this was reiterated at the end of the survey by asking what, if any, other changes OFP had made to their lives. The open-ended question technique allowed people to answer in their own words. The survey of past students of OFP was further shaped and facilitated by the existence of a register of willing research participants established by the English Language and Foundation Studies Centre, called the Potential Enabling Program Participant Research (PEPPR) register. Students on this register included representatives from all offerings of OFP: its part time program over two semesters at both Callaghan and Ourimbah campuses; its part time distance offering; and its intensive offering at both Callaghan and Ourimbah campuses.

Potential Enabling Program Participant Research (PEPPR) Register

The data sample was collected from the PEPPR register. Funding was acquired from the University of Newcastle in 2011 to establish a research participant register to facilitate research on enabling students. Rules were established to ensure privacy and confidentiality with the proviso that ethics approval must be obtained prior to use and follow the register's protocols including consultation with the Register coordinator to ensure research is not duplicated and that projects complement each other. I was the first person to access the register.

At the time of access, there were 824 Open Foundation respondents[83] willing to be research informants, and some former students responded who were not included on the register. In all, 350 responses were received, which constitutes roughly a 42% response rate. According to Mellahi and Harris, there are no fixed rules or 'formulae' to determine acceptable response rates[84] and no clear boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable rates. Largely, it depends on the research aims and accessibility of a relevant sample. According to Walter, a response rate of 50% for a self-administered survey is considered acceptable[85] but with increased difficulties of accessing respondents, lower rates are becoming increasingly

[83] University of Newcastle, *Potential Enabling Program Participant Research (PEPPR) Register: Summary of de-identified aggregate data.* Document Version V04: 6.1.2012.

[84] Kamel Mellahi and Lloyd C Harris, "Response Rates in Business and Management Research: An Overview of Current Practice and Suggestions for Future Direction," *British Journal of Management* 27 (2016), 426.

[85] Maggie Walter, ed *Social Research Methods. An Australian perspective (*Oxford University Press, 2006), 200.

common and "no gold standard" response rate exists in the literature.[86] Better response rates often require follow-ups, which exceeded the resources of this project. Goyder reports that an acceptable range could vary between 30-70%.[87] A detailed study of response rates in 1,093 survey based business and management papers published between 2009 and 2013 found the median was 40% and the mode was 50%.[88]

Since in excess of 26,000 students have successfully completed the course and the PEPPR register only went back as far as students enrolled from 1995, the research results cannot be generalized to all completing Open Foundation students. However, the data do provide a snapshot of the experiences and outcomes of a significant sample of those who agreed to participate in research on their enabling experience.

NVivo as methodological tool

NVivo was chosen as the most appropriate software to analyse the results of the student surveys due to the kinds of sophisticated analysis it made possible and as a manageable way to organise a large amount of data. Over 12,000 pieces of data were collected from the surveys and needed to be readily accessible. By coding data into nodes the material was organised and developed into both simple and complex categories that allowed quantification as well as examination of specific text.[89] By coding according to unit of meaning, responses to the same question could be analysed. Accurate and comparable demographic data was recorded in a way that could be easily reviewed. Details such as sex, age upon entry to the program and prior educational qualifications could be collated in statistical analyses and to detect patterns that could then be used in comparative analysis. If, for example, an answer was sought to the question "How many women proceeded into nursing or teaching degrees?" that material could be extracted and analysed separately. Alternatively, the stories of all those who became architects, or lawyers were of interest and could easily be accessed. These data were accessed, for example, to examine discourses relating to stakeholders in enabling education in order to demonstrate the diverse, intersecting and sometimes conflicting positions of a variety of different stakeholders in this field.[90] The node allowed not only quantification, but also inclusion of qualitative comments and all people who fell under the category designated by the node could be examined collectively. Coding stripes can be enabled to show what has been coded and where it is

[86] S M Cummings., L A Savitz and T R Konrad, "Reported response rates to mailed physician questionnaires," *Health Services Research* 35 (2001).

[87] J Goyder, "Non-response effects on relationships between variables," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 40, 1985, 360-369.

[88] Mellahi and Harris, "Response Rates in Business and Management Research," 430.

[89] Jennifer StGeorge., Hedy Fairbairn and Allyson Holbrook, *NVivo 10 Instruction Manual, (*Newcastle: Centre for the Study of research Training and Impact, 2013), 16.

[90]Rosalie Bunn and Annika Westrenius, "Enabling and changing lives: Stakeholders who affect and are affected by the enabling initiative." *International Studies in Widening Participation,* 4(1) (2017): 55-73.

located. It comprises a "visual trigger to data pattern discovery, inquiry and interpretation."[91]

Auto coding is also a feature of this software and allows multiple documents to be coded so the material can be retrieved simultaneously. Material was coded according to particular survey questions and in the case of qualitative answers, by linguistic expressions used by respondents. For example, when responding to the question about their experience of studying in the OFP, former students used a variety of expressions to indicate their impressions. By assigning their varied responses a shared code, all informants' views can be compared.[92] It is also possible to create a classification sheet, or dataset, which allows all descriptive data to be viewed concurrently. Likewise, each individual participant's source data can be viewed in isolation. Each survey respondent carried a number allocated chronologically in order of interview or receipt of completed survey, although the original surveys in hard copy were stored in alphabetical order for ease of access if required.

The survey and interview data were grouped into separate folders, or sets. Sets allow the researcher to work with the interview and survey material at the same time and provided another way of categorising data.[93] However, because the interviews were only with staff and the surveys were mainly with students, this feature was not required. The variety of features NVivo offers make it a very flexible tool to work with. Once familiar with the data, researchers can create memos, or notes that are helpful for analysis. These include reflections, notes or theorising, which can then be coded in the same way as the other data.[94] Coding of data takes a significant amount of time, approximately 300 hours for this study. However, it is important to engage in this task accurately and systematically to ensure that the analysis stage of the project runs smoothly.

It is important to note that in some instances one response might be coded under different categories due to multiple meanings that could be elicited from the context. For example, where a student's reason for enrolling was cited as to get out of the house and indulge herself in study, this was duly coded as relating to self-identity and a reflection of the complexity of her daily life. Rigorous analysis of each sentence was undertaken in the search for meanings.

When analysing data, text searches are important for content analysis. It is also possible to use text searches to locate specific phrases. Once results have been obtained they can be saved as a thematic code.[95] Once the project reaches an advanced stage, relationships

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[91] St George., Fairbairn and Holbrook, *NVivo 10 Instruction Manual,* 20.
[92] St George., Fairbairn and Holbrook, *NVivo 10 Instruction Manual,* 22.
[93] St George., Fairbairn and Holbrook, *NVivo 10 Instruction Manual,* 27.
[94] St George., Fairbairn and Holbrook, *NVivo 10 Instruction Manual,* 29.
[95] St George., Fairbairn and Holbrook, *NVivo 10 Instruction Manual,* 45.

between aspects of the data can be detected. Bazeley refers to this stage as re-assembling fractured slices of data.[96] Group queries are also possible where the researcher can compare responses in one node to another.

Taking a Grounded Theory approach to data analysis

Discovering themes is at the heart of examining qualitative data. Ryan and Bernard suggest there are a number of techniques that can be used that are based on word analysis; careful reading of large blocks of text; analysis of linguistic features; or physical manipulation of text.[97] Each of these approaches was used in this research. While the questions themselves may indicate some major themes, closer examination reveals subthemes. When no new themes occur, "theoretical saturation"[98] is said to take place. When looking for themes and patterns, a constructivist grounded theory (GT) approach was used. GT was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s as an inductive approach to analysis that challenged positivist assumptions about the conduct of research. Charmaz later developed a constructivist approach, still grounded in the experiences of participants, but co-created by the researcher.[99] Acknowledgement of the active involvement of the researcher is crucial to this approach and is based on the principle that they should not know or predict the outcomes of the research in advance.[100] Charmaz argued that the researcher cannot be an impartial observer, they have interpretive influence over their findings and construct rather than discover their theory.[101]

GT develops theories based on the collection and analysis of data. This method was "methodical, rigorous, and structured."[102] There are three types of coding associated with constructivist GT. A process of open coding identifies emerging concepts; axial coding identifies sub-concepts, properties and dimensions and shows relationships between concepts; and finally, selective coding develops a narrative by integrating the concepts and connections identified in the axial coding.[103] The main focus of the survey data was the impact of OFP on students themselves. Close analysis of data had five advantages: it allowed deep immersion within the data; it fostered creativity by using empirical data to generate concepts and theories; it offered the potential to conceptualise; it had a systematic

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[96] Pat Bazeley, *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo,* (London: Sage, 2007).

[97] Gery W Ryan and H. Russell Bernard, "Techniques to identify Themes in Qualitative Data," *Field Methods* 15(1) (2003): 85-109.

[98] Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, A. *Basics of qualitative research. Grounded theory: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory 2nd ed* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 1998), 143.

[99] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis, (*Los Angeles CA: Sage Publications, 2006).

[100] Meabh Kenny and Robert Fourie, "Tracing the History of Grounded Theory Methodology: From Formation to Fragmentation," *The Qualitative Report,* 19 (2004): 2.

[101] Kenny and Fourie, "Tracing the History of Grounded Theory Methodology," 6.

[102] Charmaz, *Constructing grounded theory,* 5.

[103] Donald Mitchell, "Advancing Grounded Theory: Using Theoretical Frameworks within Grounded Theory Studies," *The Qualitative Report,* 19, (2014): 3.

approach to data analysis; and finally, it provided depth and richness of data.[104] The key principles of constructivist GT are familiarity with the research and the wider context in which it is situated; reflexively considering both researcher and participants' standpoints; and focusing on meaning, process, action and language.[105] While Ryan and Bernard argue that "explicit descriptions of theme discovery are rarely described in articles and reports"[106] this research provides a full account of the themes that emerged from the data and are used as the basis of understanding a range of experiences of students completing OFP.

Some concluding comments on methodology

This chapter has demonstrated the rigorous process of gaining ethical approval and the use of oral history methodology to gather historical information and insights into OFP by staff of the University of Newcastle. The interviews were based on the same set of questions for each respondent, but were semi-structured to allow respondents to take the interview in the direction of their choice. This technique allowed deeper insights into areas of questioning and probing of matters that had not previously been covered. To access student experience of the program, a mixed quantitative and qualitative survey was administered to the volunteers on the PEPPR register. This elicited demographic data for statistical purposes and qualitative responses that could then be further analysed to consider the impacts of the program on the university, on the regions in which OFP is delivered and on individual students who were at liberty to critique the program by recounting their own experience of it. The chapter also provided details of the use of NVivo software, which facilitated coding, quantified categories, and allowed comparative analysis of survey data. The use of constructivist grounded theory to analyse the data reinforced the important point that data is co-created by both research and participant. The findings of that data collection including demographic data relating to respondents such as gender, age and year the program was completed as well as qualitative responses to questions about their experiences and outcomes will be addressed in Chapters 7-10. The following two chapters 5 and 6 will examine reflections of staff on the history of the OFP.

[104] Mohamed El Hussein., Sandra Hirst., Vince Sayers and Joseph Osuji, "Using Grounded Theory as a Method of Inquiry: Advantages and Disadvantages," *The Qualitative Report,* 19, (2014): 3.

[105] Elaine Keane, "Considering the practical implementation of constructivist grounded theory in a study of widening participation in Irish higher education," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 18(4) (2015): 420.

[106] Ryan and Bernard, "Techniques to identify Themes in Qualitative Data," 1.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF OPEN FOUNDATION 1970s-1980s

This chapter and the next present a history of the Open Foundation Program (OFP) drawing on thirty-eight oral history interviews with staff who were either directly involved in the early years of OFP and had first-hand experience of characters and events or who were able to make observations based on their perceptions about how OFP has developed over time. From the earliest decisions to create the Department of Community Programmes within which OFP was situated, through more than forty years of successful operation, the insights provided offer 'insider' views of a program that, as later chapters confirm, has contributed significant impacts to the lives of individuals, their families, the university and the regions in which it is taught.

As Horne argues, a personal perspective is important for understanding the history of institutions such as universities.[1] Oral histories can provide a behind the scenes account of events, personalities and decisions from people who were present, but also captures the "personal side of institutionalised life,[2] or what Young, in her history of the Open University in Britain, refers to as "other stories of universities as places of pedagogy, culture, social change and personal relationships."[3] Horne states:

> The story is always bigger than the influence of one person, yet it is people who make up the story, and their motivations, beliefs and responses … constitute an essential source to reveal the spectacle of human imagination at work.[4]

In universities, what Lee *et al* refer to as tacit and inchoate knowledge about the way the institution operates is sometimes not "readily susceptible to simple documentation or verification but exists in the memories and stories of members and shape and colour the culture and [current] practices."[5] Sarkar further states that "much can be learnt from personal narratives if we read them as processes of meaning-creation rather than as 'depositories of facts'".[6] Together, the recollections of the respondents in this study form a "body of evidence"[7] that is not available elsewhere, not least of all because some of the respondents have passed away since the time of interview.

The unique insights that arose from the oral histories collected for the study confirm the findings of the wider literature on the HE and enabling fields. Ramsay's reports on the

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[1] Horne, "Capturing the personal with oral histories," 67.
[2] Horne, "Capturing the personal with oral histories," 72.
[3] Young. "Whose Story Counts?" 95.
[4] Horne, "Capturing the personal with oral histories," 69.
[5] Lee., Manathunga and Kandbinder "Shaping a culture," 308.
[6] Sarkar, "Between Craft and method," 587.
[7] Lee., Catherine Manathunga and Peter Kandbinder "Shaping a culture," 308.

marginalisation of enabling programs within universities,[8] the ongoing struggle to secure funding and not only comply but promote equity policies are themes that emerged from the oral histories. Staff observations of students gaining cultural capital and the changing habitus of both students and UON, the theoretical aspects of which were reported in Chapter 1, were also evident in these oral history accounts.

Through oral testimony and documentary evidence, this chapter covers the 1970s and 1980s, decades that included the origins of OFP, and its transition throughout these two decades of its operation. The oral narratives show how individuals present historical memories of the program according to their position within the structure of the university and the program. This variety of perspectives arising from lived experiences allows for a nuanced picture of the program's history to be assembled that canvasses a wide variety of factors that the documents either do not or cannot mention. This includes matters relating to funding, staffing and the impact of a highly casualized workforce, development of its distance, online and support programs and its offerings at other locations, including the University of Newcastle's Ourimbah Campus.

Origins of OFP

Previous research on the history of OFP used documentary sources to establish the context in which the impetus to establish a mature tertiary entry program at Newcastle played out. May's analysis highlighted three significant layers of influence: international ideas about broadening university participation and lifelong learning; national educational initiatives put in place by the Whitlam Government of 1972-5, which having abolished fees for tertiary study, encouraged low SES and other non-traditional groups to contemplate university study; and the local context in which there was a desire to provide adult and continuing education modelled on the University of Sydney's Department of Adult Education for the Newcastle region. It is the third of these layers that will be explored in more depth. [9]

The Short Committee and Reports

In his history of Newcastle University, Don Wright reports that by 1970 there was local commitment to the idea of promoting intellectual capital and a desire on the part of UON to initiate stronger ties with community. These aims were explored by a UON committee, established only five years after the university became autonomous, which was given the task of advancing adult education within UON with a view to collaborating with existing adult education providers:

> The task of establishing a new campus ensured that no action would be taken immediately. But by 1970 the Science, Engineering and Commerce Faculties were organizing short continuing professional education courses to update or improve

[8] Ramsay, "Blurring the boundaries and re-thinking the categories," 273-305.
[9] May, "A child of change" (2005).

> professional and managerial skills in Newcastle business and industry. In April 1970 Senate voted for a planned takeover of the general adult education work, and asked a committee to consider the nature of Newcastle's possible contribution to adult education.[10]

This committee was headed by Professor Laurie Short (see Figure 1) who recalled that he had taken up his position at UON: "about 1967 or 1968 I think. We came from the University of New South Wales to Newcastle." While still at UNSW as Director of the Educational Research Unit, Professor Short wrote an article in *The Australian University*[11] in which he stressed the importance of higher levels of education in the form of skilled resources to meet the needs of a developing country like Australia. He positioned his argument within the context of Australia as a former colonial nation and argued that a measure of independence, economic, technological and cultural advancement would be achieved through adequate education provision. This was to be provided, not on the basis of the class into which one was born, but as an "instrument of social mobility"[12] by which people could advance according to their own merits. Short's argument was very much concerned with future directions for Australian education in which the power of education played a pivotal role and was a continuing process throughout one's life. On this basis, he advocated for provision of continuing education coupled with the need to meet the demands of population growth. He stated: "I believe that the strong demand for higher education should be regarded as a major national asset, and an opportunity to contribute both to national development and individual fulfilment."[13]

Short argued that rather than lowering standards in universities by admitting a more diverse range of students, instead opening access would prevent the "destruction of the interest, enthusiasm and ambition of those who seek further education."[14] He felt that training for a new era of emerging occupations as well as an extension of basic education were dual functions of universities and that to prevent Australia assuming the label of being "underdeveloped" on the world stage, that universities should plan and operate on the basis of individual, community and national needs.

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[10] Don Wright. Assisted by Rhonda Geale, *Looking Back, a history of The University of Newcastle. (*Callaghan NSW: University of Newcastle, 1992), 137.
[11] L N Short. "Changes in Higher Education in Australia." *The Australian University* 5(1) (1967): 1-41.
[12] Short, "Changes in Higher Education in Australia," 2.
[13] Short, "Changes in Higher Education in Australia," 39.
[14] Short, "Changes in Higher Education in Australia," 39.

Figure 1. Professor Laurie Short, 20.2.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Two reports were presented by Short's committee, the first in 1970, the second in 1972, that recommended that a new Department be established to provide refresher courses, present public lectures, undertake research and development projects, promote theatre, music and the arts and offer other courses similar to those offered by Workers Education Australia (WEA).[15] WEA had been in operation in Sydney since 1913 with the aim of developing "knowledge, understanding and skills through a range of stimulating and varied educational activities." [16] Newcastle had a long history of "industrial education work"[17] aimed at improving outcomes for workers in the region. In fact, Newcastle's Trades Hall Council had been influential in advocating the establishment of a university in the city with delegates represented on the Establishment Committees from as far back as the 1940s.[18] Trades Hall members had argued that higher education had a role to play "in a new social order where there would be complete and free education for all. Others expanded on the idea that working class children should have the same educational privileges as those given to the rich."[19] The connection between workers advocates and the university was therefore in existence long before UON itself.[20]

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[15] A5803 (iv) and (v) Senate Minutes 18 August 1972, Appendix 'The Short Report'.

[16] https://www.weasydney.com.au/

[17] *University News*, No 63. 14 June, 1973.

[18] Rod Noble, "Trades Hall backed Uni", *Newcastle Herald. Weekender,* June 20, 2015, p9.

[19] Noble, "Trades Hall backed Uni," 8.

[20] John Collins reported in his interview that one of his jobs as senior tutor was to run programs in conjunction with TUTA (Trade Union Training Authority).

Due to the efforts of Professor Short and his peers: Dr W. Doniela (Philosophy); Mr E. Flowers (Librarian); Professor J. Keats (Psychology); Professor Brin Newton-John (Languages); and Associate Professor A Ritchie (Economics) who were on the committee in 1972,[21] guidelines were established to proceed with UONs adult education initiative. The range of disciplines from which the committee members were drawn (Professor Short was in Education) demonstrates the orientation towards humanities envisaged for the new department.

Following its terms of reference, the 1972 report recommended UON's participation in adult education as an "opportunity for members of the community to receive instruction at or near the level of university undergraduate courses."[22] The emphasis on UON providing a "community service" was highlighted in its name Community Programmes, but this undertaking was also aimed at community development. The report indicated that previously, collaboration with WEA was on the basis of UON providing the academic input and WEA the administrative aspects of organizing courses. The courses were weekly and of two hours duration across a ten week term. These collaborative courses, precursors to Open Foundation, were also run at locations other than the university, in the surrounding towns of Toronto, Muswellbrook, Gosford and later at Singleton and Cessnock.[23] Special mention was made of a program to meet the needs of executive staff of the BHP steelworks, funded by the company, with the aim of advancing the academic knowledge of graduate officers of BHP. This connection was to prove useful in the late 1990s when BHP made the decision to close down and staff were encouraged to enrol in Open Foundation as a means of retraining and seeking alternative employment.

The spirit of the report was aimed at cooperative ventures with WEA rather than the idea that UON was seeking to take over this area. Further cooperative arrangements with other organizations to "develop adult education activities"[24] were envisaged. The report also signaled collaboration with ABC radio and television as well as the local television station NBN Channel 3 to develop adult education material. This was put in place, in 1978, when an attempt to run Open University-like distance courses taught by Dr John Turner (History) (see Figure 2) and Dr Jean Talbot (English Literature) (see Figure 3) was made through 2NURFM, the university's radio station was established. The Short Report envisaged making lectures available throughout the Hunter Valley region.[25] The regional stretch was to extend even more broadly in time, from near Taree, to Woy Woy and inland to Murrurundi and including Gloucester, Nabiac and Forster[26] (that were between 100 to 190 kilometers from Newcastle) but without encroaching on the territory of New England University, based in Armidale.

[21] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', AB8997, item 1.3.
[22] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', item 2.1.
[23] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', item 3.6.
[24] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', item 3.10.
[25] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', item 4.2.
[26] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', item 5.2.

Figure 2. Dr John Turner and Ms Margaret Henry. Photo 65528 reprinted with permission Cultural Collections University of Newcastle

The new Community Programmes Department was not to be organized in the usual pattern of academic departments. Instead, the Short Report recommended more broadly defined educational activities that would be headed by a Director who would be paid at the level of Associate or full Professor. The Director was to be an ex-officio member of Academic Senate and executive officer of a Board of Community Programmes, which would be under the control of Senate.[27] The framework of the Department was to be endorsed by Senate and University Council and the Director was to work with Heads of Departments and university staff to plan and present community programs, including continuing education. The report acknowledged commitment to current staff attached to the University of Sydney's Department of Adult Education who were currently working in Newcastle.[28] It was therefore recommended that these staff be offered appointment in the new department. On that basis, Dr John Turner who occupied one of the University of Sydney positions, was offered acting Directorship until a permanent appointment could be made. Three other academic staff were also to be appointed, along with an administrative assistant at the level of graduate clerk.

[27] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', item 6.4 and 6.5.
[28] University of Newcastle (1972) 'The Short Report', item 7.1.

Figure 3. Dr Jean Talbot, 14.6.2012, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

In reporting the adoption of Short's recommendations in his history of UON, Don Wright expressed some surprise that the committee's recommendations were so readily accepted:

> A little miraculously this imaginative set of recommendations which came largely from the pen of Laurie Short survived Senate and Council almost unscathed and the machinery was set in place. Newcastle took over the Sydney operation and staff from the first of January 1973. By adopting this approach to adult education the University was emphasizing its regional role. The University appointed Dr Brian Smith an able, imaginative and occasionally provoking man as the Director of Community Programmes.[29]

Early OFP staff members, Margaret Henry (see Figures 2 and 8) and John Hill, (see Figure 4) recalled that the Department "grew out of" the University of Sydney's Department of Continuing Education. John Hill commented: "It was just a period, a step in the growth of Newcastle University."

[29] Wright, *Looking Back, a history of The University of Newcastle,* 138.

Figure 4. John Hill. 1992 reprinted with permission Cultural Collections University of Newcastle

Dr Brian Smith takes over

Dr Brian Smith (see Figure 5) was selected as the first Director of Community Programmes. His own experience as a mature age student[30] as well as his work in the University of Western Australia's Extension Program provided insights into the needs of mature students. Dr Smith also spent a year on sabbatical from UWA[31] undertaking research on adult education provision in Britain, Denmark, Holland and Belgium. Details of his life and aspirations to establish a specifically designed tertiary preparation course within the Department of Community Programmes were fondly remembered by many interview respondents. Dr Jean Talbot, who lectured in the OFP, recalled that the OFP was the "brainchild of Dr Brian Smith":

> And he didn't think the program would last very long. He thought very soon they would use up the pool of suitable people ... But it was his idea that there were people out there in the community who hadn't had the chance to go to University. He would be amazed to know how it grew. But that was inspirational, really, of him to have thought of it.

[30] Details of his early life were included in interview data with his wife Sybil Smith.

[31] Sabbatical Report provided from personnel records of UWA indicate that Dr Smith returned to work after twelve months study leave on the 21 April 1971.

Figure 5. Dr Brian Smith. Image WW2P0652, reprinted with permission Cultural Collections University of Newcastle.

John Collins (see Figure 6), appointed as senior tutor and who later became Director of Community Programmes, recalled some of the conversations he had with Dr Smith about his motivations for establishing OFP and about the research Smith had conducted in Europe, which stimulated his thinking about the best way forward for the program:

> He [Brian Smith] had been most impressed by the Open University, and especially their entry requirements, or lack of them, relative lack of them, I suppose. He'd been impressed by the German Open University, based in Hagen, in then West Germany, and given Brian, he was particularly impressed by the Paris 8 campus, the 8 campus of the University of Paris and the Free University of Amsterdam, where much of the student troubles of 1968 in Europe had centred, or had focused. And Brian was most impressed with the way in which these alternative Universities had been established. And he was of a mind to do something similar in Australia and his first step towards that was a course which allowed anybody who took a liking, or had an inkling that they might wish to do further study, allowed them to get started and gave them some support and assistance to the point where they would learn whether or not

> they were suited for and, or, liked higher studies. And that was the background to it. That's where Brian was coming from.

Figure 6. John Collins, 29.7.2012, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

John Hill also recalled conversations with Brian Smith about the influence of the British Open University on his model for OFP:

> I just think it [Open University] was in Brian's mind very clearly. Again, Brian was a man of the left. I think he would agree with my saying that, and I feel this was a sort of a left wing movement. It was in England because it was created by the Labour Government, the Wilson Government, with the motivation of Lady Lee, the main figure who advocated the Open University in Britain. And I felt that this fitted in with Brian's philosophy of opening up the University to underprivileged people who had missed out. It was a University of second chance. It was always called this in England "The University of the Second Chance". And this I think appealed to Brian. It was away from the elitist, narrow stream of British Universities the Open University was, and this appealed to Brian's thinking. And I think it was extremely important to him and his formulating of the Open Foundation course.

John Collins commented on Brian Smith's inclination toward support of the working class and people who suffered social disadvantage. Smith understood that:

> most Australian Universities had clauses in their regulations which allowed them to make exceptions, or to consider exceptional circumstances when allowing people to matriculate to them. But those provisions were poorly understood, even by the Universities and certainly, hardly ever, employed, or activated. So, and I guess he was mindful of the fact that it was not a good thing to allow people into University who may not have been ready for it academically, intellectually, emotionally, where they might fail and therefore have a mark recorded against their name forevermore as a failure.

John Collins went on to explain how OFP was to be structured, with particular emphasis on no penalties for failure:

> So the Open Foundation Course was to be outside the University … was to have a University orientation, but the records were to be kept within the Department, not within the University, so that, there was no official record of someone having missed or muffed or messed their opportunity to gain entry to University, and that was something we tried to preserve all the way through until the very end [of Collins' time as Director], at the beginning of 1995.

Collins recalled that the spirit of the times in universities, while not wholly elitist, was also not encouraging of working class students. Brian Smith's desire to break down this barrier in Newcastle was met with some opposition. May characterised this dilemma in the Open University in Britain as a "marriage of convenience between the ideal of anti-elitism and pragmatic instrumentalism."[32] Putting this desire for elitism into an historical context, Collins observed:

> Universities were elitist institutions. They were not businesses, as they are now. And I'm not advocating them as businesses, but they were not seen as enterprises in the way they are now, they were seen as public institutions with a public role to play. But the role they were to play was, I guess, to impart the most highly valued ideas that the culture or the society had to those who would benefit most from receiving those mysterious ideas and skills and knowledge. And, they [universities] weren't elitist to the extent that they wouldn't allow other than the upper class in, but other than the upper class rarely got in. And I guess their connections with organizations such as the WEA [Workers Education Association], and the University of Sydney's tutorial department and its book scheme and its learning circle programs and so on that have been around for probably nearly one hundred years by the time Brian arrived in Newcastle. All those things indicated that the universities weren't shunning people from other than the middle, upper middle class professional

[32] May, "A child of change," 53.

> stratum of society. But while not shunning them, they weren't encouraging them either, and certainly not encouraging them in ways that increased their chances of success. So they were all considerations that were tipped into the notion of the Open Foundation Course.
>
> **Are you aware of any other Universities doing anything similar or do you think Newcastle was the first to take that direction?**
>
> Brian had trialled something at the University of Western Australia in Perth immediately before he's come to Newcastle ... there weren't many, I think 8 or 9 or 10 universities in Australia in the 1970s … The University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne in particular, and the University of Adelaide had arrangements with the WEA that people who had completed a certain number of WEA courses with University lecturers as their tutors in the WEA courses, could gain alternative access to University.

So while there were alternative entry modes, there were no programs dedicated entirely to the purpose of non-traditional entry. After Brian Smith arrived to take up his Directorship in mid-1973, he expressed his good fortune at moving into a department "which had established itself well as a presence in the university and the community".[33] He commented on the collaborative work he had recently witnessed on a sabbatical between trade unions and the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and Nottingham and hoped he might be able to establish a basis of trust with the union movement in the Hunter to develop similar programs of benefit to training or retraining workers. In laying out his future plans for his new job, Smith commented in *Uninews* in June 1973 that he was also keen to establish something similar to the British Open University, which offered mature age tertiary entry in Newcastle:

> Following the success of the British Open University, strong moves are afoot to provide in Australia some effectively equivalent form of open access to tertiary education. Many people like to try universities before committing to serious study over a full year, adapted to the attitudes and capabilities of mature people, could be both valuable and popular.

Given both his own and his wife's (see Figure 7) experiences of mature study,[34] Smith saw both the potential of mature entry and the need for a flexible pathway that provided the opportunity for prospective students to test the water and see if it suited them.

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[33] *University News*, No 63. 14 June, 1973.

[34] Mrs Sybil Smith detailed in her interview the difficulties she and her husband had both endured seeking mature access to university.

Figure 7. Mrs Sybil Smith, 9.5.2014, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

However, Smith's concept of a mature age university entry program was not based solely on the Open University. He had also researched models in France, Belgium, Germany and Denmark to ascertain the features he thought would best suit his program in Newcastle. Don Wright's history of UON reflected on this initiative and on the contribution Smith made to the university:

> Smith's greatest achievement was his work relating to the admission of mature aged students through the Open Foundation Course. Newcastle had always had a system of mature age entry, but it had not worked well and few had taken advantage of it, perhaps partly because it was a concessional arrangement. Smith, who had himself been a mature aged student, argued that mature aged persons would prefer a system whereby they underwent a course of teaching and assessment conducted specifically for University entrance and entirely in the hands of University staff. If they got through that and were recommended for admission, they would feel confident they could proceed with a reasonable chance of success. Such a system involved no concessions. They were merely being offered an alternative form of matriculation. There were no prerequisites for the Open Foundation Course which was conducted at or near the Undergraduate level. [35]

[35] Wright, *Looking Back, a history of The University of Newcastle*, 138.

Figure 8. Margaret Henry, 17.1.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Wright's analysis indicates that the preference for something close to an authentic first year undergraduate experience that had both academic rigor and provided an indication of the workload required rather than the teaching of generic skills was the mode of delivery Smith saw as being most useful to develop students' abilities. The idea that OFP was open entry with "no concessions" meant that students could participate on their own merits and that previous academic failure would not be a consideration. Like several other interview respondents, Margaret Henry (see Figure 8) reported that the formulating of OFP was uniquely determined by Smith, and using the metaphor also used by other respondents, a "baby" to whom he had given birth and nurtured in a protective manner.

Dr Keryl Kavanagh (see Figure 9), who lectured in OFP and later became the Deputy Director of the Centre recalled:

> When I first became involved in OF Brian Smith was Director of Community Programmes. Open Foundation was his vision – based on the UK's Open University experiment. One of Brian's observations was that the best way for a student to prepare for University is to have a go at it, or have a go at something that's very similar. And his argument that these courses could be University courses, but are not, was one of the basic premises behind the structure of what was in the course and the approach to it. Consequently the people teaching the courses needed to have a very good knowledge of what students would encounter in Undergraduate

studies in terms of curriculum and in terms of theoretical approaches to that material. Brian made it clear to people teaching in the program that we needed to provide the understanding of things like say, writing, breaking down a body of knowledge into chunks so that students could understand those. So the analytical, pulling everything apart and putting it back together again, and the skills, the essay writing skills that students needed to be able to write the essays, write the exams, were part of our responsibility as well. We couldn't assume that they were going to get that from anywhere else.

Figure 9. Dr Keryl Kavanagh, 23.1.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Open Foundation encounters some opposition

Placing the origins of OFP within its historical context, Dr Terry Ryan (see Figure 10), who lectured in OFP and Classical Studies in those early years, commented on the approaches of the two earliest Vice Chancellors whose job it was to oversee OFP, and on the national political context:

> [Auchmuty] was the foundation Vice Chancellor, a civilized human being in every sense. Auchmuty was an historian, and believed that the Humanities were first and foremost in his University. [His successor] Don [George] wasn't from that background, but there were those who feared that once Auchmuty went, and times were "a'changin" long after Dylan sang that. Certainly Universities and funding once Whitlam fell and we had the dark years of [Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm] Fraser …

> Fraser threw nothing at the Universities, whereas [Liberal Prime Minister Robert] Menzies and Whitlam had … But after Whitlam, Universities were a low priority of the Coalition. And therefore, the problem for Vice Chancellors and what they could do to support this program was somewhat limited. Especially since the University kept growing and the funding didn't always match that. So I didn't envy the new Vice Chancellor coming in. But I thought Don George did a very good job.

Figure 10. Dr Terry Ryan. Photo supplied by Dr Ryan. Permission granted

This observation goes some way to explaining Auchmuty's (see Figure 11) willingness to accede to Brian Smith's emphasis on the importance of humanities when developing the curriculum for OFP. But two respondents who were present in those early years indicated there was also a bit of tension in the relationship between Vice Chancellor Auchmuty and Brian Smith about giving approval to admit students into the undergraduate program at UON who had successfully passed OFP. John Collins recalled resistance to the democratic impulses of the OFP:

> The University of Newcastle was not quite so (laughs), so keen on the rabble. And there was enormous resistance to the establishment of the Open Foundation Course at the time. And J J. Auchmuty, the Vice Chancellor at the time, kept delaying decisions that Brian had been asking him to make about whether or not the students, at the end of the course, would be allowed access, or entry, to the University. So, in early 1975, or late 1974, I've forgotten now, when Brian still didn't

have an answer, he advertised (laughs), 'would be allowed entry at the successful completion of their course'. And this, rather forced the University's hand. Unfortunately Brian suffered somewhat for this. He was given a rollicking carpeting by the Vice Chancellor … I think it was Auchmuty laying down the law about who was boss and what Brian's place in the universe was. But by that time, Brian wasn't alone. He had others. And as a wet behind the ears senior tutor, I wasn't of much use to him. But the Professor of Philosophy, there were others there, and I think Bill Warren might even have been one of them who had some standing in the University who were behind the plan, as Brian had described it to them … So I guess that had given Brian the confidence to advertise that it was all going to be the way he thought it was going to be.

Figure 11. Professor James J. Auchmuty. Photo P395 reprinted with permission Cultural Collections livinghistories@UON, University of Newcastle

John Hill observed that there appeared to be some tension between Auchmuty and Smith that was not evident in the relationship with the next Vice Chancellor:

> I suppose James Auchmuty was a man of the old school, being Irish and from Trinity College and all that sort of thing. So I imagine he may have been in conflict with Brian. But Brian was able to carry the day with Don George. He didn't have trouble with Don George …. He was a very fine Vice Chancellor and he also had a very difficult role to play following Auchmuty.

An editorial piece in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* prior to the start of the pilot OFP in 1974 reported that Vice Chancellor Auchmuty was opposed to Whitlam's initiative to abolish tertiary fees because he believed it would lead to a lowering of standards particularly in light of universities being directed to increase their vocational role. The editorial expressed surprise that Professor Auchmuty wished to return "to an ivory tower existence" [36] given his interest in promoting the life of the city as shown in the setting up of the Department of Community Programmes. The editorial speculated that Professor Auchmuty may have feared that government pressure would broaden the role of universities in light of Whitlam's announcement in June 1973 that he did not expect universities to be "cloistered retreats for a privileged few … where once their strength lay in isolation, it lies now in participation, in a process of organic involvement with the needs and aspirations of society."[37] In part, then, Dr Smith's aspirations to open access was at odds with Professor Auchmuty's desire to protect the privileged place of the university.

In recollecting Dr Smith's difficulties Greg Preston (see Figure 12), a lecturer in OFP during the 1980s, also recalled that Smith, once he became the Director, undertook some intense lobbying of fellow academics to convince them of the merits of OFP and to gain their assistance in implementing it:

> Very soon after he arrived he began lobbying and ultimately it only took a year for him to get Open Foundation started, against some considerable opposition in some places. But clearly there must have been some support in equally important places as well. I was a student back then and had some vague awareness of these developments. I know that Brian talked to a number of academics, I guess trying to persuade them to come on board with this idea and he hoped that some of them would, out of the goodness of their hearts, be involved in teaching in this program and developing it.

[36] Newcastle Morning Herald. "Campus and Community." Tuesday January 29, 1974, p.5.
[37] Newcastle Morning Herald. "Campus and Community," 5.

Figure 12. Greg Preston. Photo supplied 23.1.18. Permission granted

Greg Preston elaborated on the difficulties encountered by Dr Smith in winning over total support for OFP. The remnants of an elitist notion of universities remained, which resulted in some negative opinions from within the university:

> I understand that there was quite a bit of opposition initially because it was seen as, how can we put this, degrading the role of the University. And that particularly came up when … the Teachers College had moved to this campus, [and the] Open Foundation started. And there were comments by some people saying "Well first of all we've got these Teachers College people that don't deserve to be at the University, they are not Higher Education material" … And they said "That Open Foundation … is not appropriate for the University". And that was the kind of thinking by a number of people who, and some of them have even expressed it to me in interviews in the last three or four years, so it's something that they believed strongly at the time ... [On the other hand] there was scattered support, but it was mainly because it was seen as philanthropic, rather than because it was seen as something that was valuable to the University.

Despite the clash of ideologies between Dr Smith and his comrades and those who wished to maintain an elitist line, Open Foundation persisted. The idea that universities should be open to a wider cross section of the population was bearing fruit. Brian Smith's vision and

the steps he took to put his convictions into practice were commented upon by Associate Professor Ralph Robinson, who later became a Director:

> And I think it's a tribute to Brian that he could see the potential in people for someone to do a course like this and still succeed despite their disadvantages. And seeing this whole region as educationally deprived and that it needed a new impetus, not just a proposal, it needed someone to do something about it, not just social support.

Open Foundation: a collegial enterprise

While Dr Smith was responsible for conceptualising OFP, he had an array of allies who helped put it into practice. According to Dr Terry Ryan:

> Brian came here and he created the whole structure. But he did consult with us about what would make a good centre piece and he wanted it to be the Arts rather than the Sciences or Economics and so on. Those were the signed issues. In terms of how it started up, he was the driving force behind it, but he had some good allies. I mean, it was never a one man band.

As mentioned, Dr John Turner continued to work in the Department of Community Programmes after Dr Smith was appointed Director. He was joined in 1974 by John Hill and later that year by John Collins, both of whom Smith had met and been impressed by at an adult education conference held in Canberra in 1973. John Collins had vivid recollections of Brian Smith's background and rationale for establishing OFP. He began by outlining his first experiences of taking up his position as senior tutor in Newcastle in 1974:

> My substantive appointment was to do with mounting a Trade Union Training Program, a Trade Union Education and Training Program, for which we managed to get quite a lot of money out of from various sources to train shop stewards and trade union professionals in meeting procedures, report writing, investigative techniques, history of the union movement … governance issues, organizational governance matters and so on. And, the problem very quickly emerged that as we trained the trade unionists, they saw this as their insights into the educational system as a platform for leaving the trade union movement, which wasn't our intention at all. At the same time, Brian Smith … had been hatching this dream of a Foundation Program, an Open Foundation Program, for quite some time. And he saw in the failure, I suppose, in a sense of the Trade Union training program to achieve its aims, another reason for hurrying up his plan to establish the Open Foundation Course at Newcastle.

The link to the union movement and promoting opportunities for workers was one of Smith's central aims and consistent with his report to *Uninews* in 1973. When asked what else was happening during those early days of Community Programmes, Collins responded:

> There was a pilot group [of students] in 1974. In '74, yeah. And that included some of the Trade Unionists I talked about … well, oh, Godfrey Tanner taught Political Man, and Godfrey was a great supporter of the Open Foundation Course along with Ken Dutton … and the fellow who was Professor of History [Cranfield] at the time.

Like Jean Talbot above and other respondents, Collins recalled Brian Smith's apprehensions about the longevity of Open Foundation. It was thought it would have run out of eligible students within a few years:

> Brian was always very nervous about the Open Foundation Course. He thought it wouldn't last long. He thought that we would soak up the demand for it within a few years, and he wondered what his next step would be, because Newcastle was thought not big enough to support it over a long term.

However, as Smith later reported, numbers grew slowly and steadily from the 40 who enrolled in 1974 and in 1986 over 300 people commenced the course.[38] Collins was also able to make some observations about how Brian Smith saw the example of the British Open University playing out in Newcastle:

> He [Brian] must have come to Newcastle with this in mind, because he appointed John Hill specifically because John had been associated with the Open University. Apart from other reasons, I mean John was impressive in other ways, of course. But Brian was very eager to have some of that expertise available to him at Newcastle ... He was interested in the fact that the Open University did have an open entry policy.

Collins' colleague, John Hill, was also asked how he came to be employed by the Department of Community Programmes. His response provides some idea of the qualities and backgrounds Smith was looking for in staff who would work with him in the new department:

> I applied to an ad in *The Newcastle Herald*. I had been working for the ABC [radio]. I had a background in Adult Education and also in Broadcasting ... I worked in Tasmania for the Tasmanian Adult Education Board for three years, and then I went to London and I was offered a post in the University of London in the Department of Community Programmes, it was called actually the Extra Mural Department, in

[38] Brian Smith, "Investigating 'Drop-Out' from the Open Foundation course." *Australian Journal of Adult Education,* 27(1) (1987): 17-24.

> London ... Because I had a background in adult education, they offered me a position for a year. I took that, greatly enjoyed it. I was supervising adult education courses in Southern Hartfordshire, in Southern Essex. And then after that was over … I was offered another job working for the London Services Education Committee which organized courses for senior British Army personnel. I did that into 1968 and then after that I didn't know quite what to do, so I thought I'd come back to Australia. And I took up my old job at the ABC, they kindly offered me a job back again, I'd been a senior producer with them when I went into adult education. And then I worked there for a time. And then my parents, who lived in Newcastle, spotted this ad for a Lecturer in the Community Programmes Department which had been set up. And they pointed it out to me and I thought "That looks rather good because it does click in with a lot of my interests", and I applied and fortunately was successful.

Hill stated that his role within Community Programmes consisted of organizing courses for professional groups including solicitors or lawyers, that he describes as "genuine interest courses". He explained the aim to create a bridge between the university and its community:

> In those days the University I suppose felt itself a little bit elitist and then there was this movement to set up a Department of Community Programmes which was a way of bringing the community to the University. That was a big thing in the 1970s. We were not the only Department of like kind. There was a very big Department of Adult Education at Adelaide University and a very big one at Sydney University … But the philosophy of our Department of Community Programmes was to bring the University to the community and vice versa, at quite a low cost to the community. So our courses were cheaply priced. Now of course this philosophy applied in other areas of Australia that had Adult Education Departments in Universities, but the philosophy changed because of government pressure. And if you look at what Sydney University Department of Continuing Education is doing now, you will see that the prices are not cheap prices. Courses are not cheap. They're used as a revenue raiser for the University. And so the philosophy has changed. In our case it was to bring people to the University and to introduce them to standards of the University and University life. In the case of the University of Sydney … they used to make a profit.

When asked what it was like to work in Community Programmes in those early days, Hill replied:

> Oh, it was a very good atmosphere. I mean we all, the four academic staff, myself, John Turner, John Collins and Smithy, we got on quite well together … And the University was supportive. I mean, we had the money to do it. The economically

> political climate of the time was favourable and as I said, it fitted in with the philosophy of the Whitlam years and so on. It was more liberal times than we have now, and it went very well.

John Hill was asked whether he thought the attitude of the wider University to the establishment of Open Foundation was reasonably supportive: "Yes I do. And if there was any opposition, it was muted opposition, only mutterings in the corridor. But there was no really strong opposition by anybody that I know." Open Foundation was underway. Professor Laurie Short, who was at one time responsible for the Department of Community Programmes, recalled that Dr Smith had a reasonable degree of autonomy in running Community Programmes as it existed outside the formal structure of UON.

OFP in the 1970s

When Vice Chancellor Auchmuty retired in 1974 he was succeeded by Professor Don George (see Figure 13) who had a background in engineering. In recollecting the role he played in fostering the OFP, Professor George reported that early on he supported what Brian Smith was trying to do in Open Foundation.

> I started on the 1st of January 1975 … And I stayed Vice Chancellor for twelve years [1975 to 1986]. I finished on the 31st of December 1986 … I thought Brian Smith and the others involved needed full support from me. And life in a University is quite competitive, the search for funds for what everyone thinks is the most important thing in the world, their discipline, leads to some pretty hard bargaining on resources. So if a resource issue came up I think I tended to side with what Brian was trying to do.

Professor George's philosophy of education and his observations about the talent pool that could be tapped by fostering mature age tertiary entry was very similar to Brian Smith's:

> But I did know, going to Newcastle, that I was going to an area that was basically deprived still in opportunities for higher education … I had no doubt there were plenty of people who'd come up the hard way, without families which had any understanding of the value of Universities or opportunities for themselves for education. I did know that a lot of them were very proud when their kids got to University through something [like Open Foundation], well through the very existence of it as it had been created. And even if they didn't have a good enough school record could still have a shot at University by attending these new concepts of Open Foundation courses.

Figure 13. Professor Don George, 20.2.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Vice Chancellor George remembered OFP as running under the radar of the mainstream university, which itself was in its infancy when OFP began. Becoming autonomous in 1965, UON was still developing and expanding in 1973 when Community Programmes was established. OFPs pilot program was undertaken only 9 years after UONs autonomy:

> I think probably by and large, the bulk of the University, both academics and students were totally unaware of this [OFP] activity. It [Newcastle University] was already getting a pretty big and complex show when I got there … I found it a complex and pretty well oiled and running institution. I felt very privileged to just inherit what I did.

This complexity masked the operation of the Open Foundation. Associate Professor Bill Warren (see Figure 14), who was employed in 1970 in the Faculty of Education, recalled that his knowledge of OFP was only accumulated through his interactions within the university as a "really secondary and kind of casual learning."

However, as other respondents have indicated, some academics were quietly advocating for the program at the same time as establishing their own careers. Roma Kane, administrative assistant for a ten year period beginning in 1978, recalled that the collaborations with WEA continued during those early years. Her involvement with OFP began as a student:

I was working in Admissions at the University, just as a casual and that happened just as a result of doing Open Foundation. They just gave away jobs for round holidays and things like that, and when my job there finished there was an opening, which was just down stairs, at the Open Foundation Course, so I went down there and worked for the first enrolment of the Open Foundation for the year. And then after that, I went off to the WEA [Workers Education Association], and then at the end of my time at WEA, once again, there was an opening for the Open Foundation. So I'd worked with Brian Smith who was the first in charge there, and then for John Collins. So I worked for both of them. And also, all the time I was at the WEA we worked very closely with the Community Programmes who of course, looked after Open Foundation ... We would do lectures, small courses, things to do with Community Programmes that would guide people into further education if they wanted to do that. Yes, and it worked very well, it worked very well. Mmm. Brian Smith was particularly keen on keeping the two organizations working side by side.

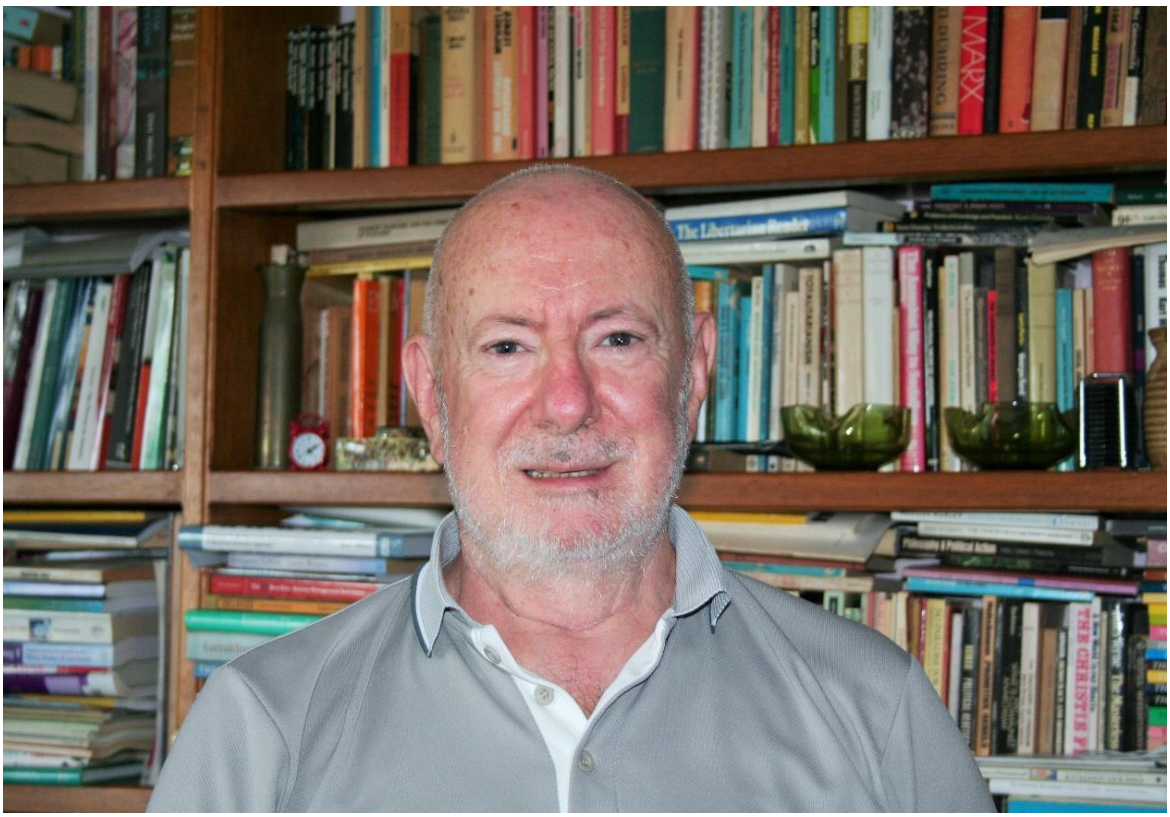

Figure 14. Associate Professor Bill Warren, 5.3.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Due to her prior experience as a student, Roma's responsibilities within Community Programmes extended to advising prospective students about the exigencies of the course. She advised them about time management, the research, study and writing requirements of the course as well as impacts on their family and home life.

Establishing the aims of OFP around learning support and an academic curriculum
When asked about her knowledge of the history of the program or its origins, Dr Ruth Lunney (see Figure 15), a long term supporter of the aims of OFP, was also one of the early providers of learning support assistance.

Figure 15. Dr Ruth Lunney, 10.7.2012, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Dr Lunney commented on the emphasis on enculturating students within the university environment as well as the "enthusiastic" commitment of staff to the program. She always believed it was vital to provide additional writing skills support for students.

This enthusiasm was also noted by Dr Angela Cowan, a lecturer in OFP for many years who had also been a student in the 1976 cohort. She explained her knowledge of OFPs origins:

> Because we lived in a regional working class area, it seemed to be that there were a group of predominantly men, at the time that I started, who thought that women and men who were working class, and anyone else really, for that matter, that they should have an opportunity to go to University, that this might be an opportunity that hadn't been there before and it was a bit like a scaffold to get you into University and they were going to try and give people the opportunity to build on their skills, build on their knowledge and basically gain an entry to the University, but gain more than that, build your confidence, have an understanding, build your self-esteem so that in an academic learning environment you weren't going to basically

fail before you'd started. You'd have the opportunity of having an entry mark [or equivalent] that got you in and then you'd also have the skills that might give you half a chance to keep going and actually succeed in this journey.

Figure 16. Dr Barry Hodges and Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, 19.2.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Dr Barry Hodges (see Figure 16), a lecturer who later became a Program Convenor, was struck by some of the similarities to the Open University in which he had the opportunity to spend some time while on study leave in 2010. He was particularly impressed by the enabling ethos he observed in both institutions: "They [OU] still had that spirit and that commitment which you can see in our program as well."

Another Program Convenor, Dr Jill Bough (see Figure 17), was herself a student of the British Open University. Her path as a mature student allowed her to experience the life changing possibilities that mature tertiary entry programs offered:

> I was a student [in the Open University]. So this is what has set me up really, really well for Open Foundation, I believe, because in a way I'm what you call a late learner … I started teaching in 1969 having gone to a teacher training college because I wasn't interested in just academia, I wanted to teach, I knew that was what I wanted to do. I started to do the Open University as a student … It made me an independent learner … I couldn't have taken the other steps without it. I mean it was a wonderful thing ... the same thing will happen with the Open Foundation. I'm sure it will.

Figure 17. Dr Jill Bough, 4.7.2012, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Apart from the effects of tertiary entry programs on individuals, Dr Barry Hodges speculated on the effect OFP might have had on the city of Newcastle:

> The impact [OFP] must have had on a working class city, an industrial town which is now becoming more and more a sophisticated service and tourist centre, which is a very nice place to live, becoming less the hoon town of the Newcastle song (laughs). I just don't see how Open Foundation could not have had a significant role in that. And I'm immensely proud of being part of that over the last what is it? Seventeen years now (laughs), immensely proud. And I just think it's a unique institution, and its effect on this city, backed up by the fact that when we've looked at application forms, 80% of people say they have come into Open Foundation through word of mouth. And that shows its success, you don't come to something via word of mouth that says "This is crap, don't go near it". You come because you're told there's a change of life on offer and it's terrific. It changes lives and it's changed an awful lot of lives. And you can't change that many lives [without an impact].

The aims of the OFP, often compared to those of the Open University by staff, were to support, encourage and enable people who wanted to try to enter university. With regard to curriculum, the program began with just a few subjects on offer due to limited resources and availability of teaching staff. Brian Smith persuaded some of his academic colleagues in

the Faculties to give guest lectures or take portions of the course to give students exposure to a high quality academic experience.

John Collins who was involved in OFP in the first year of its operation recalled:

> We offered two subjects [to each student], Political Man [was one] … based crudely on the PPE of Oxford, was it? Or Cambridge? The politics, philosophy and economics strand of disciplines. And I remember Ken Dutton and the Professor of Philosophy, and Brian, and other luminaries were engaged in teaching Political Man. And then there were a series of other classes, I think there might have been History with John Turner and English with, I'm not sure, Norm Talbot perhaps, maybe even Jean [Talbot] at that early stage. I don't know ... And as I recall, we also offered them tutorials in addition to the lectures. The lectures were always two hours, from the very beginning. No, the first hour was lecture, and the second hour was tutorial. That was how it was intended. It never quite worked out that way. Why, I can't recall. But it soon settled back into a two hour lecture on each discipline, each week.

Further details of the early curriculum, based on documentary evidence, are reported in May and Bunn's history of the first three years of OFP. [39] Brian Smith's desire to design a curriculum that would appeal to mature age students included an interdisciplinary subject that aimed to provide foundations in Western knowledge which would stimulate critical thinking in a range of disciplinary areas. After the early demise of this core subject, Political Man, students could choose any two subjects, of which Philosophy was one. Associate Professor Ralph Robinson (see Figure 18) recalled that as Dr Smith became busier in the running of the whole Department, he had to relinquish some of the philosophy teaching. Dr Robinson took up teaching part of that course in 1977:

> And one of the interesting things was that quite early on he [Brian] asked me to teach Philosophy too ... I was overseas for the whole of 1976 … and when I got back, this funny bearded man approached me, and I didn't know him, and asked if I'd be involved. And I said I would, and we divided the course between us: he taught Philosophy proper and I taught logic. Now what was interesting about this was that Brian and I probably didn't agree about anything important in Philosophy. He was very much a British Linguistic analyst school and I'd moved on from that and a lot of other traditions in Philosophy by that stage because I thought that you can't do Philosophy unless you know something about the world. You can't spin stuff out of thin air, you have to work with what counts as knowledge. But then you realize that all knowledge is fallible anyway and it's a subject of reconstruction, and your job is to

[39] May and Bunn, "1974- 1976," (2015).

be part of that. So as time went by, and Brian got more and more busy it came about that I was teaching the whole of the Philosophy course.

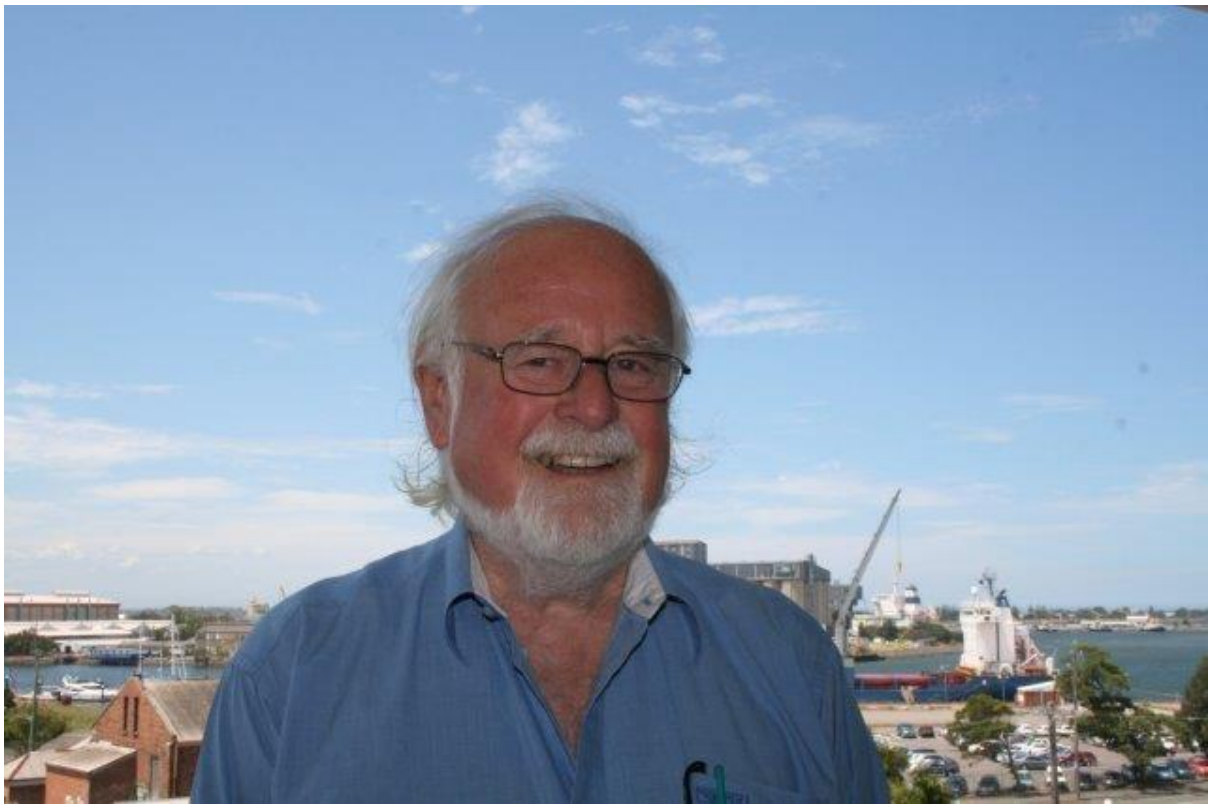

Figure 18. Associate Professor Ralph Robinson, 22.1.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Gradually, the demand for other subjects led to a wider offering, including Basic Quantitative Methodology (BQM) that was a Mathematics subject tailored to serve the needs of students transitioning into Business, Economics and Commerce degrees. Mandy Bowden, Maths lecturer since 1992, said that:

> Originally we had the Open Foundation Program running from 1974 but the only Maths available was what was then called BQM [Basic Quantitative Methodology], that's been running since I think 1976. And it was realized that that wasn't suitable for everybody, because BQM was the Maths designed for people going into a Commerce degree or Business-related field. But not everybody wanted to do that. So they introduced first of all the Science Math course and then they had this general course that I was involved in. And then they decided to do this Basic Maths course and now they've got the three [Maths courses]. But that wasn't always the case.

Figure 19. Di Rigney, 27.2.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

John Collins confirmed that a decision was taken to include Mathematics as a trial in 1976 because only the Faculties of Arts and Economics and Commerce would accept OFP students due to the large components of university level Maths expected in other courses.[40] However, it was not offered in 1977 because of the fail rate in the trial where only 5 of 24 students sat the final exam.[41] Further course design was required before Maths could be introduced. The Registrar, Di Rigney (see Figure 19) also recalled that BQM was introduced early in the program, as was Legal Studies, to meet the needs of students who wished to transition into Law:

> Well, the subject BQM, maybe that would have started [near] the 1980s, it's been around a good long while ... It was called BQM because it went into IQM which was the compulsory Statistics/Econometrics course that was in the Commerce and Economics and Business degrees at the time. So we were really targeting that course for that … But certainly, there was a big focus on Humanities in the early days ... Wayne [Rigney] also taught into the Program. He was their first Legal Studies lecturer in the late 80s early 90s as well, when the numbers used to be capped at 50 [per subject].

[40] J. E Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, (University of Newcastle, 1978), 79.
[41] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 79.

As needs dictated, the subject offerings changed and became more vocationally oriented, or were oriented to the needs of the faculties into which students transitioned. These changes meant that Brian Smith's original objective of providing a liberal education including compulsory study of history and politics also changed.

"Political Man"

Brian Smith's vision for Open Foundation was that all students would study a core subject[42] that was originally named 'Society and Humanity', and choose another elective.[43] This requirement remained until 1978, after which students could choose two subjects that did not have overlapping content. John Collins stated that Political Man [formerly Society and Humanity] was taught by academics from the Departments of Classics, History, Economic History and Modern Languages.[44] Many respondents shared memories of this core subject:

> Everyone who was involved in developing it thought, apparently, that it would be really successful and a good subject for students to do because it would give them knowledge of certain kinds of social aspects and how the individual relates to society and a whole lot of things. As it turned out, the students didn't like it (laughs), so it was rethought in various ways. (Di Rigney, Registrar)

Dr Angela Cowan (see Figure 20), a student herself in the 1976 OFP intake, remembered Political Man as having quite an impact on students, not only due to the subject matter, but the idiosyncrasies and personalities of those who taught it:

> Political Man was interesting because it was both ancient and modern history, and it started with ancient history. And so that's where we worked through … a whole lot of topics on ancient history.
>
> **So what was the "political" about it?**
>
> It was political in the sense, I think, that they were talking about government. They were talking about ancient governments in the ancient part. In the modern history they were talking about modern governments, modern history. History as it revolved around power. A central theme that ran through both Ancient and Modern History was about how civilizations came into power, how they defeated others, how they declined, what was the reason they declined in power. That's what I took away from the political thing, it was about who was in power, how did they come to power?

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[42] May, "A child of change," 61.

[43] In 1976 the electives were: Social Enquiry; English Literature; Economics; Philosophy; Geology; Mathematics. In his Report to the Admissions Committee on the 1976 Open Foundation Course Students who are candidates for Admission to Degree Courses in 1977, Dr Brian Smith reported that 160 students commenced; 92 completed all assignments and sat the final exam. All 22 staff involved in teaching and assessing, mainly from the faculties, had the opportunity to check and comment on the report and make recommendations about who would reliably be suitable candidates to enter undergraduate degrees.6 of these staff were either at professor or associate professor level.

[44] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 80.

> What was it about their culture that allowed them [to do this]? They weren't saying this was good or bad, they were just saying historically these were the elements and this is what we can gather and this is how civilizations came to be over time, these are some of the reasons we can glean from historical facts about why they've declined. And then it was up to the students to make a decision about whether that was a positive or negative thing, whether that was good for their culture or bad for their culture. They would tell you what others said, but then it was up to you to decide whether that seemed to be a wise thing to do or an unwise thing for a society to have. So I gleaned from Political Man that's what they meant by political. And it was Political "Man", and I suppose they were talking about predominantly men in power, but of course it didn't exclude women, but it was about "mankind" in their view.

Figure 20. Dr Angela Cowan, 24.2.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

In considering Brian Smith's rationale for introducing Political Man as a core component of the course, Di Rigney, the Registrar, observed:

> It encompassed the whole breadth of what people would need to know in order to be able to develop an argument. You know, understanding History and Philosophy, Politics, all of that across time, a period of time, would be the essential thing that you would need to do to become a scholar, I guess. And you would be able to

> measure your success or readiness, preparedness for university based on how well you could engage with that kind of learning.

Roma Kane, a student in the 1970s, explained that the political aspect of this subject awakened in her: "The possibility that things that you have heard of in your life were accessible to you". Dr Terry Ryan was enlisted to help teach Political Man very early in the program. He described working alongside Professor Tanner in the delivery of Political Man as well as in the undergraduate Classical Civilization course that had begun in 1971. Dr Ryan considered that course to be "in sort of frontier mode, or pioneer mode, in the sense that we were the first … to offer such a course in Australian Universities." While the construction of that course had been widely criticised, Dr Ryan stated that it was soon taken up by all Australian universities. He indicated that Brian Smith saw the value in what was being done in Classics and wanted some of its content incorporated in the core offering for Open Foundation. This allowed an ailing Classics Department to revitalise and reinvent itself and provided students with an exciting introduction to university curricula:

> So everyone had to do this Political Man thing, and so we [Classics] were kicking off first because we were the ancient world, and then some of the scholars from some of the other disciplines came in, in second term, third term and so on ... So it was Brian's initiative, in discussions with Tanner ... Brian wanted to go from the beginnings of politics as we understand them in the Western world and take it through to fairly contemporary periods, so that's why other historians of later places and philosophers got involved in later parts of that course.

By instituting this core subject, Dr Brian Smith was attempting to instil the principles of liberal education. He was also exposing the OFP students to a range of diverse disciplines and lecturing styles, and stimulating debate among a largely working class group who had not had exposure to this depth of education in the past.

The experience of being an Open Foundation student in the 1970s

As part of the 1976 cohort, Dr Angela Cowan recalled the wonder for a working class girl entering a foreign domain and the excitement this evoked among the new students:

> Personally, [I remember] being very excited and very scared at the same time because coming to the University wasn't something for people like me, a working class girl. I was supposed to be a nurse or a secretary or work in a shop. I wasn't supposed to be at University from the history in my family. So it was very exciting to be there and they'd just actually brought in the situation where you didn't have to pay fees, so getting an opportunity to go and do a University degree which is something I had always wanted to do from High School was terribly exciting. I mean, meeting other people, and other women especially, like myself who were wanting to

> do the same thing was very, very exciting … I remember coming along and not quite understanding the whole system, but it sort of being explained that we all had to do one core subject, Political Man, and then we could choose. And so, I was doing Social Enquiry which was about people, and culture, and society and I thought "Ah, that's very exciting, very exciting". But then I met up, when I was doing Political Man and we'd be waiting outside to go into lectures, I'd meet up with people from the Social Enquiry class and they'd introduce me to their friends who were doing something else … So I just remember the excitement in everybody's voice, and the thrill of going. I used to go at night time, and so it was just a very exciting thing to be doing, and the excitement in the air, that's what I remember especially. But also people being quite bewildered about what it was we had to do, and then the realization that some people sort of "got it" and knew what we had to do. And I remember that the lecturers were very kind, very understanding, and very approachable. And I remember being quite overawed in Political Man when I realized we had a Professor who was teaching us. And I thought "That's amazing, fancy a Professor coming and teaching us, and particularly me, when I don't know anything".

Dr Cowan explained how, as a new student, she came to terms with how to interpret lecturers' signals and how to learn in a new way. She described the revelation of knowing what to record as useful knowledge as like "cracking a code":

> And I remember that we had different lecturers who would come in from the Classical History unit, and Godfrey Tanner in particular, I remember Godfrey used to come along and he'd be walking in and at times there'd be power cords across the room, across the lecture theatre and I remember we'd be sitting down the front, I'd be sitting with another friend, and I remember being quite intrigued being in this big lecture theatre and here was Godfrey, he was quite a thin man, but he'd stride the whole length of the floor, not up on the stage but down on the floor and then he'd come to the cords and it was like he'd come to these electric cords and it would trigger a thought for him, and he'd think about the Peloponnesian Wars or something, he'd digress off to something else and he'd go "Ah, now, let me tell you about…" and then he'd go off and tell you about something that was interesting. "When I was in Greece…" or "When I was in Rome…" and he'd start saying "this is what happened", and it was just a fascinating journey, he'd take you along on a journey. And then he'd step over the cords and then continue walking a few paces and then he'd come back and stop and look at the cords and then he'd digress again (laughs).
> And then over time I realized that Godfrey had this amazing knowledge, but what am I supposed to write down, what was it I was supposed to write down? Do I write everything down? Do I write nothing down? How can you listen, how can you take it down. And then after a time I realized that when Godfrey sort of leapt up and got to

> the board and picked up a bit of chalk and wrote a name or wrote a few things down, that was your central point. You had to write that down. And it was like cracking a code, it's like there was a code into this sort of wealth of knowledge and how did you sort of crack the code? And it was like they [lecturers] knew so much, and it was like what's the pathway into this huge hall of knowledge that they seemed to be able to access at any point in time, all of this classical history. And I thought, "Well you know, Ancient History, you can go and get books". And I remember I went to the Library, just our local Library, and got out Primary School children's books on Ancient History and I started their reading so I could build up to be able to read the texts we had on it … And I remember talking to the Librarian and she said "Mmm, it's always a good place to start, then you just keep building and building" and I thought "Is that what they do? They build on their knowledge, they have building blocks" … And it was like going back and hearing a serial in a story the next week. You had to go back the next week to hear what was going to come up, what was the next piece in that story? Because it was like you could go and pick up a book on the same topic, but it was almost like there was another story there that they were telling that I'd never heard before and couldn't find in books if I'd just gone to the Public Library. It was like they were the holders of this wonderful story. And it was as though you were going through an action movie today, it was like I had to go and hear it because it was like "Oh, what happened next?" and "Why would they have done that?" And they'd say "And next week we're going to tell you about why the Romans hated the water and why they were scared of the water". And I thought "How could the Romans have been scared of the ocean when they laid siege to people in battle? So I had to come back to hear this story.

Dr Cowan explained that for new students, the enjoyment of being there and the terror they felt when required to articulate their own ideas were inextricably entwined, or as she put it, "two sides of the one coin":

> I suppose there are several memories that just sort of swirl around together. One vivid memory is really the camaraderie and the friendship. But the other memory from the academic side that is very, very vivid is my absolute terror of having to try and put an essay together. I know that's two separate things, but it was almost like two sides of the one coin. The friendships wrapped around that terror and kept me there. It kept me coming back. But there was non-judgment, I think. But the terror of doing the assignment, just not really knowing what this was about and what on earth they could possibly want.

From first-hand experience, Dr Terry Ryan commented on his observations of how a student of that era responded to the learning environment provided in OFP and went on to achieve high results:

> And this is the thing about this program [Open Foundation]. It just opened them up. My sister-in-law was one [OF student]. I'd long since ceased to teach in it, but she'd left school at thirteen to go into a family shop and this sort of stuff. She was the eldest of the girls. And she didn't come near here [University] until she was in her fifties. You know those stories, thousands of them. And she finished up getting literally High Distinctions in English. Brilliant. Then [she] went back to her domestic life. Never wanted to pursue it, just explored that, realized her intellectual capacities. I don't think she reads literature or anything now, but I'm sure there are many like her, who came here all excited.

Campus environment and structures impacting OFP in the 1970s

Dr Terry Ryan explained that the main campus was quite a different place to inhabit during the 1970s. For Open Foundation students studying there, the pace was not quite as hectic:

> And the number of students was so few. There was a lot more interaction between staff and students. There's virtually none now, there's no opportunity. Students aren't full time anymore. But in the 1970s there were, and this campus was very vibrant because there weren't very many buildings here. The Union [building] was there, this building [McMullin] and a few others had started to get built. So we were all confined. I can remember the first year in 1966 when that courtyard up there [between McMullin and Great Hall] was THE campus. And every hour, the Arts Faculty was the only one here, on the hour everyone piled into that courtyard. And they fitted into it (laughs). So it was a very, very easy going campus … As it's grown, I'm not saying it's a bad thing that it's the size it is now, and students are still vibrant, and I'm sure the ones that come into Open Foundation are still as wide eyed and keen and as excited as they ever were then because this was something they never dreamt they would ever get into, some of them stay and enjoy themselves and go on to get Doctorates. Others are happy to get the degree and go out and be better for the experience and make new friends and so on. It is very much, I don't know whether Newcastle's got a siege mentality, there tends to be sometimes about defending itself … Although in my experience in the early 1970s, we were only involved in the thing for about two or three years before our loads became so great that we couldn't carry our commitment to it. And the numbers in Community Programmes, of course, exploded after the first intake. Brian and his cohorts were running round … trying to cope with all the organization and so on.

Dr Ryan commented on the considerable amount of goodwill in those early days when academic staff from the faculties were paid very little for their time, a situation that would not exist now. Many respondents reflected on the ambience of the 1970s. They agreed that those days were very interesting times:

> The Department of Community Programmes, was also located on the lower ground floor [of the McMullin Building]. So I knew the staff of that area, knew about Open Foundation, so knew Brian Smith, John Collins, John Turner, the wonderful John Turner who taught History with them at the time … You know, it was just that there was a Department of Community Programmes. They seemed to do lots of interesting things. John Hill was probably with them in some capacity at that stage as well. And it just made life kind of interesting having that happening around us as well … in 1976 I got a job here. So, yeah, I knew them and knew the kind of, in general terms, the good work they were doing ... they were always there and you know, interesting things [happening]. (Di Rigney, Registrar)

The former Registrar explained that admission criteria in the early years were much less structured than those currently in place:

> Originally I think, my understanding is, that students were recommended for University admission. It wasn't as clear cut as it is now. Basically we have final marks, and we get averages of marks. Those average marks are converted to rankings, they're sent to UAC, UAC is the one who organizes these cut offs and makes the offers. Originally the Department of Community Programmes or perhaps the Board would just have a list of students. They would just recommend: yes, yes, yes. Recommended.[45] And there would have been a narrower range of degree programs that you were recommended for admission for to start with. So it's possible that it was only some Humanities degrees that they could get into from Open Foundation to start with ... But I'm pretty sure it was a much narrower range that were willing to accept this mature age program as a means of entry. When that changed to be broadened out to everything, except Medicine, as it is now. (Di Rigney, Registrar)

In his history on UON, Don Wright reported on some of the demographic data relating to the pilot group. He indicated that "on average, over half the initial entrants to the Open Foundation Course completed it satisfactorily" [46] and most sought entry to university. Wright reported that a higher percentage of students over thirty years completed the course compared to younger students. The vast majority who entered university were successful. While fifty four percent of students were male in 1974, by 1977 fifty eight percent were female. Overall, Wright considered the concept of OFP as a success from the point of view of both students and University:

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[45] May, "A child of change," 61 reports that students were ranked according to categories A-D on the basis of highly recommended; recommended; some reservations; not recommended. May also reports that 50% of those who started OFP in the first 5 years completed and 90% of completing students were offered places at university. Retention rates also reflected national averages.

[46] Wright, *Looking Back, a history of The University of Newcastle,* 138.

> [Students] had a completely open opportunity to try themselves out at Undergraduate or near Undergraduate level work but within a carefully structured and supportive atmosphere with no penalties imposed for failure and substantial rewards if they succeed. For the University, and especially the Arts Faculty, it has provided a seemingly endless stream of mature age and often high quality entrants. The scheme is also an excellent piece of public relations work.[47]

When asked what his most vivid memory of OFP would be, Professor George the former Vice Chancellor responded:

> Oh well, there was always pleasure when you discovered someone graduating with first class honours or something like that who were Foundation products. I mean you don't know that much about what's going on in your University as a Vice Chancellor, you're keeping your ears wide open, but you miss a lot. So I probably didn't know many of the actual success stories. But I can recollect one or two cropping up that I was aware of, and it just seemed to justify everything that Smith was doing.

When comparing OFP to other enabling programs, Program Coordinator Dr Barry Hodges noted its expansion and the fact that it has become an identifiable institution in the Hunter and Central Coast regions:

> It [Open Foundation] kept going and got bigger and bigger and bigger. I am still staggered and I mean people obviously don't think about going to University, and yet they do here. I mean you go to UNSW's program, I can't remember what the size is, it's about 150 [students], something like that in a year, maybe 200 in a good year … it's not a massive number. There's a program just started at UWS, Sydney University has a fee paying program, I think as far as I can see those two are the only free programs in Sydney. They have say 400 people between them in a place the size of Sydney. Here's Newcastle with a far smaller population finding over 2,000 students a year into Open Foundation, for at least I would say, the last ten years ... And of those, given the normal patterns that Cantwell[48] etc found about the same sort of level as PQR who have confirmed this, about the same level of attrition. You're looking at about 80% of those graduating. Unbelievable numbers, over what is it [43] years? And just in my time looking at the last six years, that's over 800 students per year graduating from the University of Newcastle, that's where most of them go obviously. But there's still others going to other places. There'll have been others that have come back a later year. That's just the ones who've gone from Open

[47] Wright, *Looking Back, a history of The University of Newcastle,* 138.

[48] Robert Cantwell., Sid Bourke and Jennifer Archer. "The effectiveness of enabling programmes for university entrance." a paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Brisbane. (1997).

Foundation in one year to first year the next year, and then graduated, 800 of those every year for at least the last six or seven years. And add that to the thirty years before then. It's just an amazing number.

Figure 21. Professor Trevor Waring. Retrieved from official photographs University of Newcastle.

Former Chancellor, Trevor Waring (see Figure 21) who held that role for eight years, between 2004 and 2012 and had been on the Council [of the University] for twenty seven years, remarked: "it was always just there. But I do remember the very early stages of people doing this particular program". OFP began to be recognised as an institution in its own right within UON. In 1978, John Collins wrote an extended essay, published as a manuscript entitled *Matriculating in Maturity*[49] in which he drew on data relating to OFP to make his case that OFP was vindication of Australian universities relaxing entrance requirements for mature students. Collins' argument implied that if universities wished to retain their traditional academic functions in the move to break down class barriers by allowing open tertiary access, a situation he referred to as "social engineering", then they needed to adapt to this movement and maintain control over their own institutional practices. Collins clearly supported the proposition that educationally ambitious mature students could be brought quickly to the level necessary for undergraduate entry. His thesis proceeded to detail the characteristics of OFP students, their success and performance in undergraduate studies and to assess the advantages and weaknesses of the OFP approach.

[49] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 1978.

Collins examined four cohorts of students from intakes of 1974-7 and found that, on average, 39% were aged under 30; 35% were 30-40 years of age; 21% were over 40 years and 5% did not specify age. These people were aged 21 to 60 years of age despite the age entry requirement being 25 years from 1974-5, reduced to 23 years in 1976. Collins noted that younger students were admitted if they "seemed promising in terms of post school experience and motivation."[50]

Table 1: Percentage enrolment by sex[51], year & undergraduate enrolment 1974-77[52]

Year & total enrolment	Female	Male	Enrolment in University
1974 (n=83)[53]	50.6% (n=43)	49.4% (n=40)	30.1% (n=25)
1975 (n=95)	51.5% (n=48)	48.5% (n=47)	42.1% (n=40)
1976 (n=192)	55.3% (n=107)	44.7% (n=85)	58.1% (n=113)
1977 (n=178)	60.6% (n=107)	39.4% (n=71)	42.8% (n=58)

Collins found that students who were older and female tended to be more successful.[54] He attributed this to vocational and personal development motives.[55] Collins attributed the success of OFP in its first four years, in part, to "the freedom with which students have been able to pursue their individual aims within the OFP."[56] While most students who successfully completed the program applied to attend UON, a number went to other universities and OFP was deemed by some employers to be sufficient level of qualification to be accepted into certain occupations. Collins attributed this to the success of OFP students in undergraduate studies. He noted that successful students transitioning from OFP were "better than average students. The 1974 cohort achieved a pass rate of 86%" of completed units compared to 77% in B. Arts and 69% in B. Economics and Commerce students coming from traditional matriculation paths.[57] The 1975 cohort passed 91% of units completed the following year. Collins commented that former OFP students were appreciated by undergraduate lecturers because they showed enthusiasm, preparedness for lectures and tutorials and a willingness to contribute to discussions.[58]

In summing up the advantages of taking the approach to tertiary entrance offered by OFP, Collins argued that being an integral part of the Department of Community Programmes fit

[50] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 46.
[51] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 48.
[52] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 58-9
[53] It should be noted that elsewhere the quota for enrolment was reported as 80 students. It is always the case that not all students who enrol begin the course and figures taken at different times, such as at completion will differ as students drop out during the course so disparities need to account for when the figures are collected.
[54] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 67.
[55] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 49.
[56] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 52.
[57] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 67.
[58] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 67.

well with that department's liberal education offerings. At that time, with a fee of $65, OFP was self-funding.[59] The lecturers who volunteered to teach were approved by Heads of the relevant departments and enthusiastic in their approach. Collins observed that lecturers would use OFP as an opportunity to experiment with course content and organisation before including it in undergraduate offerings. Significantly, Collins stated OFP was seen as a genuine attempt by UON to "minister to the educational needs of the community which sustains it."[60] Collins maintained the advantages of OFP were threefold: first, that students enter undergraduate programs with the confidence they are "adequate to the task" with the proven intelligence as well as proving to themselves that they are suited to university level studies and can integrate it into "other vocational, familial and social obligations".[61] Second, that withdrawal was easy and acceptable, without loss of dignity. It was a chance to try themselves out. Third, students benefit from learning the "hidden curriculum" of the program, actual attendance, learning to use library and ancillary services, acquiring the "ethos" of a university experience and facts relating to the disciplines in which they choose to study.[62]

Collins argued that the flexibility of OFP electives had two advantages. First, they were not required to conform to established disciplines and could include a variety of disciplines within one offering. For example, Political Man included classics, history, economic history and modern languages while Social Enquiry included geography, psychology, sociology and education.[63] Second, new courses could be introduced for special interest groups such as trade unions and migrant groups. The aim was not to replicate the disciplines already established, but to promote further education among wider groups of people who may then consider tertiary study. Such groups with special interests could also take advantage of UONs information resources and intellectual skills.[64]

The period of the 1970s was a time of innovation, increasing interest in the program from the community and a time when demonstrated success of OFP was being evaluated. In those early years an increasing number of women were enrolling and a significant number were transitioning into undergraduate programs. Brian Smith's initiative was firmly established and put into practice by academic staff who followed:

> Brian was firmly of the view (that still holds, incidentally) that Open Foundation subjects are, in all essentials, academic courses - they look like, feel like, are structured like, are assessed like Undergraduate courses, and are a genuine preparation for University. We were not offering a generic study skills course, we

[59] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 73.
[60] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 74.
[61] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 74.
[62] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 76.
[63] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 80.
[64] Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity*, 81.

> were offering discipline courses providing a similar experience to Undergraduate study. So that vision was presented to me as a new person coming in to teach the program. Apart from that, it was more or less down to me as a teacher to determine what was going to be effective curriculum, effective material to prepare students for Undergraduate study, and the knowledge of the discipline, the approaches to the discipline. So there was a lot of trust placed in the person teaching in the program to take on those aspects of it all. So that's part of it, but one of the things that I learnt very quickly, was the need to be very flexible in my approaches to the students and to the material. All of the students are individuals and they have come to the program in a whole lot of different ways for a whole lot of different reasons, with a range of experiences of education, all of which impact on the way they engage with you and with the course materials. (Dr Keryl Kavanagh)

An attempt to teach OFP on air

In 1978 a decision was taken to experiment with radio delivery of OFP in order to reach students in remote locations. John Collins recalled that the offering combined on air with some face to face contact:

> I guess important milestones were when John Turner started running classes at a Distance. He would broadcast on ABC radio, lectures to Central Coast students and then every month, or six weeks or so, those students would gather at Callaghan for face to face activities. That was a very innovative thing to do in those days.
> **I think that only lasted one year, though didn't it?**
> I don't recall, I don't recall. The problem was getting the students to Callaghan. Because the ones who really wanted to, who benefitted most from the radio broadcasts, were the ones who found it most difficult to get away. And because in the early years we were very, very nervous about what was seen as the quality of the output of the Open Foundation, I have a feeling he might have run weekends rather than just one day face to face sessions. It might have been over a weekend every four to six weeks and that made it difficult for people to get away.

Dr Jean Talbot (see Figure 22) was also involved in this initiative, but recalled that the radio station used was the University's station 2NURFM:

> An attempt to reach out to other places was made by having Open Foundation on the radio. And John Turner [Historian] and I did that with 2NURFM. One year only, I think it was early 1980s. The signal wasn't strong enough really to take it far up the valley, or even Central Coast. It reached some parts of the Central Coast and not others. Some areas couldn't get it, so that experiment was discontinued and maybe the travelling to Muswellbrook took place after that when that [radio] hadn't really worked out. But we would teach the students on the radio and have the students in

> for one day per month. We'd do a whole Saturday tutorial, one of us in the morning and one of us in the afternoon. And that was an interesting way to go.

Figure 22. Dr Brian Smith, Dr Jean Talbot, Mrs Sybil Smith and Professor Norman Talbot. Image P0799B-28 reprinted with permission Cultural Collections University of Newcastle

John Hill who was also employed by Community Programmes from 1974 also recalled the 2NURFM experiment:

> Well my feeling was that it didn't continue. I'm not quite sure what happened there. The funding of the station was in question at that time, and the University was wondering what to do with 2NUR. And I feel that the Open Foundation course slipped out at that time. They felt "Well, we won't continue because the future of the station is uncertain, you know, we'll continue our normal path".

This innovation was typical of the adaptations sought to accommodate student needs and was likely based on the British OU model. It was superseded by more attention to promoting distance education, although the on campus delivery remained the main focus.

1970s as a time of experimentation and review

The pilot program in 1974 was seen as a good public relations exercise and gained an expression of approval by the community. The university was seen as "taking a positive

initiative to encourage mature-age studenthood."[65] In 1975, Smith and Collins reported that OFP had been "revamped" and four subjects were offered: English, Economics, Philosophy and Social Enquiry, which was intended to include an introduction to statistical analysis and interpreting empirical data relating to social and behavioural sciences. No individual results were to be published, but the same recommendations of A-D grades were allocated by dividing students' marks into rank order. In 1976 this cohort gained an overall pass rate of 91% and three who studied Social Enquiry achieved HDs in Psychology 1.[66]

Smith and Collins commented that their intention was not to engage in "social engineering", but to produce students who would be an asset to UON and succeed in their studies. A second priority was to equip and orient those students to undergraduate study as well as enable them to assess their own abilities and those who were not suited could withdraw without loss of face. The third priority was to future students who could use OFP to "try themselves out".[67] In 1976 the syllabus returned to one compulsory subject (Political Man) and one elective. Smith and Collins commented that now the course was established: people knew of it; previous formal education was irrelevant; and that people could withdraw without embarrassment. In fact, their report stated that it was expected that half the cohort would withdraw.[68] The aim became to make the course content as near to that offered in first year, but not replicate that material. It was to be an opportunity for students to become self-directed. Smith and Collins expressed the view that one of the most valuable features of OFP was that assessment by the university's own staff provided a reliable guide to their future success. At this time, OFP was shown to be self-funding with little to no impost on UON.[69] The following decade proved to be a time of growth of the program and staff continued to introduce educational initiatives that would long be remembered by students.

In 1977, Brian Smith and John Collins collaborated on a report assessing the effectiveness of OFP to date.[70] A significant feature was that students could withdraw, without embarrassment, if the course did not suit their needs. Its intent at that time was to prepare students for Arts and Social Sciences, not for Mathematics, Science or Engineering. In its Foreword, the Director of HE Research and Services Unit reported that half who took the course applied for university entry and as first year students their performance was at least as good as traditional entrants, and "in some cases outstanding. Thus the Open Foundation Course taps hidden reserves of talent".[71] The success of OFP provided reasons why universities had an obligation to admit these non-traditional students based on grounds of:

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[65]Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course*, 18.
[66] Smith and Collins. *The Open Foundation Course,* 23.
[67] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course,* 20-1.
[68] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course,* 28.
[69] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course,* 39
[70] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course.*
[71] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course,* (Foreword).

"humanity, equity, and economy in the use of human resources."[72] The electives in the first offering were English, Philosophy, Economics and Politics.[73] 55 students returned for the second of three terms, and 45 in the third term. Only 31 applied for admission to UON and 28 were offered places.[74] Three went to other institutions and 25 enrolled: five in Economics and Commerce and 20 in Arts.

OFP in the 1980s

Brian Smith continued his Directorship until 1981 when John Collins became acting Director for a year while Dr Smith was on study leave. During that time Dr Smith collected data for a comparative evaluation of mature tertiary entry programs across Australia. The results were published in a manuscript entitled *A Review of Continuing Education Provision by the Australian Universities.*[75] Dr Smith's evaluation of Open Foundation within that document began with the observation that Community Programmes, within which OFP was located, provided the most traditional Continuing Education provision of all Australian universities. It was staffed by a small number of academics within an 'extra mural' department.[76] OFP was described as the major component of "educational bridging work" carried out by the Department. It was a full year course consisting of four hours of face to face tuition per week in which students generally selected two subjects of six, dependent on who was available to teach. Dr Smith explained it was offered as both day and evening classes to people 20 years and over and had no entry prerequisites. He stated that response to the course had grown steadily and in 1984 had 300 enrolments.[77]

Dr Smith's comparison of programs across the nineteen universities concluded that Australian universities are "fiercely independent" and he found "no assent whatsoever to a suggestion that there might be a 'norm' for university Continuing Education provision which each institution should attempt to meet."[78] Instead, Dr Smith advocated that each university's strength lay in developing programs, roles and resources according to their own needs and circumstances. His colleague John Collins recalled:

> Brian Smith and I, mainly he, I should say, had in 1974 or 1975, written a little booklet which TUNRA published on the Open Foundation Course, its aims and objectives and I think we had some evidence of the people who'd been attracted to the first course, or first cohort or two. And in that booklet we'd surveyed all the

[72] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course,* (Foreword).
[73] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course,* 17.
[74] Smith and Collins, *The Open Foundation Course,* 17.
[75] Brian Smith. *A Review of Continuing Education Provision by the Australian Universities.* Newcastle: The Department of Community Programmes University of Newcastle, 1985.
[76] Smith, *A Review of Continuing Education Provision by the Australian Universities,* 83.
[77] Smith, *A Review of Continuing Education Provision by the Australian Universities,* 87.
[78] Smith, *A Review of Continuing Education Provision by the Australian Universities,* 89.

> Australian Universities' irregular entry schemes. By 1981, which was another few years later, Brian thought it was time to do that again, because by then, there were rumblings occurring within the Continuing Education Departments about whether the role they played was an appropriate one for Universities. And he set off to do that and he left me with the Open Foundation Course, with strict instructions not to allow more than … 200 or 250 into it. I allowed my attention to lapse (laughs) and by the time we looked up we had something like 550 enrolments, so there was a mad scramble then to find extra classrooms and extra tutors. And because it worked, he, although he was very nervous, said, "Well, you've managed that … you might as well mange the rest of it [until] I come back ". So I'd effectively managed it from 1981 or 1982. Brian retired in 1987, and that's when I formally took over the Department.

The developments that characterised the 1980s according to John Collins were OFP's expansion in student numbers and changes to the teaching span, which meant less tuition time:

> My absent mindedness allowed the thing to grow beyond any size that we thought it should, or could in 1981 or thereabouts was a significant step. I guess the change to semesters rather than year-long programs was another step. They're probably the things that, looking back, were important decisions with regard to the OFC.

Greg Preston, a staff member, recalled that there was a change of attitude toward the OFP in the 1980s:

> By the mid to late 80s, when I sort of returned to Senate … it was very much seen as an academic endeavour, it was seen as part of the fabric of the University, it was seen not as an experiment, but as something that was working, something that led to us having additional good students. So there was a change between the early 80s and certainly my first understandings of it in say the late 70s, when it was very much experimental, it's philanthropic, it's part of the University's outreach. Whereas by the mid-80s it was now seen I think more as an integral part of what was done. I'm not sure how it's seen now. I think both of those views would be shared by many people now.

One of the attractions for staff was the flexibility in designing curriculum and choosing content:

> I first became involved in 1983 in teaching in the Open Foundation Program. Jean Talbot, the then Subject Co-ordinator of the English Literature course, was going overseas, and she asked me if I would look after the English Literature course for her while she was away. I was excited at the prospect of being involved in the program,

> especially as I had some freedom about the curriculum. I included literature that I felt would have some immediacy for students – for example, the poetry of Bruce Dawe with its use of the Australian vernacular - and I introduced a film component into the course which hadn't been there before. So teaching in Open Foundation was a new experience for me. I had taught Undergraduate before, mainly first and second year students. And so teaching in a tertiary environment wasn't a new experience but teaching this group of students was. But I was not entirely unprepared, as I had encountered in my undergraduate classes some students who had completed Open Foundation prior to their Undergraduate study. So I had seen the difference between those two groups of students, the mature age students who were more interested and were asking more and interesting questions; and the students who were more passive for one reason or another, some because they didn't feel confident in speaking up to a person in authority, some because they were just going with the flow or just finding their feet as students. (Dr Keryl Kavanagh)

There was also an effort to engage socially with the students in order to break down the barriers between them and staff. Dr Talbot would go for coffee with her students after class that allowed them to approach her in an informal way about course content. Greg Preston recalled taking his students to socialise at the Staff House at the end of his course:

> We did have get togethers for the students as well at the end of semester, and certainly, that was much more common in those days, certainly. I took one of my classes to the Staff House. We all went along, we went upstairs in the Staff House and Mick Carter [Professor of Sociology] came along and asked me (with superior English accent) "Why did you bring all these students along to the Staff House". I replied, "Well part of the notion of understanding the academic life is to understand the life of an academic", and you had Godfrey Tanner saying (imitating his voice) "Hear hear. Of course! Let them stay" (laughs). It was wonderful, but I only did that once. I copped a bit of flack for that from a few places.

Brian Smith had regarded the social integration of students as an important feature of the program. He initiated residential weekends where students could interact with staff and other students and enjoy the stimulation of quality lectures and literary readings by experienced academics from both within and outside Community Programmes.

Morpeth Residential weekends

The location for the residential weekends was the Anglican Conference Centre at Morpeth where students who elected to attend were housed in small dormitories, usually with four bunk beds. They enjoyed meals in a large hall and could break off into small groups for particular lectures. Dr Keryl Kavanagh remembered these weekends in the 1980s:

> Back in 1983, the students were invited to participate in a residential study weekend at Morpeth College. That was interesting as a bonding mechanism, and it also provided an opportunity to develop more of the skills I mentioned that students need to be able to tackle the courses in terms of their essay writing and developing an argument and so on.

Dr Jean Talbot recalled that both staff and students enjoyed the Morpeth experience:

> I think that was something that was in it [early], that Brian Smith was keen on, a residential weekend. And that was an opportunity to socialize with the students as well as do work with them. Yes, I'd almost completely forgotten about that. It's a bit of a blur.

Figure 23. Professor Norman and Dr Jean Talbot. Photo P0658. Reprinted with permission Cultural Collections University of Newcastle

Dr Terry Ryan spoke of the camaraderie among all involved in the weekend and the significance of interacting with students outside the formal university environment. It was one of the vivid memories he recalled of OFP:

> I remember going to one up at Morpeth Conference Centre and the students poured in from everywhere and stayed for the weekend. I think it was a three-day job. I only went up for the day and went back, to give some papers. And so did Godfrey. When I

> say papers, [I mean] some presentations, but they were there for the whole weekend and they were well into it when we got there (laughs). When I say well into it, [I mean] just fantastic camaraderie. So it might be that my memories, certainly of lecturing to them, and performing, and seeing their responses, and seeing them getting writer's cramp, and a function such as that, I mean [are] outside the classroom. And that one off [event] for me, we didn't get to see them all that often until they became undergraduates. And that's when they came back through and said "I used to be in your [Open Foundation] class. Where's the kaftan?" and all this sort of stuff.

Dr Smith's wife Sybil also recalled going to Morpeth to perform literary readings for the OFP students along with Dr Jean and Professor Norman Talbot (see Figure 23) and that occasionally groups of staff and students also went to Smith Lakes. The purpose of these events was to stimulate and encourage the joy of learning outside an institutional environment. As student numbers grew, however, the residential weekends had to be discontinued as there was insufficient accommodation to meet the demand for this event.

John Collins recalled that despite their popularity, the Morpeth residential weekends had to come to an end:

> On a slightly more amusing note, perhaps, I remember shortly after I took over the Directorship, stopping the residential workshops we used to run up at Morpeth, because they had become really bacchanalian events and, ah (laughs), I felt sure that an angry husband or wife was going to do someone in the class or the course, damage (laughs again), because they were great events. But also, there were some people that simply couldn't get away to them (laughs), and it did create a division in the classes between those who'd been to the weekend workshops and those who weren't able to get there for whatever reason. So we closed those off (laughs). Brian revelled in them, but others of us became slightly nervous about the potential outcome of those.

First offering of Intensive Open Foundation 1986

As student numbers began to expand, a new compressed mode of delivery was approved by the Board of the Department of Community Programmes. Students were still to complete 40 credit points, but instead of four passes in ten credit point subjects, students could choose two intensive delivery subjects of twenty credit points each. One OFP lecturer had first-hand knowledge of the first delivery of the new offering:

My husband is an ex Open Foundation student and he was in the first cohort of the Intensive course when it was offered in 1986 … his student number is 87.[79] So I have knowledge about the fact that when they trialled this particular course back then the only subjects that were available to students, they had two to choose from, were English and Philosophy, in the Intensive offering of the course. And students were informed that the only course that they were permitted to go into having completed those two subjects was a Bachelor of Arts degree. But that was sort of an experiment. They just thought that it might suit some people better to have that shorter time frame [to complete OFP] ... And he went on to achieve things that he couldn't even imagine that he would have done. Previous to that he was employed in a trade capacity, not much encouragement at home as a child, people said he was silly, you know, that kind of thing, not much parental guidance. And he came along and did this [Open Foundation] and got through it, enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree, changed over to a Bachelor of Commerce degree which he completed … he's just completed a Masters in Occupational Health and Safety. So he's a person that maybe if things had been different he might be working … somewhere in a manual capacity. But he had the opportunity to change his pathway which he is very appreciative of. And he was always very appreciative of the efforts of Bethia Penglase (see Figure 24) and Brian Smith at that time. They helped him. They supported him greatly back then. (Mandy Bowden, Mathematics lecturer)

Figure 24. (L-R) John Hill, John Collins, Jan Watkins, Bethia Penglase and Sheila Winsley, 1989. Photo reprinted with permission of Cultural Collections University of Newcastle

[79] Students from OFP were not allocated a UON number until they commenced their first year.

The increased student intake also meant more work for both the academic and clerical staff. Jan Watkins (see Figure 25), who worked in administration recalled: "I was there in '88, but by then it was a fairly popular program that we ran by the skin of our teeth (laughs). "

More experimentation and innovation

The flexibility and experimental nature of course offerings was put to good effect in the 1980s by one of the lecturers in Australian History, Margaret Henry. She recalled that Dr Smith didn't tell her what to do in her new OFP subject, but it was quite dynamic. She said: "I just taught whatever I felt like teaching, really. It was like the beginning of my real knowledge of Australian history and politics." Margaret's dual responsibility was to organise public lectures to which she invited her OFP students. She recalled:

> organizing for Manning Clarke[80] to come and give a lecture and I became really good at putting out press releases and doing interviews on the radio … So you know there were these spin offs, you met people. That was the other thing about Open Foundation, you could invite people. And I remember once Brian [Smith] gave me permission to ask Fay Weldon, the feminist author, so called feminist author, but that's another story … So actually I suppose you could say I've benefitted more from Open Foundation (laughs) than I gave … I did a thing, mainly for my Open Foundation students, I did a forum on women and the Press, and invited Adele Horin, you know, the columnist in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and David Williamson, who was a journalist … It was just an amazing event, and people still remember those forums … And then I organized another forum on Women and Politics. And my students all came to these things. They were really supportive … So I suppose, really, my philosophy of teaching was that I was enthusiastic and I think I was able to convey my enthusiasm to the students. And they were so enthusiastic. They, sort of, add to your experience. Yes, while I was in Open Foundation, I think I'd organized, I think probably the first one that I did was Jocelyn Scutt[81] who then went on to be [famous]. And I contributed a couple of chapters to books that she edited, on women and divorce.

OFP students were provided the opportunity to see and hear experts in their field. This exposure to people they may have heard about or whose work they may have read must have been an exciting as well as educational experience.

Margaret Henry was also instrumental in initiating a scholarship to an Open Foundation student by the Women's Electoral Lobby. This award, called the Ellen Rose Award, named after a former OFP student, was in place for a number of years from 1987. The criteria was to recognise and encourage mothers who were juggling commitments of study and

[80] Preeminent Australian History Professor.
[81] Celebrated feminist author.

dependent children, by financially assisting their transition into higher education. Another of Henry's initiatives was the setting of an assignment in Australian History that required students to tape record interviews with local identities, transcribe and analyse the interviews, then write them up in essay form. Students were challenged, encouraged to deal with real world issues, developed interview and essay writing skills as well as oral presentation skills when presenting their project to the class. This collection of tapes and transcriptions have since been placed in UON's Cultural Collections[82] and has become a useful resource for local history research. Henry commented: "I was really happy about that [placing of this material in the university library], people were captured on tape, and transcripts made and the papers written and so on. And I thought that was really valuable."

Figure 25. Jan Watkins, 22.1.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Some concluding remarks about the 1970s and 1980s

Through the use of documentary evidence and oral history interviews, this chapter has outlined the establishment of OFP and discussed the preferred tertiary preparation model negotiated by Dr Brian Smith with colleagues at UON. While OFP was positioned outside the main structure of the faculties, this allowed more flexibility to develop a curriculum that Smith saw as most useful for opening the door to a liberal education for students who had not matriculated. Smith's intention was also to stimulate political consciousness and develop critical thinking capacity. Staff were specifically chosen for their capacity to model an enabling ethos. While the 1970s could be regarded as a time of experimentation, it was also an attempt to connect with community in a meaningful way. In this regard OFP was a

[82] Cultural Collections reference A6524(xiv) *Open Foundation history projects,* 1986 [Essays and oral history on women]

conduit to all citizens who wished to enter. Dr Smith's research background in adult education meant that he had compared many models of mature tertiary entry and wanted OFP to be as flexible as possible, to simply give people a chance to prove their capacity for university study. While he was said to not be intending an exercise in social engineering, nevertheless, he was reacting to an elitist concept of universities, which as reported by one respondent, were not shunning working class students, but were also not encouraging them – an example of how access to cultural capital can be restricted by institutions. Smith was, however, mindful of providing opportunities for working class and disadvantaged groups within society. His insistence that there be no penalties for failure was high on his agenda as he wished to preserve people's dignity and privacy by not releasing their results to UON. Instead, in consultation with lecturers, he made recommendations as to their suitability for tertiary study.

The 1970s was also characterised by political innovation. The inception of OFP could be regarded as one initiative that positioned university access as a right and not a privilege, something Prime Minister Whitlam was keen to achieve. Despite some opposition to OFP over the years, there was also considerable support. OFP had allies who would act as advocates in Academic senate, on the University Council, within UON itself, and publicly. The Vice Chancellor from 1975 was also supportive of the concept of mature age entry and recognised the untapped talent that could be harnessed from the community by supporting OFP.

By the 1980s the goals of OFP were well established and a flexible and changing curriculum to meet student needs was in place. While there was a reported shift from OFP as a philanthropic endeavour to one that was more academic in its focus, the program increasingly became part of the fabric of the university during this decade. Academics enjoyed the freedom to be creative in the curriculum they delivered providing a stimulating and exciting experience for students. It was recognized that encouraging social activities that were embedded with learning was a productive exercise of andragogy as building relationships combined with teaching skills had productive effects. The barriers connected with institutions were broken down and staff as well as students relished these experiences. The 1980s was also characterised by the expansion of subject offerings including the compressed delivery Intensive program that allowed students to complete over one semester instead of two. The following chapter will examine some of the developments of the following decades including securing federal funding and the even greater popularity and student enrolments that demonstrated OFP's reputation in the communities in which it was taught.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF OPEN FOUNDATION 1990s-2000s

The oral history of the 1990s reveals it was a decade of considerable change. Primarily the rationale for the Department of Community Programmes, within which the OFP was embedded, moved away from community engagement and toward a more academic focus. After some fluctuations, this change eventually favoured the OFP. Economic, structural and institutional changes such as secure funding and recognition as a Centre within UON led to further modifications, some praised by staff and some not. By the 2000s conditions changed again as academic study of the field of enabling education developed. OFP staff became involved in conducting research on enabling education and sharing it through publications and professional conferences as well as joining the new enabling education association that promoted enabling research nationally and internationally. OFP continued to go from strength to strength and, as survey data revealed, word of mouth tended to be the major source of recruitment. OFPs regional communities were beginning to hear stories of student success and, along with its distance program, OFP was expanding its offerings and responding to both vocational needs of students and the wider desire for a better educated population.

Some indication of the growth and success of the OFP over its first 24 years was given in *Uninews* when it was reported in 1998 that:

> Beginning in 1974 with just 40[1] students studying two subjects, the OFC[2] has grown to an enrolment of approximately 1,000 part-time and 300 full time students each year, who can choose from 25 subjects and study at two locations. There are 36 lecturers teaching in the OFC.[3]

Over the ensuing years OFP has continued to expand. The most recent data states that "each year 20 percent of UON's undergraduate commencing students come to university via an enabling pathway. This proportion is even higher at regional locations such as the Central Coast in NSW, where around 25 percent of students at UON in 2016 were supported to

[1] This figure is presented in another publication at 83 offers prior to the course commencing. JE Collins, *Matriculating in Maturity,* while May's "A child of change," 60 research indicates a quota of 80. In fact only 40 students took up the offer, 31 students completed and 28 were admitted to university.
[2] Open Foundation was originally referred to as the Open Foundation Course, hence OFC.
[3] *Uninews*, Issue No 3, May 1998, 4.

enter university through an enabling program."[4] In a response to the proposed imposition of fees for enabling students, the Vice Chancellor indicated that 13 percent of Australia's total Commonwealth-funded enabling students study at UON and 85 percent of those enrol in higher education upon completion. This provides some indication of the extent of the work of enabling programs, of which Open Foundation is the largest in Australia.

OFP in the 1990s

John Collins had taken over as Director of Community Programmes in the late 1980s. His recollections on the history of the program in the 1990s reflected his position as the leading administrator in the OFP at this time. As was shown in the previous chapter, Collins had worked closely with the program's founder, Brian Smith, and he was well versed in the challenges of its operation, including the resistance to non-traditional students in some quarters of the university. He recalled that the financial aspects of the program and its expansion led to further suspicion within the wider university.

Throughout his tenure as Director, John Collins was charged with the financial management of the OFP. He recalled that with no outside funding at the time, the program was offered to students for a fee that increased over the years. This fact contributed to its suspect position within the UON structure because "no other department of the University was taking money over the counter from its students … So we were always misunderstood and slightly suspect, all of this money going in and out." By 1994 he remembered that the sums involved were not insignificant and that the program was "taking nearly half a million dollars in $450 bits.[5] And some of it came in cash, some of it came in an envelope with notes and so on, and this put an enormous strain on the support staff."

Collins remembered that OFP was almost always self-funding, and indeed that it was an "enormous money spinner for the University of Newcastle. Especially since 1994. [And even after] the University talked the Federal Government into supporting it." He recalled that the university reaped millions from the program that was not expended on it. John Collins also stated that OFP was further regarded with some suspicion by the rest of the university because it was deemed to be taking up more and more university services, resources and space:

> There was always a feeling, and as the Open Foundation Course grew … [that] we demanded or we took over or we required more and more room space and parking space and Security was always extended by having to wait [after hours], because

[4] Caroline McMillan, "Averting a quiet catastrophe – Why changes to enabling pathways would have been a mistake". Higher Ed edition, *The newsletter of Universities Australia,* 30 October, 2017.
[5] Some of this amount came from external tours run by OFP lecturers to destinations such as Hawaii to study geology and Greece and Rome to study the classics.

> often, after Open Foundation classes, people would stay around and have a chat for half an hour, an hour or so and Security might have been waiting to close up and couldn't. It was pointed out that we were leaving the lights on longer than other people and so there was this atmosphere.

Along with these reservations about the program's position, funding and wider servicing within the University recalled by Collins, the OFP continued to flourish despite other disruptive aspects of the program's andragogic approach.

Indeed, Collins observed that: "The more successful OFP became, the more it disrupted what was perceived as the traditional role of a university." He said: "At certain times, the University was embarrassed, I suppose, slightly by the Open Foundation Course, because if it had sufficient students by normal recruitment means, then it didn't need these people." He felt that: "there was always the feeling that people who got a good pass in the HSC (Higher School Certificate) would be superior students than people who managed to get in through the Open Foundation Course." However, this was not borne out in the statistics as OFP students continued to do well in undergraduate programs. Collins commented, however, that "on the occasions when the University didn't meet its student quota, then the Open Foundation Course people were welcomed with open arms."

Promoting andragogy within a disruptive environment

OFP students asserted their right to learn and embraced the opportunity. John Collins relished the andragogic approach to learning taken by OFP:

> The Open Foundation Course made the assumption that when somebody had something to say and they wanted somebody else to understand what they wanted to say, then they would learn how to say it. Or they would learn how to write it, in a way that adopted the conventions of academic communication. There were others, especially in the Education Faculty, who believed that we really should have been teaching essay writing skills, and discussion skills, and tutorial skills, and research skills. Whereas our attitude was, that's as boring as batshit. If people get caught up in an argument, then they'll learn how to research it, discuss it and write it. I still stand by that very, very much … So, there were some people in the University, who thoughtfully and genuinely and respectfully didn't agree with the way we were going about things. There was also a concern among others that the Open Foundation Course lecturers weren't quite kosher. I had a post graduate degree for most of the time I was teaching there and I was teaching Social Enquiry and I know there were misgivings among some of the people in the Sociology Department about what I was doing and what I was teaching people.

As other respondents had observed, the period of UON's amalgamation with the adjoining College of Advanced Education (CAE)[6] in 1989 that had specialised in teacher training was a time of some angst and disruption of previous patterns of operation. John Collins noted that he received a directive to cap the number of OFP students at this time:

> That changed a little bit in the very early 1990s after the amalgamation with HIHE [Hunter Institute of Higher Education]. There was a period in the early 1990s and it followed the earthquake[7] too, so there was greater competition for buildings that were still standing, or weren't dripping asbestos on people, or whatever … But, we met much more resistance in the very early 1990s, at which point the Open Foundation Course was engaging many hundreds of people. In my mind I remember the figure 1,200 and I remember being instructed by Ronald McDonald who was the Professor of Physics and was somehow head of this executive, that I was to bring that back to 600. The Open Foundation Course was to be no larger than 600 students. And with Mick Carter's connivance, I said to Ron, "Look Ron, we've already contracted trainers or lecturers and so on for the course, I can't bring it back quite so quickly, we'll have to bring it back gradually". And we didn't (laughs).

The period of the 1990s was also characterised by attempts to secure federal government funding for OFP. John Collins recalled:

> And of course, by that time Ron had other fish to fry and Raoul Mortley had come … And he'd appointed … Keith Lester as his deputy and it was a new ball game and they'd forgotten about what they wanted with the Open Foundation Course then, because they were scheming to do what we had often tried to do in the past, and that was to get Federal Government financial support and recognition of the Open Foundation Course. They succeeded.

Collins recalled a series of government enquiries into adult education and continuing education in the 1990s. One he remembered was entitled "Come in Cinderella."[8] With the agreement of the Board of Community Programmes, Collins had written submissions to these enquiries saying:

> You've got to recognize what the Open Foundation Course is achieving and you really should provide some funds to support it so we don't have to keep hiking the

[6] In 1988 the CAE was renamed the Hunter Institute of Higher Education.
[7] On December 28, 1989 a 5.6 magnitude earthquake hit the city of Newcastle. It caused the loss of 13 lives, 160 people were injured and there was significant property loss.
[8] Commonwealth of Australia, "Come in Cinderella : the emergence of adult and community education" report by the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education & Training, 1991 and Commonwealth of Australia, "Beyond Cinderella : towards a learning society" report of the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1997.

> enrolment fee. And perhaps we can subsidize the tutors' salaries or something like that.

OFP becomes part of UON's core activities

Many had regarded OFP as peripheral to the operations of UON, however, by the 1990s it had assumed a greater presence within the university. Gradually it was absorbed within the enrolment and administrative structures of the wider university. John Collins observed:

> I was slightly remote from it from about 1991 because Bethia Penglase was [OFP Program Convenor]. Bethia's contract was under threat and so, we agreed that she would be the convenor … Whatever the title, effectively the Manager of the Open Foundation Course, so that she had a more powerful argument for staying on the staff. And she was obviously a very effective administrator of it. And I have to say, probably more perceptive than I, about the gathering storm, as I see it, from the University taking it over, because she was continually warning me about the conspiracies and so on, which I was pooh poohing, but in fact, they were happening. It was there. So it was a very messy change of status for the Open Foundation Course. And, Bethia, I think, to her enormous credit, saw it coming and insisted that certain changes be not made, even though the central administration was to take over enrolments and the administration of it. She insisted for instance that only Open Foundation Course lecturers should promote the course ... it wasn't to be a student recruitment person at the front of the group, but somebody from the Open Foundation Course ... it was an important consideration at the time. So I owe a great debt of gratitude to Bethia for her efforts ... at the beginning of 1995 it [Open Foundation] became mainstreamed by the University and the Department of Community Programmes had a limited role to play from that time on.

The 1990s was therefore a decade of considerable change as the rationale for the Department moved away from community engagement and toward a more academic focus. In 1990 as foundation professor of Social Work, a member of Academic Senate and later a Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Brian English was keen to understand operations of the university, including the role of OFP. His philosophy that education was central to overcoming disadvantage meant that he valued the work being done in OFP. Having advocates on crucial university bodies such as Senate and Council was important for advancing knowledge about the aims and achievements of the program. It was particularly helpful when oppositional voices attempted to diminish or criticize OFP's contribution to UON.

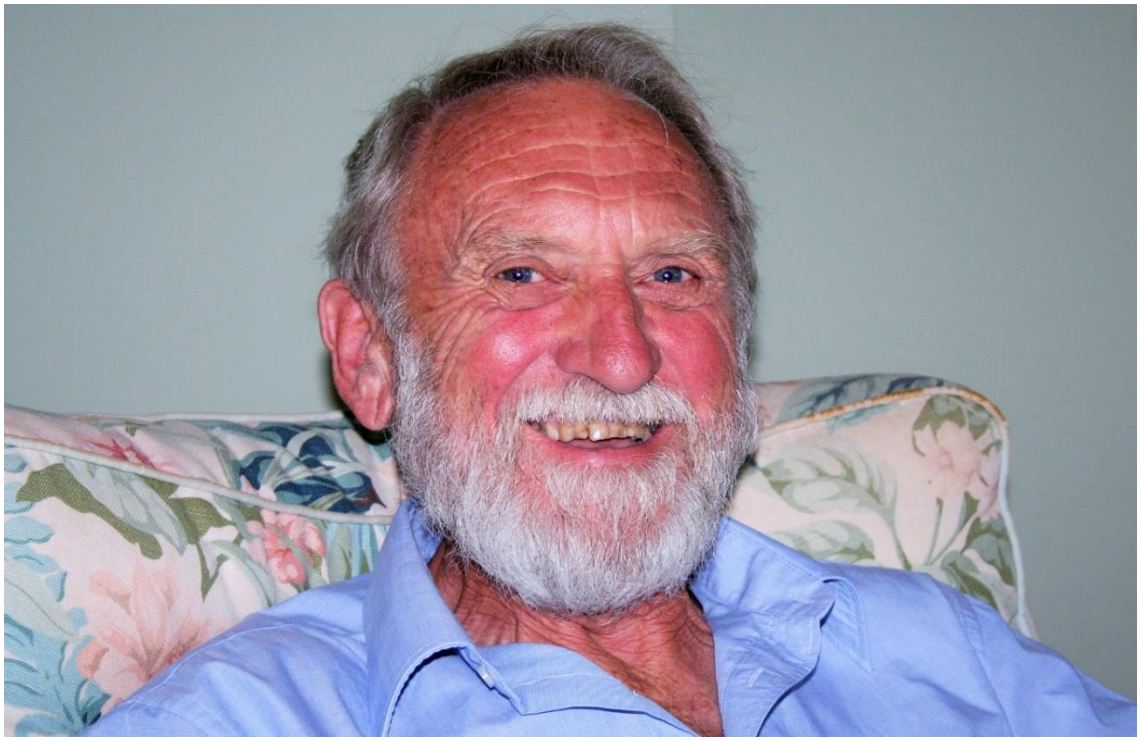

Figure 26. Professor Brian English, 26.2.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

OFP becomes part of the funded load of UON

Negotiating federal funding in the mid-nineties was a significant step in maintaining OFP. As Professor Brian English (see Figure 26) explained, the Secretary of the University, Gem Cheong, was largely responsible for this initiative:

> Gem Cheong was committed to equity, but she was also a very able administrator. And she was the one who saw this opportunity to get Open Foundation funded, as part of the funded load. So there were people working together round the top … if we hadn't done it, you know, it wouldn't be there. I'm not claiming any great credit for that in a sense, but it was just a combination of senior administrators and senior academics who could see that Open Foundation was very important. Gem [Cheong] was the initiator of it, and we had two reasons to do it … we were in danger of being under enrolled[9] as a University. And of course your funds were tied directly to your enrolments. And under enrolment is a terrible curse on a University. If you're over enrolled you can sort of feed it through the system and you can manage it. If you're under enrolled you're trying to build your numbers, because there's this flow on effect … So we had this great discussion preparing for the Commonwealth funding discussions. They'd come round each year and discuss with you your load and what you were doing and how you were planning etc. And Gem just quietly but determinedly said "We should make the Foundation Programs part of our funded

[9] Government funding depended upon Full time Equivalent Student Load so under enrolment was problematic. Once OFP became part of the funded load it ensured secure funding after the census date.

> load". It instantly solved any issue about being under funded. And I said immediately "Yes!" Now I could see immediately, once we got it funded we had two problems solved: A broad system problem for the University in terms of numbers, but from now on, Open Foundation would be funded. And it would be funded at the same [level], it would be funded into a grant. So they [Federal Government representatives] came along and we put it to them, and surprisingly they said "Yes". I think they regretted it.[10] I think they've regretted it ever since (laughs) … So it's not always easy to put them [funding arrangements] in, but to take them out would be very difficult ... And it was Gem's brilliant little insight that we could solve any threat.

This funding coup in 1994 assured continuity of OFP and removed the uncertainty, especially for casual staff, as to whether there would be money to fund their teaching the following year. Student numbers continued to grow. Professor English commented: "I'm almost certain we had more Foundation students than the rest of Australia put together." Gem Cheong, whose interest in equity led to the publication of an article on equity and diversity at UON indicated that in 1999 there were 830 enrolments, while in 2000 this had risen to 1,188. She stated that over one third of the national total of enabling enrolments was in Newcastle's OFP.[11]

According to Professor English, the assurance of continuous funding was:

> a brilliant little bit of administrative insight into maintaining or giving us an edge where we could never be under enrolled and we shouldn't have to be under enrolled, and we could do huge equity.

For areas like Newcastle and the Central Coast where socio-economic disadvantage was significant, the capacity to devote funds to improving student outcomes was an important initiative. Cheong's article describes UON's attention to low SES; Indigenous; Disability; rural and remote students and also to women, with the aim of improving their participation and success.[12] In addition, UON invested its time and energy into lessening the impact of the closure of the BHP steelworks in September 1999. UON was awarded the Australian Business and Higher Education Round Table Award for Outstanding Achievement in Collaboration in Education Training that year for its work with retrenched employees.[13] These people were offered the opportunity to retrain in areas of their choice and for those who had not matriculated, their entry to university was via OFP.

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[10] The increasing number of student enrolments meant a considerable financial commitment by the Federal Government.

[11] Gem Cheong, "Equity and Diversity: the Newcastle Approach." *Journal of the Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education,* 12(3) (2000): 78.

[12] Gem Cheong, "Equity and Diversity: the Newcastle Approach." p,75.

[13] Gem Cheong, "Equity and Diversity: the Newcastle Approach." p,75.

Professor English noted that the Commonwealth Government's inaugural National Equity Conference was held at Newcastle University due to the equity initiatives it had displayed. He recalled that Gem Chong and Gail White were the two administrators in charge of the conference and building contacts to "[make] sure the funding was there."

John Collins also reflected that the move to secure federal funding was a significant point in the history of OFP:

> Well, there's the dramatic change in the mid-1990s when it became federally funded, it became part of the University's mainstream. That was a big change, and very clumsily managed. People got hurt there. Clearly the fact that you've got, I think you said up to 2,000 people in the Open Foundation Course now, means that the University sees it much more favourably than it was seen when they were trying to limit the number of people coming into the Open Foundation Course.

The registrar, Di Rigney recalled that at one stage OFP was funded out of what the University used to call "over enrolment." She stated:

> The Government used to fund us up to a point but then they would fund for you to take extra places in this capped, sort of over enrolment amount of money. And Enabling used to come out of that. The University had obviously made a commitment, you know that it was important to have this program, and they would fund us out of that. Since that time though, in the last ten years or so at least we've had Commonwealth grants money that's come in ... undergrad students pay HECS, our students don't pay HECS, but the Commonwealth funds all Universities under a Commonwealth grants scheme, on a per student basis, often depending on the discipline they're studying in, it determines the weighting of how much funding comes in. So we get Commonwealth Grants Scheme for every student that we have as well … So there is another little pool of money called the Enabling Loading money that the Federal Government has been providing in the last decade, perhaps. But that's split between every University in Australia, and there's only a limited amount of Enabling Loading money, so as more Universities offer more tertiary preparation programs then the amount of money that comes from that can diminish, obviously. Because my understanding is it's a set amount of money that I suppose might increase a little bit. So in general terms we're reasonably happy that there's enough funding because at various times we've been quite worried about that.

Di Rigney recalled the Centre's Director, Associate Professor Fagan as being particularly worried around 2004-2005, that there would only be five years of funding. This made it difficult to plan ahead. She stated: "nothing is certain, a change of Government could change everything. Yes, so we are funded by the Federal Government and the University

then decides how much of that funding they give to the Centre." She noted that the Universities still have to lobby for funds but that enabling education was beginning to be recognized as valuable by the federal government. Rigney felt the push for widening participation and improving access "filters down, and even though this University has already had that push happening, we've already been in the game for a long, long time it was helpful to get that recognized federally, that there would be more security around the funding for that."

Inclusion under the funded load continued to be important in the 2000s. Current Director Fagan (see Figure 27) noted that when he became Director at the end of 2001 funding for enabling came from over enrolment. He said UON:

> used to over enrol to 115%, it's supposed to be 100% but we used to go to 115%. We were then paid out of the 15% which was less money. And I remember back in 2002 the amount we got per Open Foundation student was $1,200, which was very little. And in 2003-4 with trepidation we awaited Brendan Nelson's reforms to education. But one of the good things he did, he actually cut back on over enrolment and forced some universities to put Enabling inside the main load, so we actually got funded correctly. So although we were a bit worried about what Brendan Nelson had done, it was helpful. And the other thing he did was he actually gave enabling an enabling loading for funding for enabling students. So that means it was a fixed amount, which is a bit of a concern, but it meant we got the full Commonwealth places within the 100% plus we got the enabling loading. So that meant there was more funding for enabling students and for enabling education.

Associate Professor Fagan expressed the view that secure funding:

> made a huge difference to the way the University looked at us as well, because now we were bringing in actual more government funding. It was a struggle I have to say to get the funding back from the University to use it, but that enabled us to get full time staff. We were able to say "The funding is there". It did take about seven more years [to get more full time staff].

He commented that in 2004 when enabling was brought inside University load it meant UON didn't have to return funding to the Government. He stated that a number of universities like CQU, USQ had to return funding to the government because students were seeking work rather than undertaking education. Fagan's biggest concern was that the current government had capped enabling places, which meant there is not much room for growth.

Figure 27. Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, reprinted with permission Cultural Collections, University of Newcastle

Staff frustration over funding allocations to OFP

A number of staff expressed frustration with the way in which the university allocated the federal funding. Dr Jean Talbot noted:

> I think it was always a battle to get the funding, to get the rooms, to get the space. All that's been a continuing battle … They've [enabling programs] always been seen as a poor relation. And even when they became University students, you know, they were on the system and the department was getting money for them, but not much of that money was coming down to Open Foundation because it was just … something was expendable, perhaps. And at certain times it might have looked as if it was expendable. But then of course, the students became necessary (laughs).

Dr Jill Bough, Program Convenor at Ourimbah commented:

> I was particularly frustrated when I found out about the enormous amount of money that the program brought into the University and the small amount that was allocated to us. It was sent to other areas. We were considered second class because we were teaching the, in inverted commas, lowest people in the University. We as teachers, or perhaps lecturers, there is always that very difficult line, I think, and it [funding] went to support people that were doing high powered research and that

> annoyed me tremendously. I don't think the University pays nearly enough attention to the students at this University, in my opinion the reason we are here, or the people who teach them.

Subsequent federal government policy created uncertainty about funding for the staff administering OFP. Dr Keryl Kavanagh observed:

> Another factor has been the different ways funding has been allocated to the program at various times. Open Foundation started out in the seventies at a time when free education was high on the political agenda, and its initial development reflected the Whitlam "values" … I think the way the program has been funded over time has had an impact on its academic development … Up until 1994 Open Foundation was a fee-paying course, which was probably to some extent subsidized by the other activities of Community Programmes or in other ways by the University. In 1994 the then Vice-Chancellor announced that the program would be "fee free". From that time onwards, funding has reflected the arrangements that the University has negotiated with the Federal Government. This has led to some uncertainties about the security of on-going funding at various times. The Bradley Report has indirectly emphasized the need for enabling education to help reach the Federal Government's targets for low-SES and mature age graduates.

When asked why she thought OFP had had to fight so hard for funding initiatives, Dr Kavanagh replied:

> Two main things: Dollars and a perception that enabling education was not really core business that was a hangover from the very beginning of the program. The dollars have been distributed, historically in ways that they've always been distributed. It has been suggested in the past by some senior administrators that funding enabling programs meant that less funding was available to be distributed to Faculties – this was particularly relevant to the way the "over-enrolled" component of funding was distributed. In the early 2000's there was a change to the way the Government was going to fund Universities, and the University asked the Centre to develop a contingency plan for ways to operate the enabling programs without government funding. That was a difficult time as the Director and Program Co-ordinators spent a lot of time on trying to develop scenarios for that eventuality. As it turns out, it didn't come to that, but a lot of time and energy was spent responding to different funding realities or threats. And at another point in time, perhaps it was in the context of such potential funding loss, there was a proposal from some senior administrators suggesting that maybe it would be in the University's interest if Open Foundation should operate under the auspices of TAFE – just give it over to TAFE!
> **You had to fight that battle as well?**

> We had to fight that battle as well, yeah. So you know, it hasn't been just a matter of "Yes we've got this program and we just need to work out ways of administering it and looking after the enrolments and the delivery of programs and the quality assurance etc", all of those things that go with the package but there were all these other things that have come out of left field or, you know, sort of thrown at you to deal with.

Dr Ruth Lunney reflected the view of many staff that UON used some of the funding allocated for the enabling programs for general revenue rather than investing in the programs. Despite the funding problems, OFP continued to thrive due to the commitment of staff:

> Well I think at one point, the Commonwealth Government was providing a lot more money than what was being used in the Centre. So, it's always been restricted in funding, and the amazing thing is that it's managed to do so much. And a lot of that has been the commitment of the people working there. And that's not just the lecturers, it's also the people in the office. It's something that gets hold of you. It's a very rewarding experience, being able to change lives. But it isn't always easy with the red tape kind of thing. The sort of feeling that, OK, you're down there at the bottom, and you're being told what to do from up top and nothing much is going back up. Well they don't want much to go back up. But then, I'm a cynic. It's sort of, you know, instructions down, information up. And what happens is all a great mystery at times. And some of that, of course, is the effect of being isolated from the community because you're only working part time casual, and I'm hoping that's improving, that people are getting together more and talking more and having more say.

Dr Terry Ryan who had extensive knowledge about how OFP had operated from the outset commented that he felt OFP had always been under resourced and that the University could have done a great deal more with the funding allocation: "It's made a fortune out of this program over the years in its various manifestations." While he felt some DVCs in charge of OFP had done their best and regarded it as a very important program for the University's image "as well as for its health", their hands had been tied by policies. Dr Ryan believed:

> OFP should have its own building. I think it should have tailor-made resources to cope with the different needs of so many students, and have more tenured staff, when I say tenured, full time, whatever tenure is these days, to deal with it on both sites [Ourimbah and Callaghan]. I know it's a pipe dream, you probably wish why am I not Vice Chancellor and just deal with it at a stroke of a pen (laughs) … The University, while it's never been generous in the amount of money it's thrown in the direction of the program, well, it's never been overly generous, and without naming

> names now that we're on tape, some have been, well not so much hostile, but could not see the point of throwing resources into this.

It is interesting to note that in many of the fore mentioned comments, terminology such as: worry, struggle, hard work and battle are used to express the difficulties staff within the program experienced. The resolution of the funding stream, however, was only one area to which staff had to pay close attention.

Recognition of OFP qualifications

There was some resistance within UON to accepting OFP qualifications for entry into certain disciplines. In his explanation of how this situation played out, Professor English remembered there was a challenge at one stage about whether there was age discrimination applied to OFP given that originally an age criteria of 25 years and over applied. This was reduced to 23 years in 1977, then 22 years in 1978, and later it was decided that students could be turning 20 in the year they applied. OFP qualifications were not accepted in Medicine or Law. Professor English explained:

> Medicine, of course, wouldn't touch Open Foundation. They had their own selection process. Law, when it started didn't want to have Open Foundation students. They thought that would detract from their status. I don't think Engineering did either. But there was certainly a number of Faculties who didn't want Open Foundation. Open Foundation students tended to go into Arts. And then of course, if you did well in first year, you could go wherever you liked. But we gradually convinced them.

While he was President of Academic Senate Professor English stated that he got the University to agree that the President of Senate should oversee the admissions for everybody. He explained:

> We ran a model that was built in Student Services. The UAC [Universities Admissions Centre] was gaining strength in those days, they were setting up new models, and so we would oversee the admissions for everybody. And we gradually took away all of the special requirements that people had had. We said "Look, if you can prove that you are able, then the only requirement that should be on coming into University is competitive entry based on a score. You shouldn't say you have to have, you know, a number of subjects in this area or that area or whatever", because all you are doing is excluding students who probably could do well, but don't have exactly the set of subjects you want. So we gradually moved to … an admissions manual which is as thick as a telephone book, I must admit. But it worked out a system. And this wasn't just the University of Newcastle, generally this was happening in UAC. You worked out a system for scoring just about any course. It didn't matter whether it was a TAFE course or an overseas University or Open Foundation or whatever, people

> could get, well in those days it was a, it became a UAI [TER – Tertiary Entrance Rank].[14]

Professor English stated: "We convinced Law and everybody else to drop requirements other than a competitive entry based on a score. So Open Foundation could then go into Law, could go into whatever." Some research was commissioned by UON on success rates of people admitted to the university by different means. English noted that Open Foundation students were found to do better than those entering via the HSC.[15] He said:

> Once we got that evidence, that HSC was not as good a predictor of performance at University as our own Foundation Programs, every faculty pretty much rolled over and accepted that we would have our own students come through.

English also reported that UON conducted a review in the late 1990s of country and city HSC results that resulted in a four point advantage for local candidates, which had a flow-on effect for students completing OFP:

> We convinced Senate and the Council … to introduce the four point loading for locals ... some senior administrators were against it, some were neutral, a couple were in favour, but there was a consistency, and I'll say I'm not claiming any credit, but there was a consistency in that I was there right through. So I knew the arguments and I knew the evidence and I was active in Senate the whole time, from the day I joined the University I was a member of Senate, never left it.

While advocates of OFP such as Professor English looked for ways to improve access to university, other executives remained opposed to the concept of widening participation and facilitating equity initiatives. Professor English believed some were:

> hostile towards Open Foundation … didn't want Open Foundation ... saw it as lowering the standards, and [one] brought up an argument in Council [and] was hostile to Welfare ... didn't like the idea of us making the campus wheelchair accessible. He said we … don't want to attract wheelchairs, you know, sort of thing.

English reported that during one Council meeting Vice Chancellor Mortley brought up the idea that UON should cut the numbers in the Foundation Programs:

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[14] Now referred to as an ATAR [Australian Tertiary Entrance Rank].

[15] Also reported in R Cantwell., J Archer and S Bourke, "A Comparison of the Academic Experiences and Achievement of University Students Entering by Traditional and Non-traditional Means." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* 26(3) (2001): 221-234.

> and off the top of his head, [he argued] since the Foundation Programs were increasing in numbers all we're getting is more and more people drinking in the University Bars and you know they're just coming here [to drink]. And I happened to know the numbers, so I just said something along the lines of "The Vice Chancellor is mistaken. The increase in the number of people in the bars etc correlates closely with the increase in the numbers of nurses because we have largely increased the Nursing Faculty, not the Enabling Programs. But I'm sure he wouldn't be accusing the Nursing Faculty of spending all their time in the hotel, in the bars". And he gave a bit of a wry smile and backed off. But he was hostile to the idea. I'm only using that as an example that there wasn't always total [support]. There was often opposition. [There was the idea that] somehow people coming through Open Foundation, Newstep or whatever, sort of lowered the tone of the University a bit. The opposite is actually clearly the case. I mean, it's Open Foundation … Open Foundation was a kind of grooming of people to prepare them for University life. They did University like subjects in a University like environment, with a lot of engagement from the staff, and oversight, and encouragement and whatever. So it was a positive, grooming type atmosphere in which to prepare for University. But, if you didn't finish, well, you just didn't finish. Hardly anybody ever failed it, they just didn't finish. So the people who got to the end of it had already established themselves as ready for University, and that's what to a large extent I suspect why the success rate was so good. It didn't only prepare people, it filtered people out. But it filtered them out in a non-hostile way. People just stopped coming if they couldn't handle the work or if they didn't like the environment and decided they couldn't go to University or got a better job or whatever. So it was a filter as well as a preparation.

Professor English explained that in the early days students just had to complete Open Foundation to be guaranteed a place in the University.[16] He commented: "That had to go." In its place was a system by which a score achieved on a competitive basis determined undergraduate entry. He commented:

> You had to compete for a place. But still, they competed very well … But again, I suspect a lot of people would withdraw rather than fail, that would be the sensible thing to do. In fact I used to sometimes give people that advice "It's probably better to have a withdrawal on your record than to have a fail on your record".

This shift to competitive undergraduate entry provided evidence and justification for students being offered a place, rather than the earlier system of lecturers' recommendations and broad grading as to whether they were thought fit to succeed.

[16] This was not strictly correct as the interview with John Collins revealed. Students were assessed by lecturers on their suitability and graded A: likely to be highly successful; B: likely to be successful; C: need further support to be successful; D: not recommended for university admission.

An economic rationalist experiment

During the late 1990s, after John Collins' departure from UON, Pamela Finberg was appointed as Director of Community Programmes, and it became the Department of Continuing and Professional Education. Professor English recalled:

> Raoul Mortley employed Pamela Finberg. Raoul was convinced that everything had to be done for a fee. You know, he was into the fee paying stuff. And he thought our English Language Programs and our Enabling Programs could be turned into fee paying. And we tried desperately, a couple of us, to convince him that it wasn't going to work in the Hunter. It was an environment where there was a huge educational need, where a lot of people saw the value of trying University. But they either didn't have the money or they weren't prepared to pay the kind of money you would have to pay to make it profitable. $8,000 is probably what Macquarie [University] has to charge to actually make money out of it.

Professor English observed that Pamela Finberg was appointed with a mandate to turn the enabling programs into fee paying arrangements. While he always tried to present rational, well prepared argument based on facts, he claimed Finberg's argument would be: "The Vice Chancellor said… in a place like Newcastle if 'the boss said' is about the silliest thing you can say in an argument." Professor English argued this reasoning did not work well in Newcastle:

> Because you know, Newcastle's got a very long tradition, I mean the city and the University, of "the boss is a fool". It's just a kind of… cultural phenomenon. And sometimes it's said with a joke or a laugh or whatever. But you don't do something because the boss said, you do something because it's a good idea. And I mean, Newcastle's had some brilliant ideas, say the Medical School for example. That was a brilliant plan ... I really believed at Newcastle you knew what you were doing. You could do anything, in a sense, I wanted an innovative course [in Social Work], so Newcastle was the place to do it.

This kind of opportunity to be innovative was also present when Brian Smith proposed his OFP plan. But by 1996 the desire to make a profit from the programs had become a top-down priority. Professor English noted that staff who opposed this line of thinking:

> gave her [Finberg] hell, and she eventually left. She was given an impossible task anyway. I mean, the poor woman didn't have a chance. She perhaps might have survived in other times, at a different University. But I think she had failed to fire when she came … So that was an early attempt by Raoul to get rid of what he saw as the welfare cases, and put in the fee paying.

This period had an impact, both positive and negative, on staff. Dr Keryl Kavanagh recalled that during this time, some of the community oriented activities of Community Programmes became less important, and OFP assumed a higher profile:

> When Raoul Mortley became Vice Chancellor I think he wanted something very, very different from the Department of Community Programmes. It then became Continuing and Professional Education. I think that [Mortley] wanted to push more into professional education across a number of areas. Perhaps in the medical field. John Hill was already doing some refresher courses for lawyers. But I think that he [Mortley] wanted a more entrepreneurial approach to some of that. So Open Foundation wasn't necessarily such a big focus as some of the other things. And, you know, that's another thing about the development that very quickly Open Foundation became, really, the dominant part of the Department of Community Programmes. The suite of short courses, educational tourism, study days, trips Joe Whitehead did to Hawaii to look at volcanoes, these were all part of the Community Programme's original brief. But increasingly Open Foundation was the raison d'etre of the Department of Community Programmes. So whether Professor Mortley wanted more of the professional education to balance that off, I'm not sure. But it was a particularly unsettling period because of some personnel decisions, which had the potential, I think, to damage Open Foundation. But of course the product was so strong that that didn't happen. And you know, in a funny way conditions for casual staff were a little better after that period, or because of that period (laughs) than they had been before.

Joe Whitehead's recollection of this period highlighted the disappointment of staff in the direction the university was taking in pursuing this profit driven direction:

> In 1996 we had a new Vice Chancellor, Raoul Mortley, and he determined to wind up the Department of Community Programmes and establish the Continuing Professional Education Unit. And that took a different tack really because it, I think, lost a lot of its flavour as a department of the University and it lost its status as a department of the University which is very significant, because it lost its flavour in the sense that it really became less of a community based adult education program and became a much more commercial operation. And for a period of years we operated under a model where we were really driven by the cash return that the program would make which was really, to my way of thinking, rather sad. But, it changed our direction, a driving force, significantly.

John Collins' recollection of this period, which also resulted in him leaving the university, was that Raoul Mortley advertised a Pro Vice Chancellor's position to look after Community Programmes, TUNRA and the caravan project that had come into the University through the

Hunter Institute of Higher Education, as well as foreign students. The person who was appointed was instead given the title of Director of Continuing and Professional Education:

> When Mortley came, he wanted all these income generating activities to be lumped together ... there was so much turmoil in the University at the time, people came and went in positions before you had a chance to shake their hand in many cases. I mean, it was a pretty sorry period in the history of the University of Newcastle, I think.

Staff outrage at the decision to make OFP a money-making venture driven by profit rather than pedagogy was epitomised in an open letter written by Associate Professor Ralph Robinson[17] that began with an old English epitaph: "Here lies John Jones, born a man, died a greengrocer". In the letter, Robinson welcomed notions of accountability and sound management but called for that management to be transparent and in consultation with staff. He stated: "Financial prudence is not achieved at the neglect of educational function." He drew on what he knew of Brian Smith's aims for OFP and commented:

> Brian Smith, architect of the OFP saw [it] as not merely a secondary-school top-up, but an induction into the beginnings of scholarship. Students were to be taught by people experienced in their academic discipline, with a commitment to, and a passion for, that discipline. The rumoured shift in OFP emphasis seems to me a failure to comprehend the value of this innovative educational vision. Even as a commercial decision, it would be a mistake. Those seeking a secondary school 'top-up' already have two available marketers of such services in the state secondary schools and the TAFE system. The mistake is, however, also an educational one. A good proportion of those enrolling in the OFP are people whose experience of the secondary school system was unfavourable, who find, however, that the adult educational expectations of the OFP foster their development.

Robinson, whose view coincided with other staff at the time, implored that there are "values other than dollars." It was with much relief that this "experiment" ended and in fact Associate Professor Robinson was approached to become the fourth Director with overriding responsibility for OFP. According to Dr Keryl Kavanagh, there were other benefits that resulted from this tumultuous period:

> During this period casual staff in the Department were brought under the Academic Enterprise Agreement and were paid academic rates. That was a positive change. But it was quite unsettling for everyone concerned because no-one quite knew where this was going to go or what the indications were, whether the plan was to

[17] A copy of this letter was supplied by Associate Professor Robinson to the author.

> get rid of courses, to pull back to a core of subjects or what. It was all very murky, and the person who was supposed to be the Director [Finberg] wasn't talking to the people who were teaching in the program. So that made it quite challenging, quite difficult. But I can't underestimate the significance of the decision to employ staff in the program under the Academic Enterprise Agreement.

Expanding OFP subject offerings

One of the aspects of developing OFP to accommodate the disciplines and meet the needs of an expanding number of students was to offer a greater range of subjects. Joe Whitehead recalled that when he took up his appointment in 1991, John Collins was the head of the department and looking to extend offerings into the areas of science, engineering and a range of other areas. Joe Whitehead was appointed to a lectureship requiring qualifications in science, engineering or travel and tourism and he was to develop new programs within the Department of Community Programmes. The new programs were to be public programs in adult and continuing education, professional programs for people in business, industry and government, as well as developing an OFP subject:

> So I got to develop the Earth Science course in the Open Foundation Program as part of that appointment ... The Social Science course, Social Enquiry, and Earth Science were at that time the two biggest subjects, big in terms of student cohort, but I think the University, the Continuing Professional Education Unit was struggling financially, which was no surprise to me … because I think it was driven on the wrong premise, but anyway to try and balance the books I think they wanted to cut out programs and they cut out the biggest programs that were going to save the largest amount of money. It seemed rather short sighted to me because it was cutting off a large supply of students to the University. But anyway, the Earth Science program in the Open Foundation then went to just being offered at the Newcastle campus … So we had huge student numbers, I mean possibly of the order of say 400 students a year in Earth Science.

Earth Science fed students on to the associated departments of geography, geology and environmental science. Whitehead commented that:

> something like 100 first year undergraduate students a year of whom a number were very, very good … increased the standing of the Open Foundation Program in terms of its equivalence with the scores that school leavers had … because one half of all of the people who achieved High Distinctions in first year Geology for three successive years have come from the Open Foundation Program. So that was very good. And that was one of the sorts of things that we were doing.

Earth Science was replaced at the Ourimbah campus with Environmental Science and later, Conservation and Sustainability, however, it continued to feature as an offering in the Distance Program. This came about, according to Joe Whitehead, due to his enthusiasm for, and background in, distance teaching. He had previously taught at the Open University in Britain in postgraduate teaching, which was a distance course. Whitehead recalled that in 1994, in conjunction with Ian Whitson, another member of the staff of Community Programmes at the time, two courses in Earth Science and History were developed as traditional paper based distance offerings. Whitehead commented:

> And Ian had the most fascinating course … I think it was probably borne out of his experience because I am sure he had spent time in the likes of Indonesia. He … had been involved in a lot of Adventist schools and development in the islands and that sort of thing. And he had this course that always seemed wonderful to me, much more interesting than the Earth Science course, because it was all about the Spice Islands and all the mystery of these sorts of things and it was great. And he and the students also used to say we have two great courses there because the Earth Science one is similarly captivating and they really liked that. So for a couple of years, 1994 to 1996 we ran that program … in Earth Science we had up to about 40 or 50 students in that program alone. I remember we had two groups, two sort of tutorial groups and I ran one and Slade Warne who was another person who contributed to the program ran the other one.

Mandy Bowden began lecturing in OFP in 1992 in Basic Mathematics that she recalled was needed as another option to Basic Quantitative Methodology, designed to meet the need of students transitioning into Business degrees. It was recognised that a Mathematics course that began at about year 9 level was needed to prepare students for a range of other disciplines such as nursing and teaching. Science Maths was introduced to prepare students for engineering and related disciplines. UON is the only university to offer Visual Art as an enabling subject[18] and one of the highlights of each year continues to be an exhibition of student work at the end of the year. Later, Graphic Design was introduced to meet vocational needs of students wishing to pursue work in this field. A range of languages have been taught in OFP depending on staff availability. These included French and German. Linguistics was also offered to assist students who wished to learn the fundamentals of language. Philosophy, Social Enquiry and English Literature had been offered from the earliest days and continued to be quite popular subject choices.

[18] Rosalie Bunn and Ibtihal Samarayi, "Advancing the study of Visual Art as a vehicle of multidisciplinary knowledge in enabling programs". Refereed conference paper presented at Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand, Bay of Plenty Institute of Technology, Tauranga, New Zealand, 3-5 December, 2014.

Dr Ruth Lunney began lecturing in OFP in 1993 to teach a subject called “Film and Theatre” that was run on Saturday mornings to meet the needs of students who could not commit to lectures during the week:

> I’d been working largely with the English Department at the University … running an essay writing program for ten years, and I’d also done some lecturing in English ... I began teaching the play script section of that course. Now that was put together with Janice Shaw … We showed films, we talked about play scripts, but we also went to theatre productions locally, and we worked on providing skills and analysis in three different areas: analysing performance; analysing scripts; analysing films ... We eventually extended to doing some classes down at Ourimbah, but it was more difficult there to get the local performances, so it was more theoretical there.

In addition to the assessable subjects it was recognised that literacy support classes would be required to assist students who wished to brush up on these skills. While Dr Lunney was involved with her OFP course, it was becoming obvious to her that the students needed some kind of support in writing and she advocated a more formal approach to assisting students with essay writing:

> Initially it was a very informal arrangement. We used to sit on the bench outside the office, and look at essays, and help them there. We were able to begin actual classes in essay writing. At that point it was called “Catch Up”. And there were catch up classes in writing and catch up classes in Mathematics. And so, I was able to establish this course which was catch up for writing essays. And that was from, get the right dates, 1997 to 2002.

The importance of expanding offerings continued in the 2000s when transitioning students into Health and Nursing degrees began to be the major destination preferred by students. The university adapted to this need by constructing a Science for Nurses subject, developed by Dr Bronwyn Relf and Cathy Burgess (see Figure 28).

Deputy Director, Dr Keryl Kavanagh, observed:

> Expanding the courses that we offer has been important. Recognizing changes that are happening in the Undergraduate world and trying to make sure that we have appropriate pathways for students entering Business degrees, for example. And developing the new Nursing course, I think these are important. Not just sticking with same old, same old, but making sure we adapt, and in a timely way (laughs), to the things that we see either happening in Undergraduate study or recognizing where we are not.

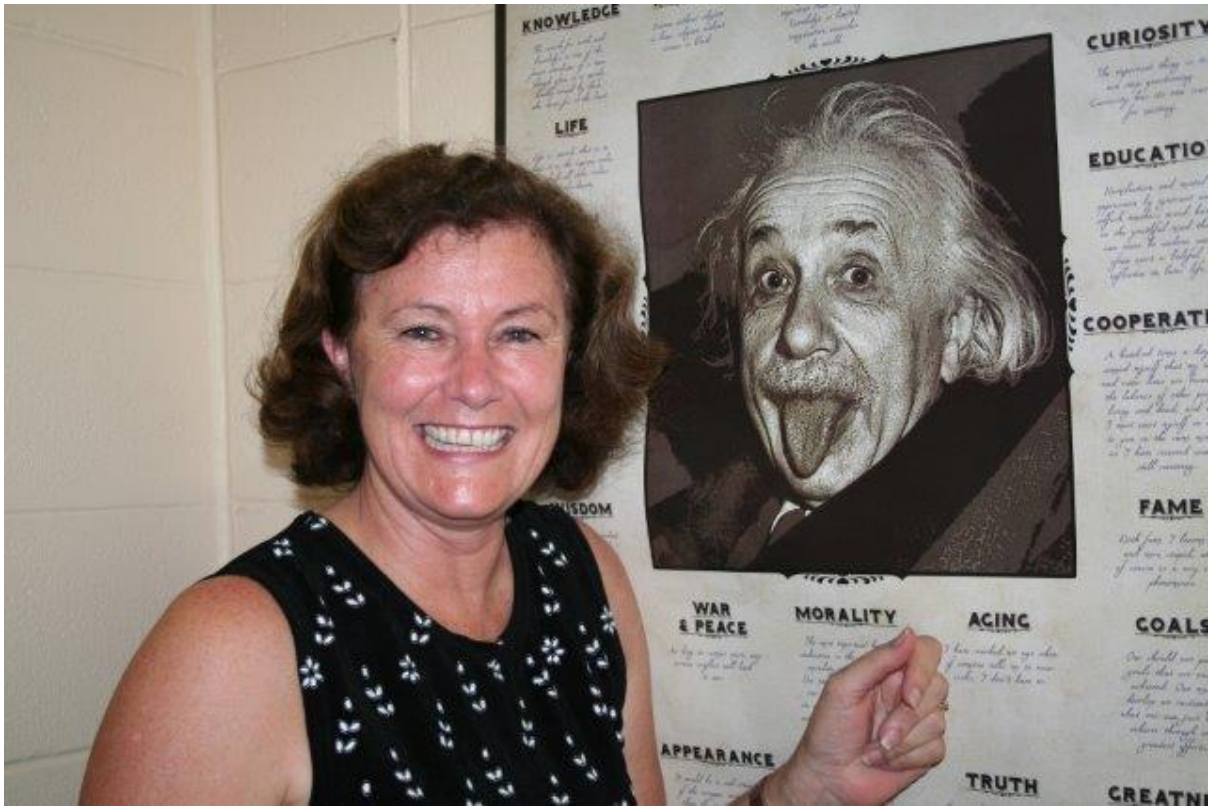

Figure 28. Cathy Burgess, 16.1.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Table 2: Subjects offered to OFP students in 2018[19]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	Australian History	Business organisation and Management	Chemistry and the Life Sciences
Classical Studies	Design in Society/Graphic Design Fundamentals	Earth Science	Environmental Studies
Extension Mathematics	Foundations in Education	Intermediate Mathematics	Introductory Mathematics
Law	Literature and Film	Philosophy	Physics
Science for Nursing and Midwifery	Social Enquiry	The Study of Language	Visual Art

Moves to encourage research on OFP

Until the 1990s, only staff who worked within OFP and held full time positions were able to produce research on the program. Their accounts covered topics such as drop-out

[19] https://www.newcastle.edu.au/future-students/open-foundation/what-you-will-study

rates,[20]characteristics of entrants,[21] and effective support for students.[22] John Collins lamented the fact that more attention was not paid to developing a research profile on these students:

> There was something that disappointed me about the University's attitude to the Open Foundation Course, and I believe that's changed ... But we tried to convince or interest the Education Faculty into doing some research into the Open Foundation Course and taking an interest in it ... And so, all the writing about the Open Foundation Course, until 1995 at least, was mine, or Bethia's or Brian's. And we were never quite comfortable with that. We would far have preferred that Bill Warren or [Ron] Laura or John Ramsland or some of the people who were established educational researchers [would do it]. I always thought it would have been far, far better for them to be saying things about the Open Foundation Course, rather than the people who were running it, but that's changed apparently.

In the latter part of the 1990s, some of the educational psychologists from UON did begin to conduct research on enabling students, including the mature age Open Foundation students, on topics such as achievement goals and beliefs about learning,[23] adjustment behaviours of mature aged women returning to study,[24] evaluating the effectiveness of enabling programmes for university entrance,[25] achievement and attitudes of students entering undergraduate studies via enabling programmes,[26] and a comparison of coping among mature age and high school entry students.[27] These papers and publications all used psychological variables and concluded that, in general, mature age students performed and coped better than the younger cohort who entered by traditional means. The authors found that as an equity programme, OFP provided sufficient preparatory background for undergraduate study. Their research continued into the 2000s and argued that contrary to

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[20] Smith, "Investigating 'Drop-Out' from the Open Foundation course," 17-24.

[21] John Collins and Bethia Penglase, "Offering a Second Chance – Who Accepts? Characteristics of Entrants to the University of Newcastle Open Foundation Course," *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education,* 31(3), 1991.

[22] Bethia M Penglase, "Mature-age access students: Affective support in the open foundation experience." *Studies in Continuing Education,* 15(1) (1993): 39-49.

[23] J Archer., S Bourke and R Cantwell, "Mature age students in an 'enabling' course at university: Their achievement goals, beliefs about learning, confidence, verbal ability, course satisfaction, and performance." Paper presented at the Combined meeting of the Education Research Association (Singapore) and the Australian Association of Research in Education, Singapore, 1996.

[24] R Cantwell and W Mulhearn, "The adjustment behaviours of mature-aged women returning to formal study", a paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Brisbane, 1997.

[25] Cantwell., Bourke and Archer, "The effectiveness of enabling programmes for university entrance, 1997.

[26] S Bourke., R Cantwell, R and J Archer, "Evaluation of an equity programme for University entrance." Paper presented at the Annual Conference of HERDSA, 1998.

[27] J Archer., R Cantwell and S Bourke, "Coping at University: an examination of achievement, motivation, self-regulation, confidence, and method of entry." *Higher Education Research & Development,* 18(1) (1999): 31-54.

the perception that widening participation led to a diminution of academic standards, examination of database records over three years indicated this was not the case.[28]

Dr Ruth Lunney, herself a published author with Manchester University Press,[29] had advocated the importance of research to professional development, but more importantly, to benefit the students:

> Lecturers needed to do research, and of course, this [examining history and impacts] is a very important area of research. It needs to be done, to find out what the best ways of helping students are. Also, and of course related to that, was the problem that most Open Foundation lecturers were casuals. And despite the fact that they had been teaching for many years, and of course that made things quite difficult, not just for them personally, but in order to raise the profile of the Open Foundation. That here you had a lot of people who were academically, extremely well qualified, who had a lot of experience, who just weren't being given any recognition. And like it or not, money does mean something, and position, and status.

Celebrating over Twenty Years of Open Foundation

During his Directorship, Associate Professor Robinson made representations to the university to have Dr Brian Smith honoured for his services to Open Foundation and to UON. He was disappointed that his recommendation of an honorary doctorate was denied, instead Dr Smith was awarded a distinguished service medal:

> I actually nominated Brian for an Honorary Doctorate and the obtuse buggers wouldn't do it. And they flew him over [from Perth] at one stage, put him up in a motel here, and they had a Graduation Ceremony, all the pomp and stuff, he got some sort of recognition, but it wasn't what I thought he should have got. But they did recognize him.

In 1998, the University also approved holding a reunion dinner for past OFP students to celebrate what was, at that time, its 24 year anniversary. The guest speaker, selected from the 1976 OFP student cohort, was Mrs Marjorie Cuthbert who had gone on to gain a Batchelor of Arts (BA Newcastle); and Master of Health Administration (MHA UNSW). Her other credentials included: Member of Community Health Nursing (CHNC); Fellow of Royal College of Nursing Australia (FRCNA); Fellow of the College of Nursing (FCN); and Australian Fellow of College of Health Service Executives (AFCHSE).

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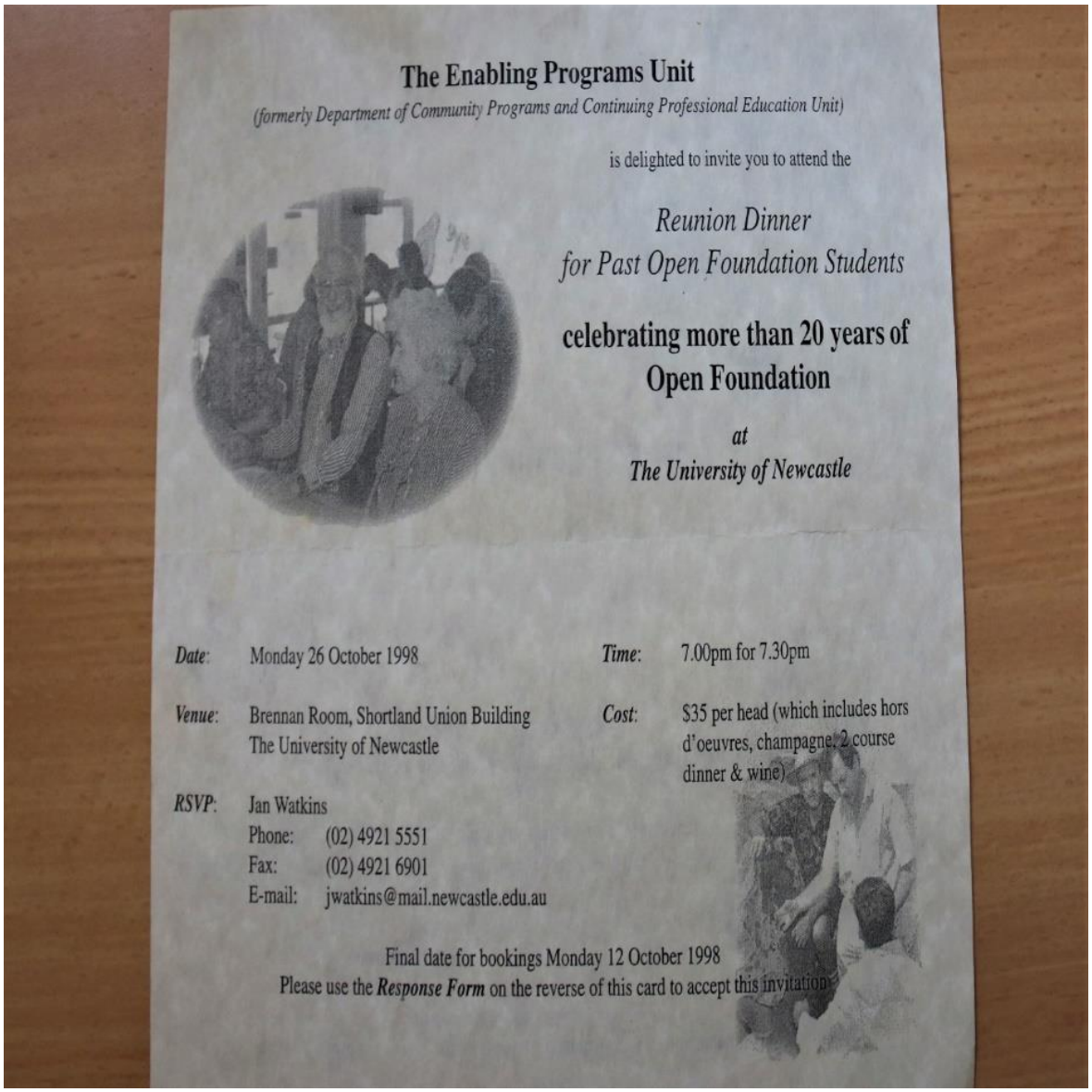
[28] Cantwell et al, "A Comparison of the Academic Experiences and Achievement of University Students Entering by Traditional and Non-traditional Means," (2001).

[29] Ruth Lunney, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition: Innovation in the English Drama before 1595,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.



The Enabling Programs Unit

(formerly Department of Community Programs and Continuing Professional Education Unit)

is delighted to invite you to attend the

Reunion Dinner
for Past Open Foundation Students

celebrating more than 20 years of Open Foundation

at
The University of Newcastle

Date: Monday 26 October 1998

Time: 7.00pm for 7.30pm

Venue: Brennan Room, Shortland Union Building
The University of Newcastle

Cost: $35 per head (which includes hors d'oeuvres, champagne, 2 course dinner & wine)

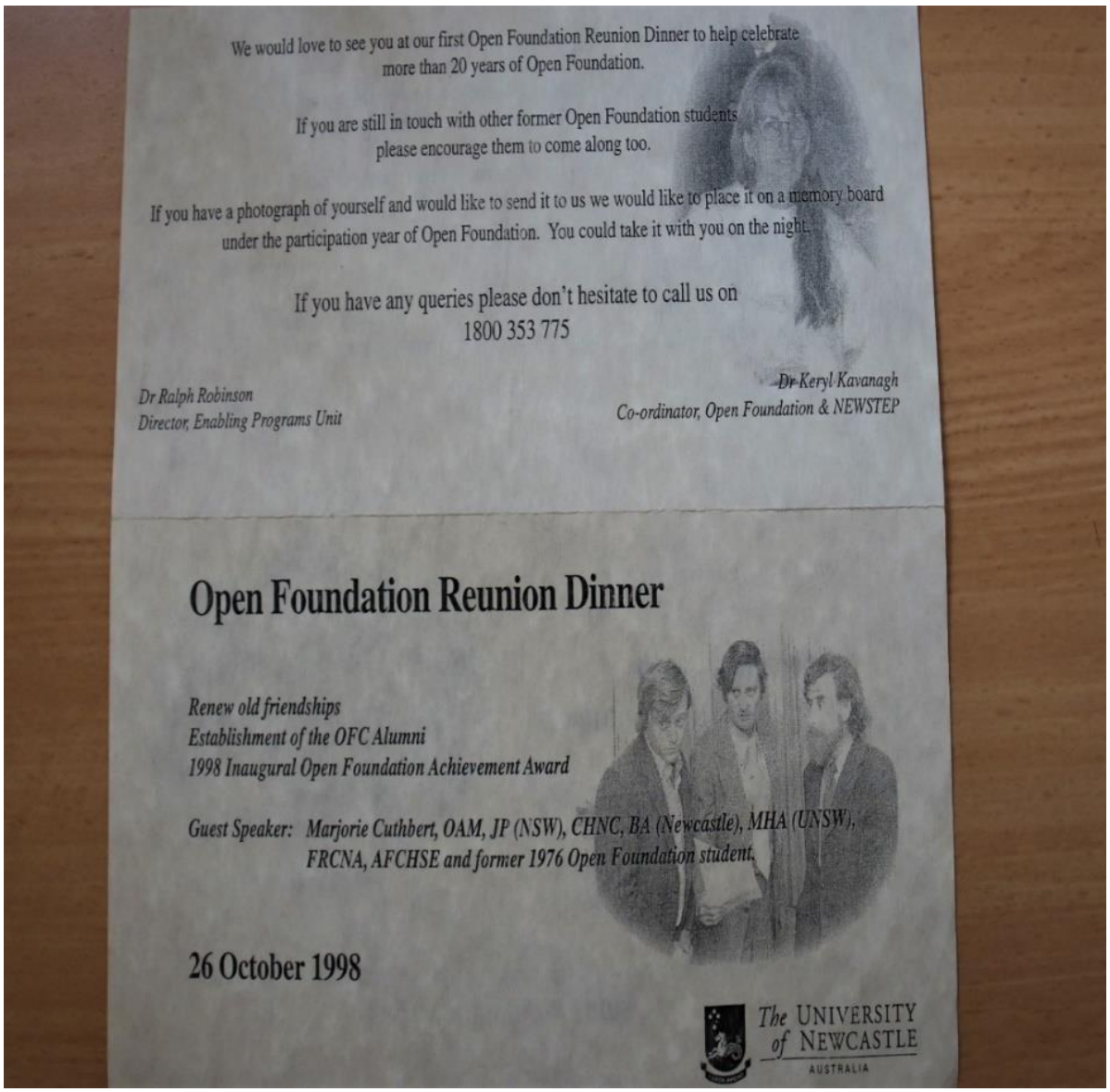
RSVP: Jan Watkins
Phone: (02) 4921 5551
Fax: (02) 4921 6901
E-mail: jwatkins@mail.newcastle.edu.au

Final date for bookings Monday 12 October 1998
Please use the ***Response Form*** on the reverse of this card to accept this invitation

Figure 29. 1998 Reunion Dinner Invitation (1)

Marjorie was awarded an OAM, a medal of the order of Australia for meritorious service to Nursing. She was also a Justice of the Peace (JP) and had become a Professor of Nursing. Prior to retirement she was Principal Research Fellow at La Trobe University (Albury-Wodonga Campus). She had variously served as President, Vice President and Member of the Board of Wodonga Regional Health Service for many years. Marjorie was awarded the inaugural Open Foundation Achievement Award in 1998. Her achievements demonstrated the heights to which a student could aspire despite significant obstacles. Marjorie had lost her husband and during her studies, still had a family of four to care for. One of her sons gave a speech at the 1998 dinner commenting on his realisation, only after completing his own studies, of his mother's sacrifice during the period of her studies. He stated that while he was drinking beer with his peers in the Godfrey Tanner Bar, his mother was bringing a thermos of tea, a packed lunch and economising in various ways so he could enjoy his

university experience. Marjorie's story typified the kinds of sacrifice many OFP students make to accommodate their families but also demonstrated the talent Marjorie brought to her community. The event, held on campus, was well attended and students were able to reconnect with peers from their past. The invitation to the reunion dinner featured photographs of staff (see Figures 29 and 30) who had been prominent in the program during that previous 24 years.



We would love to see you at our first Open Foundation Reunion Dinner to help celebrate more than 20 years of Open Foundation.

If you are still in touch with other former Open Foundation students please encourage them to come along too.

If you have a photograph of yourself and would like to send it to us we would like to place it on a memory board under the participation year of Open Foundation. You could take it with you on the night.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to call us on
1800 353 775

Dr Ralph Robinson
Director, Enabling Programs Unit

Dr Keryl Kavanagh
Co-ordinator, Open Foundation & NEWSTEP

Open Foundation Reunion Dinner

Renew old friendships
Establishment of the OFC Alumni
1998 Inaugural Open Foundation Achievement Award

Guest Speaker: Marjorie Cuthbert, OAM, JP (NSW), CHNC, BA (Newcastle), MHA (UNSW), FRCNA, AFCHSE and former 1976 Open Foundation student.

26 October 1998

The UNIVERSITY of NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Figure 30. 1998 Reunion Dinner Invitation (2)

Promoting OFP through remote and distance programs in the 90s

John Collins explained that establishing OFP by distance was part of UONs strategy to increase its presence in the region. This often meant sending staff to remote locations as "shock troops" to try to establish the University's presence on the Central Coast, the upper Hunter and on the mid North Coast. Collins said OFP classes were also run at Port Stephens

for a while and then at Port Macquarie. Dr Jean Talbot, who was involved in this teaching recalled:

> So there was a bit of time travelling. And I mean of course I couldn't be contactable, even if I had a phone (laughs) ... I think he [John Collins] thought by giving me a 0.8 appointment he would get all those things in one package. And he also wanted me to go to Taree (laughs). Well, I jacked up on that. I said "Is there any sick pay involved with this?" He said "Why, are you sick?" I said "No, but I will be if I do that!" (laughs again).

Dr Talbot commented on her experience of teaching in Muswellbrook:

> I was given a University car for that. I think it was envisaged that I drive there and back in the one night. I didn't want to do that, I think Bethia Penglase [Program coordinator and lecturer in essay writing] had not wanted to do that either ... And she wouldn't do it in one night. With the coal trucks going up and down that road it was really dangerous anyway, so I used to stay the night up there which was really rather nice. But I think, you know, it probably was too expensive for the Department to keep doing that. And there weren't enough students perhaps for that to continue. But I really enjoyed going up there. There were various attempts to find places to teach it, but in the end it was taught at the High School there. And I really did enjoy that … The Muswellbrook thing had been going for a while when I went up there. I wasn't the first one to do the travelling I don't think. I'm pretty certain Ralph Robinson travelled up there too.

Joe Whitehead was aware of the diverse locations of face to face offerings and the attempts UON had made to make OFP accessible for students, including in prisons. He recalled the "pilot type programs" offered at places such as Muswellbrook and Cessnock that were intended to take the university to the communities.

Mandy Bowden taught Distance Mathematics for about four years in the Distance program and described it as an interesting experience:

> The thing that Distance people miss out on, and I believe that's improving now because there's a lot more avenues for them to get the information, is the personal touch, the interaction, the physical interaction between teacher and lecturer, the distance, how we communicate back to them. They have access to the notes, but they have limited access to us. And I think that's where they were disadvantaged in the sense that they really miss out because they don't have the physical presence of someone with them. And it's very hard to reply to people mathematically.

She explained that advances in technology had been particularly helpful in this area as the communication barrier had previously created difficulties. She explained that a lot of work

had been done to refine the course further to make the delivery much better for Distance students:

> We have other things involved now where you can actually write things and they've got these special, electronic notepads that they use now. I didn't have access to them back then. But that was my difficulty, in communicating back to them in a level that they could understand. But it's huge [now], it's becoming really big. There's a lot of people enrolled in the Distance version of the course.

Students who chose the distance option were also sometimes in very remote locations. Joe Whitehead had observed:

> I personally had experience of lots of people [studying from remote locations] because in Earth Science they work at mine sites for example which are pretty remote. I've had people who were working on cruise ships all around the world ... Mediterranean, coast of America, California, that sort of thing, the Caribbean. I've had people who worked for Aid agencies and so they've worked in Haiti, Timor, places like that. I've had people work in the military who in theory we are not supposed to know where they are, but in practice, you know, we do. And they are in places like Iran, Afghanistan, lots in Timor, many of them at military bases in Australia of course. And guys who worked for the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) and they go off different places. And we've also had quite a number of people who've worked in embassies, so in places like China, Western Europe, United States and that sort of thing ... I've got three students … who are involved with sailing. Two of them are involved in delivering and crewing big sailing yachts around and so they are both in Chile at the moment. And I've got a guy who's in Switzerland who does smaller boat sailing and he is practicing for some world championships … he is part of an Australian squad and they do most of their practicing in Europe. So there is plenty of people who are fairly remote.

OFP in the 2000s

The Fifth Director, Associate Professor Seamus Fagan commented on the growth of OFP during his time with the Centre:

> This is my thirteenth year [2014] involved, to see the amazing growth. I was looking at some stats, in 2001 we had something like 1,300 students enrolled in Open Foundation. It's now over 2,100. And I think the highlight for us has been the development basically of the staffing profile. And you know Rosalie[30] through your

[30] The author was on the Branch Committee of the National Tertiary Education Union from 1998 as representative of casual staff and Secretary from 2008-16 when she was awarded Life Membership, the first female recipient of this award from UON.

> NTEU days it took us seven years to get to a stage where we got some permanency in staff. And I think that has changed a lot of things.

Approval to appoint a number of permanent academic staff did not occur until 2010. Until that time, OFP was mainly taught by casual staff on single semester contracts.

A largely casualized workforce

Long term lecturers who had been casual employees were asked about the impact of that experience. Their responses pointed to both the difficulties of insecure and precarious employment as well as the joy their teaching brought to them. Dr Angela Cowan who remained with OFP until 2004 commented that casual employment was:

> Very challenging, because it was very difficult to pay your bills and work casually, certainly a degree of exploitation in the sense that there'd be a lot of work that went unpaid, and this was true for all the casuals. Nice colleagues, but in fact if I hadn't had a husband with a good income I couldn't have afforded to stay teaching casually, basically. I would have had to have taken another job to be able to pay my mortgage and other bills. It was just that there was one person [in the family] with a permanent income that would allow me to have that casual income. So it was very difficult.

Another lecturer who commented on the need for financial support from her spouse when she was a casual was Dr Jill Bough. She also highlighted the dedication of casual staff to ensuring good outcomes for students that went above and beyond the amount of money they were paid for their service:

> Yes (laughs, long and loud). I was one [casual employee] for quite a long time (more laughter). Um, ah, dear. I mean, there is good and bad things. I mean one (laughs again), I remember my worst [experience] one semester, was when there was no money at all, so nobody was getting paid (laughs). Now, you know, that was OK with me, I had a husband who worked. But, I mean (laughs) that was not OK for everybody else. Now I don't think it's been quite as bad ever since then.

Dr Bough commented that the most difficult aspect of casual teaching was the "endless marking" and that being paid for only twelve minutes per essay or fifteen minutes for a term paper was "an absolute joke (laughs). I mean unless everybody is much faster than me, I think that's terrible." She reflected that the Centre was lucky that the casual lecturers are committed and prepared to spend time with the students that is outside the time they are paid for. She also noted the lack of security when staff never really knew for sure whether they were going to be reemployed the following semester. She stated:

> I think that's a very hard way to work, I don't think that's fair for people. But I do realize, you know, that Universities will probably be moving more towards that

> [casualization] for everybody. And we can see people who've been working here for years, have full time jobs, you know, fully paid, research people who really, did very little for the day to day life of the University, while the casuals are carrying the big, heavy load of students. So, back to one of my original points, to me it is the students and the people who teach them who should be valued above all else. I know research is, you know, what keeps the University going, but let's try and get a balance between the two.

In addition to the lack of income, limited contact with students also proved problematic, especially when pastoral care of students was expected and sometimes necessary. Cathy Burgess, lecturer in Life Science, found the students' needs were not being met in the way she would have preferred for enabling students who often required additional support:

> Being a casual was extremely frustrating because I was unable to devote the time that I wanted to the students for consultation. So you know, if I'm teaching from one to three I'd be out the door at ten past three, half past three and I'd know there'd be students there that would need help and I couldn't sit down with them. I did sit down with them and help them but there were times when I just couldn't, I had another commitment somewhere else. So it was very frustrating, extremely frustrating because I knew that the students weren't getting the best quality teaching from me in that time.

One lecturer found that UON's rules about employing spouses in the same school prevented her from obtaining a full time position in English Literature and she was forced to accept casual work in another location:

> I started a PhD because in the English Department, the Head of Department was saying "Well we're not going to employ anyone who doesn't have a PhD". So I started a PhD and then of course by the time I got it, there were three of us who'd got PhDs and were married to people in the Department and there was no way we were going to get a job and so I had hoped to get a full time job. And economically it has disadvantaged me a huge amount because I've been a casual all those years and with very little superannuation to show at the end of it. And I went on doing it [teaching in OFP]. I possibly should have got out and done something else (laughs). But I loved it … just simply being a teacher, and it was teaching I loved and it suited me down to the ground, it was an indulgence, in a way, that I couldn't really afford (laughs). I don't regret it, in one way I don't regret it, but now financially I am regretting it (laughs). (Dr Jean Talbot)

Another lecturer, Dr Barry Hodges, enjoyed the flexibility casual work allowed him to perform other voluntary work. He was also prepared to support his partner's academic pursuits rather than build a career for himself:

> Oh, I loved it, yeah. Absolutely loved it ... I didn't have a particular interest in a career. I was doing what I wanted to do, and I was happy being housekeeper and doing some work outside.

Dr Hodges enjoyed casual teaching and wanted to "keep my foot in the door" with UON by remaining as a casual, however he could see that not all casuals enjoyed that arrangement:

> So, I was politically happy working part time … but I'm not your typical situation. On the other hand, very few of us are, in fact, typical. In my experience the people who have worked casually in Open Foundation are people who are in that situation, partner working, often at the University; people who have retired from some other position and are looking for something to:
>
> 1. Keep them active and alert and
> 2. Give them some pocket money
> 3. People on their way up, people who've just finished PhDs and are doing PostDoc who are filling in time until they find a job.

Sometimes, staff juggled a number of casual positions at TAFE, or in faculties. John Collins noted that in the early years there was a heavy reliance on casual staff:

> We relied heavily upon casuals, of course ... Many of them were committed to spend more time marking and that sort of thing than the non-casuals, but then again, there were some who tried to get away with as little as possible because they had to stitch together lots of other activities in order to make a salary for themselves, so they were time poor ... All of our people were casuals [in the early years] , except for myself, Bethia, Brian Smith and it was only the tenured people, I suppose on Community Programmes that weren't casuals. When it came to Open Foundation, when [people like] Norman Talbot taught for us, he taught for us as a casual, so they were all casuals, I guess.

Dr Keryl Kavanagh also made observations that from the outset, the mid-seventies, Open Foundation depended largely on casual employees. She said Brian Smith's recruitment of academic staff from other departments of the University was on a volunteer basis. Some academics gave their time freely to the program, some staff of Community Programmes taught Open Foundation courses, and others were employed as casual staff. She speculated that this occurred because Brian Smith didn't have approval to spend money on developing OFP. It was cross-subsidized to some extent out of the other side of Community

Programmes' activities. She felt that was "really unfortunate because it wasn't developed as a professional activity from the outset." As student numbers grew, more people were brought in on a casual basis to teach different subjects. The subjects were expanded, more and more students enrolled and "the program developed in a haphazard way in response to student interest."

Figure 31. Dr Mavis Brown, 14.6.2012, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Casual employment also restricted staff's ability to implement curriculum. Dr Mavis Brown (see Figure 31) who taught English Literature was concerned about the effects on students due to the limited time she was able to spend with them, given their introduction to tertiary level literary concepts and texts: I'd think "How am I going to get through this amount [of work]". She noted that with OFP students "there's so much foundational work, principles, that you need to impart to them" that takes more time and patience than with undergraduate students.

Mathematics lecturer Mandy Bowden stated that her conditions of employment made her job difficult. Having been a casual since she first started at the University in 1988, she found this mode of insecure work had financial limitations and also restricted the type of teaching she could do: "You can only do so much as a casual. You can't engage with the students as much as you'd like, because you're simply not here and you're not paid to be here either."

She also found her casual status restrictive for other reasons such as accrual of Long Service Leave, reduced superannuation, and a lower percentage of superannuation compared to full time staff or people on contracts. She said: "I'm not sure what the percentage is now 9% perhaps for a casual employee as opposed to maybe … 17% full time. But I really haven't had a choice."

Another long term casual lecturer remarked that waiting for contracts and trying to make sure there was enough hours was problematic:

> we would invariably run out of marking hours, and run out of time and then they'd introduce formulas and say 'Well you should be able to mark, you know, six an hour or eight an hour' or whatever it was, and you know, it was a pain. And then they'd go through it with fine tooth comb and yeah, casual employment wasn't fun. I mean it was sort of nice to have the three months off each year, but you know, unpaid. I mean the whole Department ran on casuals … I guess you didn't feel like you really had much job security (Michelle Challinor, Chemistry and Life Science lecturer)

One of the former Directors noted, however:

> I think undoubtedly there is a place for it. In the early days it was probably the only way to do it because they didn't have any money. I think it preferable to have more full time staff provided they are very carefully picked ... But being casual undermines the person who's doing it, if that's all they can do. It's very disheartening for those people. And it can mean that they invest less in teaching than someone who is there permanently, say. I think there's been some periods when the casuals have done marvellous stuff, but I also think that the University has been pretty unscrupulous in the way it uses people. I'd say to people, we are going to pay you so much, now that so much is going to take you four hours to do, preparation, marking and so on, and you work it out that you're being paid less than someone on a checkout. The University has been quite unscrupulous in that way. (Associate Professor Ralph Robinson)

Some lecturers felt that the experience of being a casual in Open Foundation sometimes was detrimental to people's careers:

> Oh yes. People got stuck there. But the experience of casual employment made me realize how limited I'd been in my viewpoint of casuals when I was teaching in the schools. But, you came in, perhaps, for a seven o'clock lecture at night, and the place would be dark, and you'd have to turn the lights on. And then you'd have to go along, and at one point we had one small room in which was the photocopier, and the pigeon holes, and a cupboard, and a table, I think, and you had to produce all

> your handout material yourself. If you were lucky there was somebody else to talk to. But it was a fairly isolated existence. Ah, you didn't get to talk to your colleagues very often. And at the same time, you had to go through a whole lot of red tape to get paid. And then you didn't get paid for everything you did. It did improve, it did improve. But initially, in particular, there was lots of additional time you gave that you didn't get paid for. So if more people are getting permanent, or full time or part appointments now, all to the good! And I think it does give you more of a voice if you have that. And it gives you time to think, which is (laughs) one of the things I think you should have in academic life. Time to think. But, you know, there were people teaching far too many hours a week, and not really getting paid for it. We know about that. Yeah. (Dr Ruth Lunney)

This situation did improve somewhat, however, when, after much lobbying by the Director, Deputy Director and the National Tertiary Education Union, a number of staff were given full time appointments, although only a few of those were tenured positions. The rest remained contingent[31] for some time and some positions were allocated as fractional appointments.

One of these lecturers commented:

> Well I was a casual from 2004 to 2010. I guess I'd been a casual for a long time, because that's what I was at Undergraduate level as well, so I was very used to it. I think casuals here at this University are exploited quite a lot of the time. We seem to do a lot of work for free. I guess that's the lot of the casual. However, I must say in some ways being a casual suited me, because I could work full time some weeks if I wanted, and I had more say over what I did and what I put my effort into, I guess. And in those years of being casual I wrote journal articles and got them published. It wasn't that I wasn't doing anything, but I actually quite liked the flexibility. I've got used to being permanent now, but it took me a while, I must say. But obviously there's no career path or anything like that, so most people don't want to do it forever. It's a way in though. It's a way into a job, isn't it? It led me to a job. (Dr Susan West – see Figure 32)

Another lecturer also liked the flexibility and had been able to juggle high school teaching and night classes in OFP since 1992. Now in retirement, he continues to enjoy teaching Mathematics to mature age students. He remains on six monthly contracts. When asked how he had found the experience of being a casual employee in Open Foundation, he replied:

[31] Contingent employment means get the same salary and conditions but would be the first to be retrenched if funding was removed.

> Well I've known nothing different. I've only been basically on a six month contract for the last twenty [plus] years. I've never had any problem, so to speak, with that. I've never gone searching for problems. (Terry Mather, lecturer in Mathematics – see Figure 33)

Figure 32. Dr Susan West, 29.1.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

With 67,000 people, which constitutes 60% of the academic workforce,[32] being on casual contracts, this precarious type of work creates both an expendable workforce, but, as some respondents have indicated, also has some features that suit people's lifestyle. It has meant, however, that for OFP, without a dedicated staff, the program would not have run as well over the years because of the level of commitment required to meet student needs.

OFP evolves from Distance to Online

Associate Professor Fagan noted that as time went by, the Distance offerings transitioned into online and students were required to access their lecture materials via Blackboard:

> I think the other area that is important is online. It started off as a Distance Program. We started early when I came on board and it had a dual purpose. One was to reach out to isolated people who couldn't access education because of the tyranny of distance and also actually we found that most of our students were people around

[32] Geoff Maslen, "AUSTRALIA: Majority of academics are casual." *University World News, 25 January, 2018.* http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20101210221002512

the major cities who because of childcare concerns or other problems with work, couldn't access us on campus. It's been challenging.

Figure 33. Terry Mather, 8.3.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Enabling staff who worked on this material and on ensuring that online students were given effective orientation into OFP have been recognised with awards for their innovation and dedication to the needs of these students.[33] Joe Whitehead noted that in 2003 there were fears that student numbers in OFP may diminish. The university's response was to expand the Distance offerings:

> Distance programs was very much in response to a concern the University had that student numbers might be diminishing a little bit in the face to face programs and we might have, in a sense, mopped up the market around the Hunter for face to face students and so we were going to go after a student cohort that was around Australia and a bit more distant. And it was available to any permanent residents and Australian citizens, so we actually ended up picking up a few people that were overseas as well.

[33] https://www.academia.edu/9701628/Building_Academic_Survival_Skills_Online_A_collaborative_team-based_approach_to_online_course_design

The Distance programs continued to evolve and expand with improvements in technology and as marketing of the program became more effective. Joe Whitehead's role as Coordinator of these programs provided insights into its development:

> And from 2003 to 2011 we had another variant of the Distance Program and that started off as a paper based program which then, as technology developed … became available on disc. We used to send out in the first electronic offerings, it was a three and a half inch disc, and then CDs eventually became available and we sent material out on that. But people always got the paper based material as well and as the University's capacity to offer online, very loosely online, I mean downloadable rather than in an interactive sort of way online, we offered it in that way as well. And that program ran really until 2011 when we had another change and we've [now] got a more thorough going online program. So we've seen some changes there in the Distance Program. And, that's picked up some extra students. Our student numbers around Newcastle, Central Coast and more largely, Port Macquarie don't seem to have diminished significantly. And so I suppose the fear that we might run out of students here hasn't come about.

One of the interesting features of the Distance program Joe Whitehead observed was the number of local students who applied. He reflected on the reasons for this phenomenon:

> But we have picked up those extra students. One of the interesting things about the Distance Program is progressively as we offered the Distance Program an increasing proportion of those students are local students, very local to our campus. And so that is really a reflection of the fact that the students either can't or don't want to come to campus. And I don't think we are very clear about the reasons why that is the case. I mean, I think that the Open Foundation Program is pretty flexible, we offer it in the day and the evening, so an argument that they can't make it because they have a commitment to a particular time probably isn't the main reason. I think there is some students think they can do the program in less time if they do it on their own and they don't have to commit to lots of lectures, so maybe that is one reason.

Another reason local students were taking the Distance option may have been due to work, family or other commitments, which did not allow them to attend face to face lectures. The flexibility of OFP was an indication that it was attempting to meet student needs for mature learners. Distance education was not an option in the other enabling programs offered at UON. Joe Whitehead recalled that the second offering of Distance courses from 2003 to 2011 started with two courses, Earth Science and Chemistry and Life Sciences, developed by Michelle Challinor (see Figure 34). As Coordinator of Distance Programs, Whitehead remembered they were based on Open University (OU) principles learned from his

experience working in that program. He felt the two subjects “sat comfortably together”. The following year, 2004 two humanities courses were added: Australian History and Linguistics; and in the third year, 2005 Core Maths and Studies in Law were added.

Figure 34. Michelle Challinor, 13.2.2013, taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted

Michelle Challinor had taught in the Science Department before beginning teaching OFP in 2000. She recalled working in the Distance programs as well as on campus delivery with some of the largest classes in OFP. She commented on how increasing numbers of students required lecturers to adapt to changing needs:

> I guess when I first started our classes … [were] about thirty or forty [students]. And suddenly it just sort of snuck up, it just kept growing and growing. So I guess you just adapt because you don’t have any choice because it just suddenly got bigger and bigger ... I think if you can remember something about them and remember their name in a large class then they feel they’re not just a number, not just a face. You know, trying to kind of have just a little bit of a chat with each one at some stage during the semester helps ... other than that, it’s just time management, email management, all of that kind of thing when you’ve got a big class, pre-empting questions so you don’t have to answer them fifteen times.

Despite strong criticisms of teaching chemistry by Distance mode, the course had proven successful over many years and continued to be a popular subject:

> I don't know who thought Chemistry wasn't going to be popular (laughs) … I was teaching at TAFE as well and they [TAFE staff] were basically saying we were setting students up to fail and they were really angry about the fact that we could try and offer something like Chemistry by Distance, that it doesn't have the support, that students would fail, that it was appalling that the University thought they could do it, which made me kind of more determined then to make sure that they weren't going to be set up to fail.

Figure 35. Helene Clark Lecturer in Linguistics. Taken by R.Bunn. Permission granted.

Staff running the Distance programs, including Helene Clark (see Figure 35) who taught linguistics, had to adapt because courses were required to be parallel to on-campus classes with the same content and examination. Michelle Challinor explained that in her teaching, this involved trying to find experiments Distance students could do in their home kitchen rather than having to come in to campus and wait for time and space in laboratories. She remarked: "I think if they can do well at Distance they can prove that they're very good at self-motivation and organization, which usually if they do well at this they will do well in their Undergrad."

OFP becomes part of a Centre

In 2001, a further change of name occurred when the English Language and Foundation Studies Centre was established with Seamus Fagan as Director. Dr Keryl Kavanagh noted this development brought yet another branch of preparatory study into the Centre with the

inclusion of the Language Centre that provided English Language proficiency study for international students. At this point the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic became the Chair of the Board. Dr Kavanagh commented that this move allowed for consolidation and development of the programs after a period of upheaval. Associate Professor Fagan promoted a more formal management and academic governance structure within the Centre, and after much lobbying, the Centre was granted representation on the key University Committees: Academic Senate and the Teaching and Learning Committee. Dr Kavanagh, in her role as Deputy Director of the Centre, observed:

> As it turns out, this iteration of the Centre has allowed for a period of stability – so while there have been a number of significant challenges which have emerged from time to time, there has also been the opportunity to undertake future planning. Positive outcomes include the development of Open Foundation by Distance, the introduction of new courses, improved staffing, developing links with Faculties and participation in mainstream University activities.

Conferences and National Association of Enabling Educators Australia (NAEEA)

In 2004 and 2007 UON took the initiative of organising the first and second enabling conferences in Australia. The Director, Associate Professor Seamus Fagan reflected on his part in bringing the conferences about and promoting the National Association of Enabling Educators Australia (NAEEA). At that time Associate Professor Fagan had been involved on a national level with the English Language Association:

> When I came to Enabling I was shocked that we had no conferences. There was no real professional development and there was no national association to represent. So with a lot of trepidation, I think some of my staff were a bit stunned, when I said we were going to do a conference. But you know the staff here, once you give them a task they grasped it and we ran the first conference [in 2004] and then the next year it was supposed to be run by Monash and Monash went through a restructure and it never happened so we did again in 2007. And all along we were pressing the group of Enabling Educators that we needed an association. So it was good … in Melbourne [2013] we finally got it endorsed. But there was always a group that was interested in that. But I think, when someone asked me years ago why did I start it? I was tired of senior people in our university saying "Oh we're the leader in enabling education". But where were we showing leadership? And I think by us setting up the conference which I think is a great legacy from Newcastle to enabling education, and through the national association, I think that's our biggest contribution.

From the outset, the conferences were supported by New Zealand colleagues and a decision was taken to alternate the conferences between the two countries. The conferences and the networking that have resulted from them have led to extensive research collaborations and are a highlight of each year when enabling educators can share their work with the

sector. Keynote speakers, both national and international, have enriched the understanding of enabling education and the associations have become effective lobby groups to promote and protect the sector in both countries. Open Foundation lecturers figure prominently among the presenters each year at these conferences.

Attainment ceremonies

For more than two decades students who successfully completed OFP simply received an offer of acceptance into their chosen undergraduate degree. Students were not officially informed of their marks, although in practice in some subjects they could phone their lecturer and receive an unofficial indication of how they had performed in assessment and examination. There was no fanfare, merely informal celebrations were organised spontaneously by students among themselves at the end of the program. Sometimes they would invite their lecturers to these events. However, by the late nineties staff began to question why the Newstep program was accorded a graduation ceremony while the mature students were not recognised. Professor English recalled the introduction of Recognition of Attainment Ceremonies (ROAC) which were not officially graduations, but nevertheless assumed an important part, usually near the end, of other graduations across UON:

> And that's when we introduced things like proper little Graduation Ceremonies where we'd all turn up in our academic gown, which we should, and you know present a certificate and people had achieved something, they'd actually graduated from the program.
> **They call them Attainment Ceremonies.**
> Attainment, that's right. We weren't allowed to call them Graduations, but it was modelled on the Graduations.

Professor English recalled that ROACs were very meaningful ceremonies, modelled exactly on undergraduate graduation ceremonies and constituted his most vivid memories of OFP:

> We had an academic procession and the Head of the unit, just as a Dean represents the candidates to the Chancellor … the Head of the program presents the candidates. I think I used to take the role of the Chancellor as President of Senate and I certainly kept attending when I was Deputy Vice Chancellor. But it was just one of those things about centralizing it. When we set the program up at Port Macquarie, one of the major parts of that we insisted be an Enabling Program again, so that Open Foundation was up there.

Professor English described the Central Coast ceremonies as particularly moving:

> You would turn up, I'd jump in the car at the end of the day, drive down to Ourimbah, you know with the academic gown in the back. We'd wander up that dark campus to the hallway at the back of the library, I think it was, and you'd be met

> with a sea of a faces and they'd all have their partners and their kids with them or whatever, we'd put on an academic procession and come down the centre of the hall, it was a big lecture theatre, and be arranged in seats at the front. We all had a Graduation Ceremony in mind as a model. And you'd call people up, and then there'd be prizes for those who'd done well. It was an absolute joy to attend those. I mean the ones here [Callaghan] were similar, but the ones at the Central Coast were outstanding. And people would come up to you afterwards and tell you about the good teacher they had, you know, it was brilliant. So that's a vivid memory. It's a bit like saying what is a memory of childhood and I remember Christmas Day, that was good. The other things were the dedication of the staff.

Professor English also recalled some of the conversations he had with students at this event:

> It was like you'd taught 'em to fly or you'd given them wings or something ... they would tell you what they were going to do you know. Yeah, I mean they would already know which program they wanted to do, and they'd already been around and talked to the lecturer you know in the subject they wanted to do next year at University or whatever. And they were ready to go. Maybe the ones who weren't going to go didn't come and talk to you, but the ones who came and talked to you, they were up and running. They knew where they wanted to go. And invariably at those Attainment Ceremonies you'd weave their stories into your [recollection] but you'd just been at a previous Graduation Ceremony where two of the four PhD students or whatever had started in Open Foundation. So you tried to encourage the idea that this could take you anywhere too. But the ones that spoke to you were, as I say, it was like they'd had a second chance at life and they knew what they wanted to do … I just remember the kind of "I'm going to do law" or "I'm going to do Nursing" or whatever. A couple would say "My son's starting University next year and I'm now starting with him", that sort of stuff. I just remember general positive comments about "I know what I'm going to do" and "I'm now able to do it".

The Director, Associate Professor Seamus Fagan remembered many student stories recounted at the Attainment ceremonies:

> I think my favourite one … was at Ourimbah ... it was the truck driver. We've had so called great achievers, an Associate Professor in Law at Sydney, but he [truck driver] stood out for me. And his wife … said he used to come home and say "I don't want to do this job anymore. I've done it for twenty years". And then she had googled on the web, found Open Foundation and then the next time the situation came up she said "Do that [Open Foundation], and he became a great teacher, he went out to Moree and I think came back to the Central Coast. But all the speeches have been great. I've come out a number of times from a series [of Attainment ceremonies] because I've been around long enough with the programs, of Vice Chancellors and Chancellors,

> and I don't know how many of them have said to me that the speeches at our Attainment ceremonies were the best they had heard. We were often the last cab off the rank for Attainment and Graduation ceremonies and they said they were the best, because they came from the heart. The articulation of how education had changed their life just blew them away. And I've talked with other people who've come [to Attainment ceremonies] for the first time who've said "Wow, I wish I'd come before", because the ceremonies were just amazing. So they're very important and it was a great initiative.

Administrator, Jan Watkins, catalogued the speeches, she commented: "I hope they still keep them because they're inspirational. And some of those [students] have got the stories to tell." Dr Jill Bough loved the glamour of the ROAC, she recalled:

> standing up and being the person handing out the certificates and seeing all those wonderful smiling faces. That is always the sort of good end of the job and seeing what people go on to do. Very, very fulfilling and very rewarding.

ROAC was also the most vivid memory for the Deputy Director, Dr Keryl Kavanagh:

> Well one of the things that I feel quite strongly about was persuading the University to have a Recognition of Attainment Ceremony for students who've completed Open Foundation. I think that was a very important acknowledgement of what students had undertaken. And then the next step in terms of the recognition of attainment was inviting former students to deliver the Occasional address rather than have the VC, yes the Vice Chancellor said some decent things to the graduating students, but having someone who had been there and then gone on to do some other things, was really important. And one of the most gripping, well there have been several gripping speeches from some of those alumni, but a couple stand out - one was from Catherine Driscoll who is now a Professor at the University of Sydney in Women's Studies. That was just really something having her deliver the Occasional address. And because she could talk to the higher powered administrators who were the Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, President of Academic Senate and so on, in her speech she could demonstrate to them how important this kind of education really is. And that was a very powerful thing to be able to do. So, you know, those things I feel very proud about.

Chancellor Professor Trevor Waring (see Figure 21) who officiated, referred to the graduation ceremonies as 'harvest festivals' in which undergraduate students were appropriately proud of their achievements. However, he considered the Attainment ceremonies where Open Foundation and other enabling students were conferred with certificates to have quite a different atmosphere:

> Well, it's interesting. The Attainment events came in, they weren't always part of the Graduation process. And indeed, when I was Deputy Chancellor … I often did those as well, so from Deputy Chancellor through my years as Chancellor. I just looked forward to them. I found with the Graduation Ceremonies … they are wonderful times of what I refer to as sort of "Harvest festivals". You know, here is the product. But it's a product that you expected, so that every one of those young people who came across, and not so young people, who came across the stage we expected they would do well. They were bright, they were in University, they had graduated, they had done it. They've shown their way. And the fifteen hundred or so people who are gathered there on the day expected it to happen as well. And they are people by and large who are middle to upper class and have fine jobs and fine cars and fine attire. And they turn up and it's all very appropriate and a great time of celebration. I love it.
>
> But at the end of all of this came the Attainment Ceremonies. And they were noticeably different, again at a variety of levels. Here were a group of people who had taken hold of an opportunity that many thought was not available to them, and were just so grateful for the opportunity that they flung themselves into it. It was a scary experience for most of them. They tell their stories, that it was frightening. But the support they received from the staff who regarded it as being their mission … had made it much easier for them. And they then, on the day, would turn up and even though they weren't gowned you could see that they had by and large, presented themselves well for the opportunity. And the fact that they would be involved in a ceremony where there was an academic procession, where people were gowned, would come across the stage when their name was called out, that shook hands with the Chancellor and were given a certificate, was a big moment for them.
>
> But when you looked down into the audience and saw such a congregation of people, many of whom:
>
> a. had never been near a University
> b. were obviously in clothes that they didn't feel quite comfortable in but saw it as being important enough to do so out of sheer respect for the occasion and the individual who was attaining a certificate.

The Chancellor also considered the ceremonies as his most vivid memory of OFP due to the impact of the student speeches:

> I think probably because you get the details, there are two that come to mind. One is the speeches of the person who is selected to speak on behalf of their colleagues, and there you get some detail of their particular journey or life story, and then you

> sort of replicate that you look across [the audience] and think every person out there could tell a similar story, and it was clear they could. And the second thing was when you mixed with folk after the Attainment Ceremony, they told you their stories. So it's the real people stories that stick in your mind. And then later to hear the stories of people [like] "I've just finished a PhD" in graduations "and I started off in the Open Foundation course". That sort of story is very gratifying.

The Chancellor was aware that in some years there's been quite a high proportion of University medal holders who have come out of Open Foundation:

> And it's not only the Open Foundation Attainment Ceremonies but in Graduation Ceremonies there is this strong sprinkling of people who've had an opportunity to go to University and who did the Open Foundation course but who … are medal holders. Very bright people. And I can't get over the idea that their contribution would have been largely lost to the community. I mean, what an asset, what an investment, what a return.

External Review of OFP in 2006

In November 2006 a report from a review of OFP was delivered to UON.[34] The review committee, consisting of prominent academics from both Schools within UON, the Deputy Director of the Centre in which it is located, a library representative, a former student and Professors Richard James (University of Melbourne) and Eleanor Ramsay (University of South Australia) who were familiar with enabling education, commented in their executive summary that OFP was an "exemplary program to broaden university access" and was "one of the leading and most well recognised programs in Australia". The committee stated that OFP:

> Is distinguished by its scale, longevity and the significant proportion of students it contributes annually to the University of Newcastle's undergraduate intake. It is a major strategic element in the University's regional educational mission and is potentially of increasing importance in the context of Federal policy objectives of institutional diversity.[35]

Among the committee's recommendations was that OFP be included in the 'core business' within the university in line with other academic programs; that it expand the number of core academic staff; and that it develop enhanced processes of student advising and tracking 'at risk' students. This report signalled a recommended shift in the marginalized position of the program and closer surveillance of quality assurance processes. This included a more formal relationship with Schools and Faculties regarding course approval, evaluation and review processes. Recommendations also covered greater provision of ESL training;

[34] Report from the Review of Open Foundation BELFS06:27, 1-32.
[35] BELFS06:27, 4.

support for Indigenous students; and a more transparent funding model to ensure a consistent revenue base.[36] The statistical data provided as evidence of the successes of the program highlighted the role OFP played both within UON and its regions of influence. The concluding comment related to the "huge and enduring contribution" OFP made and that its benefits were "far reaching, not least in raising the socio-economic sustainability and cultural capital of the region."[37] UON would now be held accountable for implementing the report's recommendations.

Vice Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence 2007

This award was conferred to Open Foundation teaching staff for their dedication and commitment to teaching. Compiled by Ruth Stockdale and Rosalie Bunn,[38] the application addressed the large student numbers, enabling ethos and provided examples of teaching philosophies. Dr Ruth Lunney had advocated applying for the award to raise the profile of OFP within UON. She observed:

> Well I felt increasingly that the profile of Open Foundation within the University was not nearly as high as it should have been ... I did express this opinion at various meetings, that it was very important for Open Foundation to lift its profile, that there were national Teaching and Learning Awards that could be applied for. There were things such as [this] to establish the program academically and within the University.

Later, Dr Lunney assisted writing an application for a national Carrick Award that was unsuccessful, but highlighted the fact that OFP was the largest tertiary preparation course in Australia and graduated a significant number of students who were well prepared for undergraduate study.

HEPPP funding provides additional support for disadvantaged students

Another development that made a big difference during the 2000s was the instigation under Prime Minister Julia Gillard's government of Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP) that provided funding for student support.[39] Associate Professor Seamus Fagan commented:

> That's made a difference to us. We've been able to embed counsellors to be able to provide the support that our students need. And you know, that worries me in the future. I mean we know we've got funding for another three years, but after that, who knows? So I think the HEPPP funding enabled us to provide the support that our students needed.

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[36] BELFS06:27, p6.
[37] BELFS06:27, p32.
[38] https://www.newcastle.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/116865/2007-UON-AR-Volume_1.pdf p.23
[39] https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-participation-and-partnerships-programme-heppp

The idea of "embedding" related to ensuring the counsellor at Callaghan campus was in close proximity to where the students' classes were conducted so they had easy and quick access to appointments. A system of special appointments was devised at the Ourimbah campus to ensure enabling students were given priority. Counsellors were also invited into classes at the beginning of semester so students were acquainted with them, and they returned at the end of semester to deliver information on stress management before examinations. UON's handling of students experiencing distress was considered innovative and productive by other universities that contributed to research into this issue.[40] In addition, the HEPPP funding provided a student liaison officer at each campus to more effectively meet student needs and provide a sounding board and be an advocate for them.

Re-educating students who were gaol inmates

Across all decades in which OFP has operated, consideration has been given to re-educating prison inmates. In line with Brian Smith's views on catering to all sectors of the population, OFP has made special efforts to accommodate people who were serving time in gaol. In some instances the prisoners would come to campus accompanied by a prison guard, or they may have had day release. In other instances staff would go to the prison. Several of the staff remembered this initiative. Jan Watson, in her role as administrator, recalled organising staff to provide lectures in local gaols and in assisting inmates who had recently been released from prison to negotiate bus timetables.

John Collins recalled that prison inmates were taught in gaols at Cessnock, Maitland and St Helliers, at Muswellbrook. Associate Professor Ralph Robinson also taught in the gaols and found the experience very interesting:

> The inmates who came, only a few of them, were quite interested. I had a very negative impression of their keepers ... but I thought it was worth doing. I suppose at one end of the social disadvantage you're going to get a lot of people who are deprived and the only way they can cope is to break the law. I refuse to make harsh judgements about them. They're that way, partly because the rest of us are the way we are. And partly because of the sorts of crimes in society built on greed, so I think it's important for those students, like any others, to relate first of all as people, and

[40] Nicole Crawford., Joannne Lisciandro., Angela Jones., Megan Jaceglav., Deanna McCall., Rosalie Bunn., Helen Cameron., Marguerite Westacott and Sharon Andersen, "Models of support for student wellbeing in enabling programs: comparisons, contrasts and commonalities at four Australian Universities." Refereed conference paper presented at Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand, Auckland NZ, 1-2 December.

> to deal with where they are. Teach them as well as you can without placing too many constructions on them. So it's a worthwhile thing to do.
> **So did they go into degree programs?**
> They could have, although you see the gaol system is such that someone who's doing a course like this might find they have been shifted to another gaol just before they do their exams. So there's a lot of wastage of what could be positive things for students. I left with very negative impressions of the gaol system, and that's one of the really freest at St Helliers.

Roma Kane recalled that as a student herself, inmates also attended the campus:

> I came in with some very unusual people. They came down from Cessnock Corrective Centre. And they had many and varied views on life, and we were to find out about all of them, in actual fact.

In one case the student was sentenced to several years gaol during his course and was supported by his lecturers to complete both subjects. The Registrar organised for study materials to be sent to him and for his OFP examination to be supervised at the prison. Upon completing his gaol term, he went on to study a B. Arts and complete an Honours degree.

Some concluding comments on the 1990s and 2000s

This and the previous chapter have traced some of the major events as recalled by interviewees. They recounted what was significant for them according to their time and role across more than four decades of OFP's operation. As discussed in Chapter 4, there are many methodological problems with uncritically accepting people's memories as facts. At the same time, this method allows insights that are not possible through official versions as the oral histories provide a personalized account and in some instances, a critique of institutional practices. In this regard, the history chapters have discussed the enthusiasm to establish and support OFP as well as the obstacles, not only during the early years but also later when there were moves to make OFP and the other enabling programs profit driven programs. This was heavily opposed by staff who remained committed to its educational and philanthropic purpose.

The early years were also characterised by a great deal of experimentation with curriculum and Open Foundation students were exposed to a range of talented academics during the course of their studies. Over time, the philanthropic potential of OFP changed to a much more academic and vocational focus. One staff member who reflected on these changes stated there had been a noticeable change in the types of students enrolling in OFP: "We've changed from the way that we ran things back in the early 90s. We were part of Community Programmes and the student cohort was kind of different because students had to pay for their involvement in it." She also commented on the fact that OFP was part of "a separate unit, we weren't part of the University profile as well." She also observed that "the ages of

the students has become younger" and that the introduction of the Intensive program across one semester had meant that students could transition into university more quickly than they been able to in the full year program. She commented:

> What I think is very nice about Enabling is that students want to learn. That's the thing that I like about it the most is that students are motivated to learn in the program. (Mandy Bowden, Mathematics lecturer)

Finally this chapter examines the initiatives taken more recently that highlight the development of a research focus to share the valuable information gained from the experience of teaching OFP within the sector. As the important work that enabling educators do becomes recognised the prestige of the program grows and more students benefit from their second chance. When asked about the significance of OFP one of its Deputy Vice Chancellors commented:

> I mean I still think, there are two or three things people ask me about the University, Open Foundation is one of the things I thought Newcastle did extremely well. I was always very proud of the fact, it had nothing to do with me, it happened long before I got there … So a few things like that, certainly Newcastle could do it if you had somebody with an idea, you'd get on and do it. (Professor Brian English)

The following chapters 7-11 explore data retrieved from students about the impact of OFP on their lives and those of their families. They cover reasons they enrolled, transformations that occurred as a result of taking the OFP path, and career outcomes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FROM SURVEYS AND REASONS PEOPLE ENROLLED IN THE OPEN FOUNDATION PROGRAM

This chapter provides details of the student survey that was designed to collect evidence of the impacts of this tertiary preparation program run by the University of Newcastle on the people to whom it was taught. The data were sourced from 350 respondents who had undertaken this mature age entry program between 1976 and 2012. They were prompted to reflect on their experiences before, during and after completing the program in order to provide a student perspective on OFP.[1] Because it was a self-selected sample of former students invited to complete the survey, these findings are not generalisable. However, they do provide insights into the lives and stories of a significant number of former students and constitute a body of evidence about the impact of OFP on the lives of those who agreed to participate. The survey contained both quantitative questions intended to elicit demographic data; and qualitative short answer questions that prompted more personalised accounts of these students' experiences. Patterns and meanings have been drawn from this data set.[2]

As outlined in Chapter 4, the survey ascertained demographic details, reasons for enrolling, experience of the Open Foundation, degree destinations and wider impacts. A closer examination of their reasons for enrolling indicated that it was not merely to gain a qualification or improve their career prospects, although this was important to them, but that it often related to identity formation and a range of other variables including it being the right time in their lives, some disorienting dilemma they may have experienced or other external factors. As argued in Chapter 1, Bourdieu's theories provide openings through which to analyse this data in terms of how people understand their mission to achieve a more fulfilling life through higher education. Although they may not be aware of it, what they seek is the additional cultural capital required to negotiate the HE field and to change their habitus in order to embrace this new experience. A closer examination of survey participant demographics follows.

Participant demographics

The majority of students who responded to the survey were female, a fact that has bearing on the voices presented in qualitative data.

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[1] The survey instrument is reproduced in Appendix 3.

[2] V Braun and V Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2) (2006).

Table 3: Sex of student survey respondents

Sex	Number	Percentage
Female	272	77.72%
Male	78	22.28%
Total	350	100%

While the early offerings of the program were reported as "divided almost equally between men and women"[3], by 1987, the first Director reported that 68% of the OFP cohort were women and 32% men.[4] More recent data provided by the university in 2013 indicates that across all its enabling programs, roughly 57% of students were female.[5] This figure is consistent with Australian Department of Education and Training statistics that reported in 2017 that 55.6% of people enrolled in HE were female.[6] So while there has been a tendency after the early years of the program for more females to enrol, as seen in Table 3, survey results indicate a higher response rate by female participants. This high response rate by women may indicate a greater willingness by women to participate in research. This gendered response rate is consistent with other studies[7] that canvassed the views of students who responded from UON's PEPPR register.

Gender and enrolment patterns

Some of the gendered patterns cited in other studies of mature students entering HE were consistent with my data, others were not. In their 2002 publication on mature students and higher education choice Reay, Ball and David[8] comment that:

> Existing studies of mature students [in Britain] usually state that while women assert that they have enrolled for reasons of personal development and an interest in education for itself, men are more likely to give instrumental reasons for returning to education.

The data collected for this study are consistent with that finding. Males were more likely to refer to career goals in their survey responses. Reay's qualitative analysis of 12 mature women in British access courses reported that it was "the doing of a degree that was important rather than instrumental goal orientation." The mature women in Reay *et al's*

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[3] Collins and Penglase, "Offering a Second Chance," 193.

[4] Brian Smith, *Open Foundation: an account of The Mature-Age Matriculation Programme at The University of Newcastle,* (Newcastle: Department of Community Programmes, 1987), 33.

[5] University of Newcastle, *ELFSC at a glance,* English Language and Foundation Studies Centre, *2013.*

[6] https://docs.education.gov.au/node/50236 Table 1.1: Summary of first half year student numbers, 2016 to 2017(a) (accessed 12 July, 2018)

[7] Seamus Fagan., James Albright and Michelle Oshan, "The Ripple Effect: how enabling education impacts on the individual, the family and the community." Paper presented at Foundation and Bridging Educators Conference, Tauranga, New Zealand, 2014. https://www.newcastle.edu.au/profile/seamus-fagan#ghETHcOlihBlEXiP.99

[8] Reay., Ball and David, "It's Taking Me a Long Time but I'll Get There in the End," 7.

study expressed pleasure in the pursuit of knowledge, a need to care for others, to make a difference to people's lives and to make a contribution to society, which runs counter to what Reay *et al* describe as "prevalent discourses of individualisation".[9] One respondent in my study noted that she enrolled "To get a degree and to better myself and others" (073: Female). Her aim was not just personal consideration but to make other people's lives better in consequence of the education she received.

The idea of being "useful" was a dominant theme in another of Reay's studies. The twist lay in Reay's comment that for 11 of the 12 respondents, their justification was to give back for what "they clearly perceived to be an essentially selfish act."[10] This contradiction lies in the idea that taking time out to gain an education is perceived as self-interested despite the fact that their intentions might be to work in one of the "caring" professions after they have qualified. Reay argues this reveals the "complexities and contradictions of reflexive modernisation in which projects of the self can be aligned with a strong sense of community commitment and a desire to 'give back', but sometimes carry the guilt of taking the journey in the first place. Putting ego at the centre "has traditionally been more acceptable for some groups in society rather than others: men more than women; the middle classes more than working classes; white Western cultures more than [others]."[11] Many women in my study ensured their childcare and family commitments were privileged before their own educational aspirations.

Reay also found that women were more likely to wish to "give back" to their communities the benefits of their new professional expertise. She draws on the work of Lawler[12] to explain that "the commitment to giving back allowed them to reconcile difficult contradictions between wanting to escape from, whilst seeking to preserve, their working class identities."[13] Contrary to Reay's findings, my data revealed that a number of men also felt constrained by their working class identities in that at a time when they might have pursued higher education, their families thought it inappropriate and they were pressured to enter blue collar work. One male respondent wished to "give back" to the community as repayment for treatment of his injuries, rehabilitation and support following a spinal injury. He was in the process of studying a welfare degree at the time of survey.

Table 4: Birthplace of Open Foundation student survey respondents

Origin	Number	Percentage
Australia	302	86.2%
UK	24	6.8%

[9] Reay, "A Risky Business?" 304.
[10] Reay, "A Risky Business?" 305.
[11] Reay, "A Risky Business?" 306.
[12] S Lawler, "Escape and escapism: representing working-class women," in *Cultural Studies and the Working-class: subject to change, ed.* S Munt (London: Cassell, 2000).
[13] Reay, "A Risky Business? 306.

UK: 3; England: 11; Scotland:6; Ireland:2; Nth Ireland: 1; Wales:1		
New Zealand	8	2.3%
Europe Germany:2; Sweden:2; Countries with 1 student: Romania; Switzerland; Denmark; The Netherlands	8	2.3%
Pacific Solomon Is:1; Tonga:1	2	0.6%
South Africa	2	0.6%
Asia Thailand:1; Vietnam:1	2	0.6%
Central Asia Turkmenistan:1	1	0.3%
Central America Panama:1	1	0.3%
	350	100%

The birthplace origins of the survey cohort show little diversity. Given that applicants must be permanent residents of Australia, it is not surprising that Table 4 shows over 86% were born in Australia. The remainder were from the United Kingdom; New Zealand; Europe; the Pacific; Asia; and Central America. Those who were citizens of Commonwealth countries comprised 95.9% of the sample, which would suggest a familiarity with the English language and British tradition of education. This sample therefore does not reflect the experiences of many students of Open Foundation for whom English is a second language, nor for those who come from a refugee background who, in 2013, constituted 0.7% of students enrolled across all enabling programs at UON.[14]

Table 5: Student respondents with Disability

No Disability	312	89.2%
Disability	38	10.85%
Total	350	100%
Women with disability	28	8%
Men with disability	10	2.85%

As Table 5 demonstrates, almost 11% of respondents reported entering the program with a disability. In 2013 UON reported that across its enabling programs 7-9% of students identified as having a disability, so this response rate is higher than for recent enabling students.[15] For some of these people, their disability involved a learning disability such as dyslexia; but for others it was physical, often the result of an accident; or psychological such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or agoraphobia. Of those identifying as having a disability, 73.6% were women and 26.4% were men. Their stories are reported in Chapter 8.

[14] University of Newcastle, *ELFSC at a glance, 2013.*
[15] University of Newcastle, *ELFSC at a glance, 2013.*

Table 6: Identification of Indigeneity among student respondents

Non-indigenous	345	98.58%
Indigenous	5	1.42%
	350	100%

Table 6 records the number of survey respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) as five (1.42% of the sample). According to the most recent census in 2016 ATSI peoples comprised 2.8% of the Australian population.[16] A significant number of Indigenous students have come through the alternative enabling pathway YAPUG, and many register for support at Wollotuka Institute, the Indigenous centres on the Callaghan and Ourimbah campuses. However, many ATSI students are in the process of affirming their identity as a First Australian when they come to Newcastle's enabling programs and do not seek tailored Indigenous educational support. Further, some others may choose not to disclose their Indigeneity. In 2013 6.2% of enabling students at UON identified as being of ATSI background,[17] so Indigenous students are underrepresented in the data.

Table 7: Programs student respondents were enrolled in

Program	Number	Percentage
Distance	**22**	**6.03%**
Callaghan Intensive (over one semester)	75	20.55%
Callaghan Part time (over two semesters)	164	44.93%
Total Callaghan students	**239**	**65.48%**
Ourimbah Intensive (over one semester)	32	8.77%
Ourimbah Part time (over two semesters)	72	19.73%
Total Ourimbah students	**104**	**28.49%**
TOTAL	**365**	**100%**

*Note: some students repeated OFP or enrolled in offerings across both campuses or chose a combination of a Distance and on campus courses

Amongst the 350 respondents, there were 365 responses to the question about which program they had been enrolled in, reported in Table 7. Some students may have been involved in two program offerings simultaneously, for example, an on-campus course delivery as well as a Distance course while others may have failed courses and returned to complete the program in the following semester (or, as occurred in one case, even ten years later). About two thirds of on-campus students study at the large Callaghan campus, which draws mainly from Newcastle and the Hunter Valley and one third study at the smaller Ourimbah campus, which draws largely from the Central Coast region of NSW and from the

[16]http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20Population%20Data%20Summary~10

[17] University of Newcastle, *ELFSC at a glance*, *2013.*

outskirts of Sydney. The statistics given in Table 7 are therefore roughly representative of the usual student cohorts on both campuses. The number of respondents enrolled in the Intensive program across both campuses (n=107) constituted 29.32% of all student respondents and total number of Part Time students (n=236) constituted 64.65% of respondents. This gives some indication of the kind of experience these students would have had, a compressed delivery (Intensive) with 12hrs tuition per week across one semester; or a more leisurely delivery of 6 hours per week across 2 semesters in the Part Time course. Both cohorts received 144 hours face to face tuition in total.

Summing up, around 6% of the survey sample had done their course by Distance; around 20% had completed the Intensive course at the main campus at Callaghan; around 45% had studied in the Part Time program at Callaghan; around 9% had undertaken the Intensive course at the regional campus at Ourimbah; and just under 20% had undertaken the Part Time course at the Ourimbah campus. As well as these neat divisions, some students had taken courses at both campuses to access a specific subject, and some had combined Distance and on-campus delivery. Part Time students were more likely to complete the survey (65% of all respondents).

Age differences

The respondents were asked their age at time of entry into the program. Consistent with a mature entry program only around 5% were aged less than 21 years, while all students aged 24 years and under constituted just over 13%. The largest category of respondents, almost 44%, were aged 40 and over. Almost 33% had entered OFP between ages 30-39 years; while just over 23% entered aged 20-29 years. In a closer analysis of older students, over 11.5% entered aged 50-59 years; almost 3% at age 60-69 years; and the remainder or about 1.5% were aged 70-79 years. This indicated a diverse sample of former students and wide range of age groups and stage of life. The University of Newcastle's preferred method of categorising by age group is indicated in Table 8, and demonstrates the significant proportion of student respondents who were aged 30 years and over (76.77%) at the time of entering the program.

Table 8: Student respondents' Age at enrolment in OFP grouped according to UON statistical categories

Age	20 & under	21-24yrs	25-29yrs	30-39yrs	40 & over	Total
Number	19	28	35	116	155	353
Percentage	5.38%	7.93%	9.92%	32.86%	43.91%	100%

*Note: Some students completed Open Foundation twice.

Research conducted by Reay *et al* found that younger students were more instrumental and goal oriented in their motivation to study, while older students enjoyed intrinsic aspects of

learning.[18] The majority of students who entered OFP at age 20, the youngest age category, cited their reason for entry as UAI was not good enough, a few were dissatisfied with current work, or desire to improve career potential. One was biding time before he could enter an undergraduate program based on his TAFE Cert IV qualification and wished to pick up some extra academic literacy skills. Reay's research is therefore consistent with the findings in this study in that these responses were instrumental. Many in the 40 years and over age bracket expressed concern at being at a particular stage of life, sometimes expressed as a mid-life crisis, which jolted them into making a decision to change their lives. However, one young man of 20 also expressed the view that he was having a life crisis that suggests drastic change related to age is not only the domain of older students. Among the students in this study 4.5% were aged 60 and over at enrolment. Many of these respondents were either retired or nearing retirement age so their reasons for enrolling were much more likely to revolve around interests and seeking mental stimulation. However, among the very oldest students in the study regret at not having had the opportunity to study previously, testing whether they could "do it", finding a challenge and wanting a deeper and more comprehensive education than that offered by the University of the 3rd Age (U3A) were cited as their reasons for enrolling. Diverse age of students also points to the complex task of teaching students across several generations.

Education

Also of interest was the prior level of education achieved by these students. Just under 6% had not completed their School Certificate or year 10. Three respondents only had one year of high school tuition; four had two years; and fourteen had three years of high school education. The largest category of respondents, nearly 40%, included people who had completed their School Certificate. These data show that over 45% of respondents had completed four years or less of high school, which also indicates the work that needs to be done by students and enabling educators to bring students' skill base up to a level required for participation in undergraduate studies, which assumes a Higher School Certificate (HSC) and six years of high school study. Nearly 31% had an HSC mainly without matriculation so they were unable to enter university by the traditional pathway. Almost 14% had post-school qualifications through TAFE, and a small number, around 3%, had prior university experience and were, in some instances, hoping to retrain in different vocations or whose objective was completing Open Foundation as a leisure activity.

Table 9: Previous Educational Qualification of student respondents

Qualification	Number	Percentage
Year 7	3	0.84%
Year 8	4	1.12%
Year 9	14	3.94%

[18] Reay., Ball and David, "It's Taking Me a Long Time but I'll Get There in the End," 8.

Year 10 (School Certificate)	140	39.44%
		45.34%
Year 11	25	7.04%
Year 12 (HSC)	109	30.73%
TAFE	49	13.80%
University	11	3.09%
Total	355	**100%**

*Note: Some students indicated a number of prior qualifications.

Table 10 provides details of the subject choice of respondents. Each enrolment required that two subjects be chosen and completed within either one or two semesters. Their choices give some indication of their interests.

Table 10: Subjects undertaken by student respondents

Subject	Number	Percentage
Social Enquiry	126	17.57%
Core Maths	87	12.13%
Australian History	76	10.59%
English Literature & Film	58	8.08%
Chemistry & Life Science	56	7.81%
Ancient History/Classical Studies	54	7.53%
Linguistics	39	5.43%
Philosophy	38	5.29%
Earth Science	34	4.74%
Studies in Law	29	4.04%
Visual Art	22	3.06%
Basic Quantitative Methodology (BQM)	15	2.09%
Australian Economic History	14	1.95%
Science Maths	13	1.81%
Physics	12	1.67%
Chemistry	10	1.39%
English Language	9	1.25%
Political Man	5	0.69%
Graphic Design	5	0.69%
Celtic Studies	4	0.55%
Aboriginal Studies	3	0.41%
Conservation & Sustainability	3	0.41%
Australian Human & Environmental Systems	1	0.13%
Business Management	1	0.13%
French	1	0.13%
German	1	0.13%
Japanese	1	0.13%
TOTAL	**717**	**100%**

***This figure reflects people who did OFP twice and may or may not have chosen the same subjects.

Although subjects have changed over the years, these data indicate that students who studied Social Enquiry were more likely to complete the survey (and perhaps nominate to participate on the PEPPR register). People who studied Mathematics were also well represented in the data. When examining the disciplines into which these subjects are categorized, the Humanities and Arts are far more highly represented than other disciplines. If Humanities Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) are represented as a collective, as Table 11 indicates, then the percentage of respondents studying in this area climbs to 63.6%. What is indicative in this data is that people who study people are perhaps also more willing to be studied themselves.

Table 11: Subjects chosen by student respondents according to Discipline

Discipline	Number	Percentage
Humanities & Art	316	44.1%
Social Science	140	19.5%
Sciences	116	16.2%
Mathematics	115	16%
Business & Law	30	4.2%
TOTAL	**717**	**100%**

As to be expected from the variety of reasons for study reported later in this chapter, not all students proceeded into an undergraduate degree. Almost 12% were content with an Open Foundation attainment certificate to prove that they could qualify for university entry if they chose, and some had done the course for their own enjoyment with no intention of proceeding. Others could not take up their offer due to caring responsibilities or felt they could not afford the burden of a HECs debt. Of these, 2% indicated they would like to apply for university entry at a later date. However, as Table 12 indicates, the majority of the former OFP students surveyed, almost 88%, did go on to tertiary education. This is a higher proportion than reported in statistics for the ELFS Centre in 2013, which stated that "71.9% of enabling students who completed the program undertook undergraduate study within one year of completion."[19]

Table 12: Student respondents who proceeded to an undergraduate degree after OFP

Yes	307	87.71%
No	41	11.71%
Not yet	2	0.58%
Total	350	100%

Among those who did continue their education, fifty eight, or 16.54% of the whole sample of former students surveyed, gained postgraduate qualifications after completing Open

[19] University of Newcastle, *ELFSC at a glance*, *2013.* However this figure includes Newstep and YAPUG students.

Foundation. That constitutes roughly one in six of these former OFP students, a significant finding of this study to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

Table 13: How student respondents heard about the OFP

Word of mouth	n=	**Media**	n=	**University**	n=	**Other Institution**	n=
Friends	76	Newspaper	58	Uni web	35	TAFE	7
Family	37	Media (not specified)	32	Open Day	8	Centrelink	3
Work colleague	7	Radio	10	Shopping Centre	6	Career Centre	1
Taxi driver	1	Television	3	Brochure	2	School	1
Psychologist	1			University (not specified)	31		
Rehabilitation Clinic	1						
Veterinarian	1						
Mentor	1						
Other (not specified)	17						
TOTAL	**142**		**103**		**82**		**12**
%	**41.5%**		**30.5%**		**24.4%**		**3.6%**

*Note: respondents sometimes failed to answer this question or identified more than one source

Table 13 confirms anecdotal evidence that the majority of students hear of OFP through word of mouth, most often, through friends. OFP has become part of the habitus of people who have themselves sought change and pass the possibility on to others. It should be noted, however, that this data was collected from people who studied in OFP across many decades, so it might be assumed that use of the internet in the form of UON's website would feature more often among the most recent students. Media coverage should not be disregarded as a mode of advertising as stories of student success are often inspirational. One such local article explored the upsurge of mature-age students at UON[20] and provided both staff and student perspectives on educational success.

The next section will discuss the many reasons why these people described above enrolled in the OFP program in the first place. It provides examples of the Bourdieu's argument that acquiring cultural capital constitutes an investment and that habitus, a product of social conditioning, can also be transformed, raising the level of expectations and aspirations people may have.[21]

[20] David Stewart. "Live and Learn." *The Newcastle Herald Weekender*, March 19, (2011): 8-11.
[21] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice, 116.*

Reasons people enrolled in OFP

A review of literature on reasons people enrol in tertiary preparation courses located eleven studies across four nations (Australia, Britain, USA and Africa), which took a range of methodological positions, most often as case studies. Only one was based on a significant quantitative sample size, 100 students, a far smaller sample than that reported in this thesis. This literature, rather than delving into specific motivations, often presented reasons for enrolling briefly as a preamble to broader research on matters such as status, especially of women entering education or, in the context of andragogy, relating to advice on "going back" to study. Munday's edited handbook of "back-to-work" strategies for women entitled *This Time is Mine*, for example, provides tips from a diverse group of professionals, including psychologists, on how women can, "Take the plunge, give it a whirl, jump off the deep end, spit the dummy or bite the bullet."[22] All these clichés give some indication of the uncertainty and trepidation of mature women embarking on an educational or career path. Munday's work elucidates the story of a retired woman who returned to study via Newcastle's OFP at age 67 after a successful career in personnel and who, upon retirement and widowhood, was looking for something to fill her life. She graduated with a BA at age 74. The case study is used to demonstrate that age is no barrier to returning to study and that study can be a source of fulfilment and satisfaction.

Other studies using a case study approach of Newcastle's OF students are first, Debenham and May's reflections on returning to study from the perspectives of mature student and her lecturer. [23] The student cited stimulation, coping, escape from the mundane, feeling unsettled, and encouragement from family as reasons for enrolling; while the lecturer contributed a broader approach to this issue based on her experience and observations during her career. The article indicates that there is often more than one reason for seeking mature entry to university. It argues there may, in fact, be a series of interconnected motivations. Second, Stone and O'Shea used narrative inquiry to tell the stories of seven mature women's experiences. [24] Despite the unique circumstances of each student, a common theme that characterised their experiences was having a "second chance" both at education and making a new life for themselves. Likewise, their reasons for enrolling were many: the outcome of some traumatic event, dislocation, boredom, need for a challenge or vocational calling. Similar to other studies, these stories focused on the women's transformations and self-discoveries as well as providing practical tips for those embarking on similar journeys.

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[22] Rosemary Munday ed. *This Time is Mine* (Sydney: Australian Consolidated Press Ltd, 2000), 4.

[23] Jennifer Debenham and Jo May, "Making connections: a dialogue about learning and teaching in a tertiary enabling program", *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 45(1) April (2005).

[24] Cathy Stone and Sarah O'Shea, *Transformations and Self Discovery. Stories of Women Returning to Education* (Champaign Illinois: Common Ground Publishing Illinois, 2012).

Benson *et al* reported on pathways into higher education for a group of students from diverse backgrounds including low socio-economic status, non-English speaking and migrant backgrounds, regional and remote areas, those with medical conditions and first in family university entrants.[25] Using narrative inquiry, these researchers concluded that students' decisions to enrol were often influenced by family members, personal characteristics such as self-concept, or external influences including the impact of a serendipitous event or life crises such as relationship breakdowns.

Widening the focus to both women and men, Beaty, Gibbs and Morgan[26] take a more theoretical approach by discussing four learning orientations that directly imply a student's reason for enrolling. [27] The first is vocational where they have a direct interest in obtaining a qualification; the second is academic where their motivation is learning in and of itself; the third is personal and can relate to identity; and the fourth is social, where they are seeking companionship and social interaction. Fulmer and Jenkins discuss desire for personal enrichment, workplace retraining, and a desire to change life circumstances and develop new interests; [28] while Kaziboni's research in Zimbabwe found that women returned to study for economic reasons due to family dislocation.[29] The desire to act as a role model to their children is reported in studies by Passe[30] and Reay[31] who argue that this reason is important, especially to working class women. Cantwell and Mulhearn cited self-improvement and identity generation as the main reasons women return to study. [32]

The most extensive study found in this literature was Clayton and Smith's analysis of reasons 100 American women aged 25 years and older returned to study. These authors found eight motive typologies, which when ranked in order by mean weighted factor score were: vocational; humanitarian; self-actualization; family; self-improvement; to gain knowledge; to make social connections; or as part of a role they saw for themselves. The aim of the study was to assist re-entry women and enhance their return to college while

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[25] Robyn Benson., Lesley Hewitt., Margaret Heagney., Anita Devos and Glenda Crosling, "Diverse pathways into higher education: Using students' stories to identify transformative experiences", *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 50(1) April (2010); Robyn Benson., Margaret Heagney., Lesley Hewitt., Glenda Crosling and Anita Devos, "Diversity and achievement: Is success in higher education a transformative experience?" *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 54(2) (2014).

[26] L Beaty., G Gibbs and A Morgan, "Learning orientations and study contracts" in *The experience of Learning: Implications for teaching and studying in higher education,* 3rd ed, eds F Marton., D Hounsell and N Entwhistle, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment 2005).

[27] Beaty., Gibbs and Morgan, "Learning orientations and study contracts," 2005.

[28] A Fulmer and H I Jenkins, "Evaluating a tertiary access program for mature women", *Higher Education Research and Development* 11(1) (1992).

[29] T Kaziboni, "Picking up the threads – women pursuing further studies at the University of Zimbabwe", *Studies in the Education of Adults* 33(2) (2000).

[30] G Passe, "'You can't put the toothpaste back in the tube': the impact of higher education on mature age women students", *Australian Educational Researcher* 25(1) (1998).

[31] Reay, "A Risky Business? 2003.

[32] Cantwell and Mulhearn, "The adjustment behaviours of mature-aged women returning to formal study, 1997.

also encouraging colleges and universities "to develop and offer appropriate educational programs and services designed to meet the needs of re-entry women, who represent an increasing percentage of the college population."[33] What these studies reveal is the multiplicity of reasons for enrolling, all of which were found in my research, but none of which were dealt with in quite as comprehensive a manner as the research conducted for this thesis.

For most respondents there was not a single reason for enrolling, but an interconnected bundle of circumstances and emotions; a mixture of social structural factors and those involving human agency; and rational and "extrarational"[34] explanations. In the data collected, reasons that went beyond the rational were compelling for those expressing them. Blair, McPake and Munn's Scottish study of adults returning to education remarks that a new conceptualisation of adult participation in education is required because "existing explanations proved ill-equipped to reflect the complex and diverse data gathered about reasons for returning to education."[35]

Following the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss[36] and described by Charmaz,[37] reasons people enrolled in OFP emerged from the data enabling categorization based on an analysis of linguistic expressions used by respondents. Patterns and continuities were detected in the qualitative responses using QSR NVivo10 software. Table 14 below provides a list of all 49 reasons cited by survey respondents in order to quantify each answer and ascertain frequencies and patterns within the data. The table was arranged from most to least cited. Table 15 then provides the main concepts or frameworks generated from these responses, referred to by Glaser and Strauss as the "broadening power"[38] elicited from more comprehensive analysis of data. While these tables may not be the only way to categorize the data, and bearing in mind Foucault's view that categorization is in itself a micro practice in the exercise of power, [39] it should be noted that the categorizations were not based on prejudging the data or forcing any predetermined explanations of it.[40] While there are similarities to explanatory frameworks located in the literature review cited previously, the surveys revealed a more comprehensive set of explanations and descriptions than those discussed in that review.

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[33] Diane E Clayton and Margaret M Smith, "Motivational Typology of Re-entry Women", *Adult Education Quarterly* 37(2) Winter, (1987): 103.
[34] Robert D Boyd and Gordon J Myers, "Transformative Education," *International Journal of Lifelong Education 7(*4), October-December (1988).
[35] Amy Blair., Joanna McPake and Pamela Munn, "A New Conceptualisation of Adult Participation in Education," *British Educational Research Journal* 21(5) (1995).
[36]B G Glaser and A L Strauss, *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research* (Beverly Hills CA: Sage 1967).
[37]Charmaz, *Constructing grounded theory*, 2006.
[38]Glaser and Strauss, *The discovery of grounded theory,* 1967.
[39] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 1975.
[40] Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of qualitative research,* 1998.

Table 14: Most to least cited reasons student respondents enrolled in OFP

Reason	Times cited	Reason	Times cited
Right time in life	112	For mental stimulation	6
Career change	97	Felt calling to a particular career	5
Career skills	69	To improve financial situation	5
Gain knowledge/education	61	No fees attached	4
For qualifying ATAR	39	Flexible class times	4
Had dream or aspiration	35	For a stable future or job security	4
Relationship breakdown	34	Local course	3
Regret	28	To help others	3
Job loss	27	An adventure	2
Needed "ME" time	25	As therapy	2
To find purpose or had unclear direction	24	Lure of advertising of course "Change life"	2
To "prove" they could do it	23	Bored	2
To gain a qualification	23	Future options or life choices	2
To "test" their ability	23	Curiosity	1
Family reasons	21	To join friends	1
Influence of others	19	Government obligation	1
Wanted a challenge	19	To learn to organise thoughts	1
Wanted a life change	19	Had financial support	1
Had an interest	15	To give back to community	1
For self-improvement	13	To maintain momentum (after TAFE study)	1
Death of loved one	11	Isolation	1
Injury, illness or disability	11	Self-discovery	1
Saw as opportunity	10	Divine intervention (a "God" incident)	1
As companion to someone else	8		
To fill a void	7		
As tertiary preparation	7		
TOTAL			**834**

Given the purpose of tertiary preparation courses, it might have been expected that responses to the question of why students enrolled in OFP might have related to educational, economic or career aspirations. However, when the data were analysed collectively, issues relating to enhancing "self-identity" appeared more frequently (in almost

39% of all responses). This exceeded categories relating to career seeking or economic improvement. Sometimes responses that fell under the category of self-identity related to confirming, through education, what students already knew about themselves, that is, that they had the intelligence and capacity to succeed in tertiary education. In other responses it was to prove to others that they had the capacity to achieve at this level of study. While the most frequently cited reason was that it was the "right time" in their lives to take up study (n=112) comprising 13.4% of all responses to this question (although for the purposes of categorisation ten other responses could be interpreted as falling into this category, see Table 15), it also constitutes almost 35% of all respondents who cited this reason. Collectively, as Table 15 shows, issues relating to "self-identity", including the need for "Me" time or "self-improvement", were cited far more frequently than other categories as reasons for enrolling.

Table 15: Categorisations of reasons student respondents enrolled in OFP

Reason for enrolling	Explanations	Times cited	%
Self-identity	Needed "Me" time; regret hadn't studied earlier; to prove they could do it; to test their ability; fulfilling a dream or an aspiration; a challenge; a life change; interest; self-improvement; to find a purpose or clear direction in life; to fill a void; felt a calling to a career; for mental stimulation; an opportunity; an adventure; as therapy; bored; curiosity; to organise thoughts; isolation; self- discovery; to help others; to give back to community; self- improvement though education	**325**	**38.9**
Seeking Career & Economic stability	Career change; career skills; to get an ATAR; to gain qualifications; as tertiary preparation; to improve finances; for future career options or life choices; to create a stable future or job security	**239**	**28.7**
Right time in lives	Children in care or more independent; stage of life; retirement; lesser work commitments; financial support; moving back to area; overcoming illness; time to seek education; time to seek better life	**122**	**14.6**
Disorienting dilemma	Relationship breakdown; Death of someone close caused re-evaluation; diagnosis of illness or disability; job loss	**83**	**10**
External factors	Family reasons; influence of others; as a companion; no fees; flexible class times; local course; advertising influential; to join friends already there; to fulfil Government obligation; had financial support; Divine intervention!	**65**	**7.8**
TOTAL		**834**	**100**

What follows is a deeper explanation of each emerging theme.

Self-identity

Given the high response rate to the survey by women (almost 78%), it was notable that a high proportion of these respondents referred to the responsibilities of motherhood as a defining criteria of their decision to enrol. Chodorow's[41] work points to the deep psychic structuring of individuals' identities that she argues is "established very early in life and [is] very hard to transform".[42] Chodorow suggests that women in Anglo-Saxon culture learn to connect better and foster relationships more than men do, which leads to women identifying with the needs of others. Her view is that "the basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate".[43] While there have been critics of this theory, it does provide some insights into why motherhood is such an integral part of many women's identities. 106 of the 272 women (roughly 39%) referred to children in their answer to this question but only 3 of the 78 men, or 3.84% of male respondents. Below the men's responses will be addressed before returning to discuss the more numerous responses of the women.

The first of the men's responses relating to fatherhood as a reason for enrolling indicated that being a call centre worker was not what he wanted as a career. Instead, this respondent "wanted a career my child would be proud of or not disadvantaged by" (057: Male). This had implications for his identity in that he felt his career choice reflected on his child's life and affected how his child may respond to him. The second male respondent to refer to children expressed a similar motivation, implying that his son might be ashamed of him performing the job he was currently doing (250: Male). In these cases, how their children viewed them was important and an identity shift achieved through training in a professional career was a priority. The first respondent entered a career in Software Development while the second was completing a PhD in Architecture at the time of survey. The third male respondent who referred to his children as a reason for enrolling stated it was a "combination of children leaving home and frustration with career prospects/results" (230: Male). Presumably the children's departure allowed the opportunity to re-evaluate his life direction now he no longer had dependent children. However, responses related to an identity as a parent were far more frequent among the women in the sample.

The women's responses cited children going to preschool, primary school or high school as allowing them some freedom to pursue their own interests, while others felt they had to wait until their children had left home or had themselves gone to university before they could enrol and "take time" for themselves. One commented: "It was previously too difficult with little children (getting out, getting babysitters etc)" to pursue her own interests (346: Female). Typical of responses relating to motherhood that showed a quest to find their own

[41] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
[42] John J. Macionis, and Ken Plummer, *Sociology. A Global Introduction. (*New York: Prentice Hall, 1998), 354.
[43] Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering,* 169.

identity was: “I decided after 15 years of being a Mum that it was time to do something for me” (001: Female), and “Children growing up, looking for adventure” (047: Female), or with one child nearing the end of school and another one starting, “it was time to get a life” (075: Female), or “with kids attending school it was time to get some ‘me’ back” (096). Such comments typified the centrality of motherhood to many women who saw it as their primary role but also indicated a loss of their own identity, hence the need to reclaim it. The habitus to which they were accustomed revolved around performing their mothering role willingly. Outside that space, however, these students were looking for something more in their lives, something to stimulate and interest them, or, in the case of respondent 047, an adventure. They were seeking an identity beyond that which society had decreed. Letherby comments on the social attitudes that encourage women to “measure their own self-worth in terms of the capacity/desire to mother,” [44] so placing their children’s needs before their own until they felt they could claim time for themselves, was often expressed as the need for “Me” time (n=25).

Having time for themselves was a common theme in the data: “I wanted to fulfil a lifelong dream now that my time was my own” (083: Female); “I wanted to do something for myself before the children left home” (287: Female); “Children at high school. I could now give time to me for study” (297: Female); “I wanted to improve myself and career prospects now children had grown a bit older” (328: Female). The sense that time had not previously been at their disposal to spend on their own interests or ambitions was predominantly a way women expressed their situation.

Alternatively, one respondent reported that pregnancy had provided the “opportunity to do something constructive that I wouldn’t normally be able to do because of work constraints” (176: Female). Another commented that having her first child meant she was not working for the first time in her adult life and this presented an opportunity for her to study (183: Female), while another stated that having taken time off work to raise a small child allowed her time to satisfy her curiosity through education (344: Female). This new found freedom to study occurred because being relieved of social expectations surrounding a commitment to paid work made this new space available for them. Mothering, though bound by different time restraints, could be paired with study.

Another frequent theme among the reasons for women enrolling was to fill in time while the children were otherwise engaged or because they now faced an “empty nest” (113: Female). Comments such as the children are now “living their own lives” (187: Female) or “My children have left home to follow their own career paths” (192: Female) indicated that the centrality of the family to their existence meant that a void in their lives developed

[44] G Letherby, “Mother or Not, Mother or What? Problems of Definition and Identity”, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 17(5) (1994), 526.

when their mothering role no longer dominated. This change in their circumstances led to a need to find an interest of their own. This was expressed in various ways: as isolation (235: Female; 347: Female); the need to "do something" (169: Female); that life had to hold "something more" (171: Female); that they felt they had "stagnated" (112: Female) or were "bored" (222: Female; 296: Female); feeling "unfulfilled" with work undertaken after having children (247: Female); seeking a "meaningful job" (200: Female) or wanting "mental stimulation" (150: Female). One respondent came to the conclusion after being interviewed by her daughter for a leadership program she was doing at school that "I had done nothing exceptional in my life so I decided to further my education" (163: Female).

Rather than feeling a sense of loss and looking for a means to fill the gap, other respondents were emphatic that now their children were more independent, it was their "turn" to fulfil their own needs. "It gives mature people a chance to finally have some 'Me" time and tackle life at Uni" (282: Female). "I thought long and hard about what I wanted to do in the next stage of my life" (283: Female). These people all focused on their identity within their family and how, by asserting their right to reclaim an identity lost through family responsibilities, it was hoped OFP would act as a catalyst to either reclaim a sense of self or shape a new identity or habitus that would allow some sort of security or satisfaction.

Changing their habitus was also evident among other female respondents who enrolled because they saw themselves as inadequate in terms of their level of education and wanted: "To raise [my] education level to year 12 standard which all my children had achieved." (080: Female) Seeking respect and to be considered intellectually equal within the family group was a high priority for some respondents. Some felt they had to put their educational dream aside to focus on the needs of children or to support their husband's career (338: Female). Only when other family members' needs were met could they return to education.

A number of respondents undertook the course for altruistic reasons. They identified as needing to help their children or grandchildren with their studies: "I wanted to study maths to help the children" (030: Female); "To encourage my grandchildren to attend uni." (131: Female). One wished to provide transport for her stepson to ensure he got to class, or as she put it "we thought if he had to collect me every night it would help him to follow through and complete the course" (264: Female). The nurturer role had a large impact on these people and they had internalised the responsibility for guiding their family member rather than undertaking studies for their own sake. Alternatively, respondents wanted to train in an occupation that would allow them to fit in with their children's needs: "I wanted to be home for my kids after school" (151: Female), or that they wished to "set an example" for their children (175: Female).

Some students had been constrained by circumstances that prevented study, but they looked forward to a time when they could fulfil their potential: "I had been made to leave

school by my family when I had wanted to continue, so I guess I just saw it as a chance to fulfil my dreams" (048: Female). Or sometimes the reason to enrol involved challenging the attitudes and stereotypes of people close to them:

> My father thought higher education was wasted on a girl (in 1956) and sent me to secretarial college. In 2000, even though he had been dead for several years, I decided to show him what I could do! (164: Female).

This response shows the deeply psychological nature of needing to prove oneself despite the fact that the recipient of that demonstration was no longer alive. The extrarational factor present here became a guiding force in this student's desire to succeed. In fact, 23 (almost 6.6%) of people in the student survey indicated that the reason they enrolled was to "prove" they could pass the course and qualify for university entry. This indicated that they believed in their own abilities, but felt disposed to demonstrate that they had the capacity to succeed and enter university. Comments such as: "I knew I could achieve much more and decided to do something about it" (069: Female); "I saw OF as a second chance to prove that I could do it" (165: Female); "I always wanted to prove that I was intelligent enough to be successful" (187: Female); "It gave me a chance to prove that I could do it" (220: Male). Sometimes it was a matter of proving capability to oneself: "I wanted to prove to myself that I could have completed and gone on to Uni if I chose" (032: Female); "To prove a point to myself" (234: Male).

This group differed from those who indicated they were unsure of their abilities and wished to "test" whether they had the ability and staying power to complete the course. There were, coincidentally, also 23 respondents (6.6% of the sample) who offered this reason for enrolling. Typical of their comments were: "The OF course offered an opportunity to test my ability to do a degree course after so many years away from study" (018: Female); and in order to ascertain his ability "OF was the vehicle to do the testing" (063: Male); "I wasn't sure I was smart enough, so I enrolled" (064: Female); "To explore my ability to study and gain experience in a different field" (066: Female); "To test my abilities. Poor writing skills impacted on my confidence" (078: Female); "I was of the belief that I was not smart enough to do University. High School had a negative effect on me" (092: Female); "I wanted to find out how smart I am" (102: Female). This uncertainty appears to be premised on the idea that if the going got too hard or the journey was too difficult, then they could concede defeat. Most respondents were, however, pleasantly surprised at their good results.

Family expectations were prominent in a number of respondents' decisions not to have pursued higher education earlier. A male respondent stated that he had come from a "Blue collar family and I was expected to leave school at 14 and get a job" (063: Male), so enrolling in OFP was his opportunity to break from family expectations and pursue his own (professional) interests. While some respondents noted active encouragement by family as

a reason they pursued OFP (311: Female), others noted that their desire to study was limited by their family commitments. One said that her son was now “not as needy” (208: Female) that freed up space for herself. The only way the constraints of family obligations were overcome by one student, pregnant with her fifth child, was by undertaking the distance OFP offering (153: Female) as she could not allocate travel and class time into her time use schedule.

In some cases determination and goal setting were evident in the desire to initiate identity change:

> Had a child, single parent, decided to raise him and expand my employment opportunities. I believed if I could have a child and raise him on my own from birth, then I could achieve almost anything. So I set the goal of finishing OFP then became a lawyer. (229: Female)

While for other students, changing their identity was based on dreams and aspirations for their future and education was the means of achieving this. 35 people, or 10% cited fulfilling a dream as reason for enrolling: “Wanted to fulfil a lifelong dream now that my time was my own!” (083: Female). And:

> Always wanted to go to university. After my divorce and children left home I needed to reconstruct my life. I didn't want a meaningless job till I retired. I had questions I wanted to ask about why power was distributed the way it was. After a trip to Central Australia I wanted to know the truth about a lot that happened to our Indigenous Australians (085: Female).

Explanations that related to self-identity constituted compelling reasons for enrolling in Open Foundation and showed that a major expectation of these students was to “re-make” the self and prove to others that they were resilient and capable. As mentioned above, in a number of cases female respondents found themselves as single parents who needed to support their families. In the case of several, their partners had become incapacitated and they now needed to become the provider or find some respite so they could care for their own mental health and wellbeing, for example (054: Female):

> Children starting school; need for a career (fulfilling); mentally ill husband. I decided I could and should aim at taking over the financial responsibilities for the family.

Another woman commented:

> My husband was severely brain damaged as the result of a motor cycle accident. As a result he had many problems. We had two small children and … I was overwhelmed

> by it all. A friend mentioned she had done the course and enjoyed it. Hearing about the OFP was a golden opportunity to get out of the house for a few hours each week and indulge myself – which I took! (252: Female)

The "escape" theme was evident here, but so too was the notion of education as therapy, which Standish, Smeyers and Smith suggest has implications for self-esteem, confidence, happiness and personal growth.[45] One respondent suffered from post-natal depression and she thought OFP would "give me something to do for myself, as well as a self-esteem boost." (239: Female) This was also expressed as wanting to "do something with my brain" after fifteen years of child caring, needing to "stretch myself" (111: Female) that shows how overcoming constraints merged with an inward challenge to regain a sense of self. In the case of one male respondent, escape was from chemotherapy (107: Male), while for another respondent their admission that they were "Very unhappy at work and at home" (068: Female) led them to seek education as a means of remedying this unhappiness.

For some respondents seeking a new career via OFP was the catalyst that would lead to identity transformation, increase their self-esteem and, also make their family proud of them. The call centre worker mentioned above (057: Male) went so far as to sell the family home and investment property to pursue his education so that he and his child would be proud of him. This significant investment in a new identity was also reflected in how this student perceived others, particularly his family, would see him. Goffman refers to "saving face"[46] as an important aspect of social interaction. He argues that self-presentation that confers dignity and respect, holds value in society. In a similar vein, the following student who was completing a PhD in Architecture at the time of the survey offered this reason for enrolling:

> The arrival of my son. I was motivated to change my current employment as I did not want my son to see me doing the job I was doing. I decided to go to University and set the best example I could. By starting with something I enjoyed, I believed I could set two important examples:
>
> 1. You can do something you enjoy
> 2. Nothing is out of reach. (250: Male)

To this student OFP was instrumental in achieving these goals but also accommodated personal enjoyment and satisfaction at the same time as role modelling an educated habitus for his child. Roy comments that "The concept of the educated person and the desire to be known as one, must be seen as a singular component of self-identity".[47]

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[45] P Standish., P Smeyers, and R Smith, eds. *The Therapy of Education. Philosophy, Happiness and Personal Growth.* United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
[46] Erving Goffman, "On Face-work", in C. Lemert ed. *Social Theory: The Multi-cultural Readings,* Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2010.
[47] Roy Nash, "The Educated Habitus, Progress at School, and Real Knowledge." *Interchange* 33(1) (2002), 29.

Regret that they had been unable to pursue higher education in the past also figured prominently in the data. 28 people, or 8% of respondents, mentioned this in their qualitative comments. Harbouring a desire to fulfil their expectations of themselves is evident in comments such as: “I have always wanted to get a university degree. However, my grades were shocking when I finished year 12. This has always been a big regret for me” (165: Female). After marrying young, one student commented, “I always thought there had to be something more” (171: Female) and she pursued OFP out of interest.

A similar number of students were looking for a purpose in their lives. 24 people, or 6.85% indicated that they were seeking to reconstruct their lives: “I needed a new direction in my life” (091: Female). For these students taking the opportunity to renew themselves was an important part of their biography. This meant there was also a lot at stake in committing to their studies.

Several students expressed a desire to extend themselves intellectually: “Wanted more mental stimulation” (150: Female); “I did it for interest” (171: Female); “I enrolled for ‘mental exercise’” (227: Male); “Needed a challenge. Had always wished for further education” (241: Female); “I wanted something to sink my teeth into” (242: Female); “For the enjoyment of doing additional studies and taking on a new challenge” (253: Male); “Need for intellectual stimulation” (291: Male). One referred to the rigors of study and how he reasoned that hard work was the key to success, rather than some innate ability:

> I basically wanted to see if I had a brain and to develop an attitude to studying, a commitment and a desire to achieve. I worked bloody hard and with dedication achieved my goals. I deserved what I achieved as I was very committed, bordering on obsession. I always thought Uni was for very bright people (which was my error) but I was really focussed” (279: Male).

(17.43%) of respondents’ comments focused on education’s capacity to contribute to self-worth and identity as fulfilling an aspect of their character they had been unable to develop. Among these (n=61) were comments such as: “I had always wanted further education: (034: Female); I wanted “to educate myself” (046: Male); “I was interested in learning” (077: Female); I was “very interested to become more educated” (079: Female); “I just wanted to go further with my education. I’m a bit of a sticky beak and would have liked to get into research of some sort (pathology or statistics” (110: Female); “I wanted to learn” (137: Female). “I always wanted an education” (163: Female); “I wanted to study” (183: Female); “It was an opportunity to advance my education” (261: Male); “I had a passion for learning” (278: Female); “I wanted to round out my education” (205: Male). These people saw

education as intrinsically beneficial. Education in and of itself was perceived to add value to their lives.

Sometimes the education may have been something quite specific the student wished to train in and saw as indicative of their identity: “I wanted to further my interest in art” (067: Female); “I had a social justice agenda” (193: Female); “Always interested in social justice. Strong desire to learn about other cultures and educate myself (no opportunity to do so before)” (301: Female). For these students, a quest to channel their knowledge either broadly or into discipline areas was the guiding force behind their decision to enrol.

At other times there was an acknowledgement that learning was linked to self-worth: “Felt I needed to do something for myself, improve self and felt learning environment would give me an avenue to pursue with vigour” (122: Female); “I was feeling a void in my life. Also felt I would benefit from further education” (135: Female); “Enjoyed learning, felt I could achieve” (294: Female). The discussion of the link to self-identity earlier in this chapter elaborates the significance of these comments to enhancing their self-esteem.

Skill building was another important goal of becoming educated: “I enrolled in OFP to enrich my knowledge and learn new skills” (062: Female); “I had an interest in further education but was too ‘rusty’ to enter straight into undergrad” (295: Female); “Always felt I had not reached my academic potential” (309: Female); “As a natural continuum to learning U3A and wanting something more” (350: Male); “I was after a challenge. I wanted to learn how to study at Uni” (219: Female); while for another student education was a matter of overcoming past failure: “I liked the idea of completing what I failed to do in high school” (166: Female).

All these comments, however, relate to the overwhelming aim to remake the self and habitus through personal growth, to cultivate a sense of achievement or to improve one’s standing in society as a reflection of identity. Bourdieu’s metaphor of learning to become a ‘fish in water’ and become comfortable with their identity requires that students hold the requisite knowledge to play the game but also have a feel for how to do it. The next set of reasons however were more pragmatic and/or targeted to a specific career goal. It is interesting that males figured largely in this set of reasons for enrolling in the OFP.

Career aspirations & economic advancement

135 respondents nominated career and/or economic advancement as their reason for enrolling in OFP. Since they provided qualitative responses and could include several reasons, this category comprised 239 responses that included: aspirations to work in particular professions; wanting career change; wanting to improve career skills; wanting to gain qualifications for better employment prospects; wanting job security; or better pay. Of the 135 respondents most motivated by career advancement, 35 were men. Since there

were 78 men in this study, this means almost 45% of them referred to future career as a reason for enrolling, while 100 or 37% of women, referred to careers or economic advancement in their answer. The past few decades has seen decline in support for male breadwinner and female homemaker models of family. One study found this was due to attitudinal change in which higher education levels as well as women's increasing participation in employment were found to be negatively associated with the male breadwinner model. [48] As noted in the previous section, some women who cited career aspiration as a reason had become single parents or, were carers for injured male partners, and believed they must secure a career that would support their families. Another study cited the global recession as responsible for men looking to retrain in higher education. It commented on the way in which traditional masculinity was being refashioned as men sought to reposition themselves through new jobs and opportunities, and that 'real men' were finding jobs to support themselves and their families through education.[49]

Many respondents indicated that they enrolled in order to pursue a specific vocation to which they felt called or had always dreamed about. More often as the comments in Table 16 show below, this was expressed in regard to teaching.

Table 16: Comments on career Aspirations of student respondents proceeding to teaching

Teaching
"I wanted to attain a placement in B. Ed to do primary teaching" (002: Female)
"I had always wanted to be a teacher" (007: Female)
"I wanted to complete my education and teach English – be a professional and have a future. I loved language" (101: Female)
"Always wanted to be a teacher. Found hairdressing physically difficult" (142: Female)
"Inspired to become a TESOL teacher" (151: Female)
"I always wanted to be a teacher. I had the chance on moving back to Newcastle to 'follow my dream'" (170: Female)
"I had travelled to a lot of third world countries doing work with the poor and orphans … I felt called to pursue teaching which would in turn better help these kids and those also in my own country" (177: Female)
"After children … I decided I wanted to do something more meaningful than work in retail for the next 20 years, so I needed to re-qualify and had to get a degree to do it as I now wanted to teach" (200: Female)
"Love of teaching, desire to help young people succeed in life. Also persistent prompting from my wife (of 2 years)" (258: Male)
"Finally worked out what career I wanted (secondary teaching)" (293: Female)

[48] Mick Cunningham, "Changing Attitudes toward the Male Breadwinner, Female Homemaker Family Model: Influences of Women's Employment and Education over the Lifercourse." *Social Forces* 87(1) (2008): 299-323.
[49] Anne Gannon, *Is this what real men do?: the learning careers of male mature students in higher education.* Electronic thesis, University of Sheffield, 2014.

“After school, I tried doing other jobs however they never satisfied my desire to not only complete my studies but exceed that and excel in the career I always dreamed of (teaching)” (308: Female)
“Always wanted to be a primary teacher” (330: Female)

Simultaneously rejecting the career she was currently in due to its physical impact on her health, as well as fulfilling a lifelong desire to teach, is evident in the response of (142: Female) while (151: Female) was positively inspired to teach English as a second language. The coalescing of several reasons is evident in (258: Male) as he reconciles a calling based on intrinsic motivation, with a desire to help others, based on extrinsic motivation. His wife’s encouragement was also instrumental in his decision to enrol as her support during his period of study would also have had financial impacts on this couple. Another woman was even more specific about the type of teaching she wanted to undertake:

> I was working with someone who had children with learning difficulties. She gave me info about her children and a DVD about different styles of learning. It hit me that I could do something for children who didn’t fit in the main-stream. I also had a suspicion that I have had dyslexia all my life and worked around it. So I wanted to help others like me. It became a passion. (214: Female)

The revelation that she could participate in an agenda of educational inclusion and equity was closely bound to this student’s experience of her own learning difficulties. The drive and determination she felt was a significant motivating force to pursuing this line of study.

Several respondents were interested in studying law: “I had always dreamed of being a lawyer” (064: Female); and “I always wanted to be a lawyer (especially after working in a law firm) and after learning OF could give me entry to my dream career while studying part time, I couldn’t resist!” (339: Female) The notion that people “dreamed” of undertaking a particular vocation was mentioned 35 times, or by one tenth of respondents, so was a significant determinant. Other respondents sought a career in health: “Wanted to further career working in health” (246: Female); “Interested in becoming a teacher or a nurse” (274: Female); and “I thought long and hard about what I wanted to do in the next stage of my life and career. I decided nursing was where I wanted to go, it was something I wanted to pursue when I left school.” (283: Female)

Sometimes people harboured a long term aspiration that they were only able to take up when the time became right for them: “I wanted to work in mental health as a loved one was having trouble with health. I witnessed care that I wanted to be a part of” (179: Female). Personal experience was also a motivator to pursue a career in health and people could see that they could make a significant contribution to someone’s life or care. Such insights into their own personal strengths provided the motivation to tailor careers into

specific fields, also evident in the following comment that her reason for enrolling was: “To fulfil a lifelong desire to become a graphic designer” (271: Female); and “Started Fine Art, something I had always wanted to do” (224: Female); or “I wanted to change careers to do Industrial Design” (207: Male).

For many more students, however, their reason for enrolling in OFP was a matter of changing out of a career they were disenchanted or dissatisfied with. For example, some respondents commented: “I was looking for a new career (in Engineering). I instead chose to pursue medical radiation” (006: Male); “I had dropped out of Uni. I was now at a point in my life where I wanted a good job. I was unhappy in my current occupation” (037: Male); “Job unrewarding and boring. Looking for a more interesting career but needed qualifications for architecture” (108: Female). Expressions of unhappiness, seeking a “good” as opposed to a “bad” job had consequences for both personal satisfaction as well as financial implications. “Wanted to change professions, get a better job” (285: Female) was typical of such sentiments.

The feeling of stagnation and dissatisfaction was also expressed in terms of: “Believed I had stagnated and had no reasonable career prospects for improvement” (292: Female); “I was no longer satisfied in my job” (299: Female); while another student had tried a number of different career options he found objectionable and was looking for a more satisfying alternative:

> Stage of life. Had recently moved back to Maitland from Sydney with a wife and 2 children. No qualifications. Disliked my previous employment (postman). Tried bar work and bus driving. Hated both. Realised I needed some higher qualifications. Friend convinced me to enrol in OFP. Changed my life”[50] (042: Male).

Another student noted her enrolment in OFP was a result of “problems in job. Needed a more fulfilling job” (145: Female) and was actively seeking a career that would change the negative effect that resulted from her previous employment. This lack of fulfillment was sometimes coupled with resentment at the low pay:

> I had gone back to work after my children were born and found that the previous work that I had done (administration) was not fulfilling and I found that the money was not very good either. So I quit and decided to change careers and as I didn’t know what I wanted to do I thought OFP would be a good option[51] (247: Female).

Any change was perceived as preferable to some previous careers:

[50] This student became a Primary School teacher.
[51] This student went into B. Occupational Therapy.

> Previously office/PA work, took voluntary redundancy during maternity leave for my first child … needed to do something – either work or study and due to a lack of local work and disillusionment with office culture, I decided to see how I would go studying, perhaps leading to a career change[52] (169: Female).

In such cases the search for a new career was uncertain and students were unsure where their journey would take them:

> Searching for new career opportunities. Unsure what to do. Decided to challenge myself a bit more. OF was too good an opportunity to refuse. It was only possible due to my wife's financial support (173: Male).

In other cases the uncertainty resulted from their life being directed along a pathway that was not of their own choosing: "Selling of family business where I worked part time. I had previously worked in administration before having children and was not sure about returning to this area of work" (313: Female). In such cases, students were forced to make decisions about an unknown future and consider what direction they wished their own life to take.

On occasion students felt they could achieve more in the same environment in which they currently worked: "I was working part time X2 jobs with little pay [one in hospital admin] and thought I could do nursing" (257: Female). In this instance, her observation and knowledge about the pay and working conditions of other immediate professions was the incentive she needed to take the step to enrol in OFP and upgrade her professional status. Similarly, "My position [was] Financial Controller of a property development company. The rapid growth of the company and my position could be enhanced with further education" (125: Female); "My boss at the time asked if I would consider doing a degree. My immediate supervisor was to retire in the coming years and [he said] that I would be a good candidate for this position but would need formal qualifications to qualify" (161: Female).

This theme of career advancement was also expressed as: "To further career" (290: Female); "Wanted to further career, improve skills and move ahead" (314: Female), or "To improve work skills" (263: Male); "Worked voluntarily in welfare field and wanted to gain more knowledge and skills. Needed to enter paid workforce and didn't want to work in a field that was not stimulating" (287: Female). In these cases, students saw opportunities within their current employment but could not advance without higher degree qualifications.

In other instances the student was changing career path and seeking a better life: "Wanted a challenging and meaningful career path to lead to a better life for my children and myself"

[52] This student is currently completing a PhD in Psychology.

(025: Female); “Left a job intentionally because I wanted a better life” (180: Male). In these instances they had re-evaluated their current status and wished to improve their situation by enrolling in OFP. The idea that there was something better in store for them was also a theme in the data: “I wanted an opportunity to change jobs and earn a better living” (303: Female); “I felt dissatisfied with my current job and skill set and felt I could do better, get into a better more fulfilling career” (339: Female).

In other cases, the student needed prompting by those around them to pursue objectives that others saw they were capable of, rather than personal aspirations they may have held for themselves. This was reflected in the following comment: “I was inspired and encouraged by work colleagues to attempt a degree to open better employment opportunities” (155: Female).

Sometimes an unexpected outcome or event resulted in the need to seek an alternative: “Business failure combined with the desire for a career change” (258: Male); “Wanting a career change as I know that I will be working for the rest of my life after divorce” (260: Female). These types of response are discussed in more depth below and are referred to by Mezirow as “disorienting dilemmas”, which were then linked to career aspirations.[53] In the case of one student her disorienting dilemma and reason for enrolling was job loss:

> Coincided with GFC [Global Financial Crisis] aftermath. I had been employed in financial services for 10 years. After a higher qualification and greater job security (345: Female).

Other students in similar situations commented: “Moved here from WA, had to leave a job. Needed a new direction in my life” (091: Female); “Needed to improve employment prospects after a relationship breakdown” (289: Female); “Divorce – needed to reskill” (329: Female). Their disorienting dilemma was a catalyst to change the direction their lives took.

Rather than reacting to a situation or career that was unpalatable some students had more general career ambitions and were seeking ways to bring this about. Their aim in enrolling in OFP was: “to acquire better job prospects” (008: Female); “Not successful looking for employment – wanted further education and to increase employment prospects” (019: Female); “Wanted to retrain after another career of 25 years” (021: Female); “I wanted a worthwhile job and career” (050: Female). Such comments did not specify what that career might be, but suggested a brighter future based on improving their situation. “I wanted work options” (102: Female); “To get back into the workforce” (147: Female); “I wanted to go to Uni but my UAI [University Admissions Index] wasn’t enough. OF was a good way to ‘ease’ my way back into study after working for 2 years. I decided that I wanted more out of

[53] Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning,* 1991.

my life/job and Uni was a good way to broaden my education, skills and options" (Female: 212); "I wanted to get a good job with good pay. Realised I needed that elusive 'piece of paper', degree, to attain my career goals" (217: Female); "To create the capacity for employment options" (254: Female); greater career potential (140: Male). All these responses point to the idea that a brighter future lay in store if students could gain appropriate qualifications, secure a good job and earn a higher income.

The need for qualifications, referred to directly in 23 responses, but implicit in many more, was expressed as: "Wanted to gain qualifications before advancing career" (305: Female); "Wanted qualifications to assist future employment" (318: Female); "Wanting to enter the workforce with a qualification" (324: Female); "After 12 years at home with children I had no formal skills, no-one would employ me" (092: Female). The theme of regret at not having gained the qualifications that confirmed one's ability was evident in the reason given in the following student comment:

> I had started a degree at Canberra CAE in the early 80s but never completed it as I landed a full time position as a cadet journalist at News Ltd in Sydney. Felt that I needed to complete what I set out to do. Realised that I needed to get some sort of qualification if I was to find future meaningful employment in current climate"[54] (130: Male).

Despite a series of high powered jobs in the field of communications and journalism, this student was aware that his lack of credentials inhibited further progress within this field. This reflects the growing credentialism in the workforce and the fact that a Bachelor's degree has become a basic qualification for participation in some areas of the Australian workforce.[55]

The need for qualifications sometimes coincided with a desire for credibility and legitimacy when seeking to change their current occupation. For one student this involved adding teaching credentials to the mix of skills required for the position he had been offered:

> I had completed a Diploma of Herbal Medicine and was approached to teach some anatomy and physiology by the Herbal College. I was working at a Forensic Mortuary at this time as a Forensic Technician. Needed to beef up my qualifications for science related subjects and gain credibility to tackle teaching (120: Male).

For another student, an awareness of the challenges of changing technology and its impact on her skill set was uppermost in her desire to enrol in OFP: "My previous job was made

[54] This student later produced an historical documentary film.
[55] Jane Frawley, "Bachelor degree now minimum qualification for naturopathy and Western herbal medicine in Australia." *Australian Journal of Herbal Medicine* 26(3) (2014): 84.

obsolete due to computers” (093: Female). Alternatively, the need to upgrade skills within the field where they originally found employment was not open to some workers: “Financially needed a job. Qualifications out of date. Needed job skills” (143: Female). For these people, developing new skills was a prerequisite to changing career: “Needed qualification to change career path” (265: Male); or that there would be a lack of opportunity to progress if the student did not initiate a change: “I had started a new career and quickly realised that my existing skills would find a ceiling in this profession. Knowing that I would benefit greatly if I was to gain an undergraduate degree would eliminate this predicament” (268: Male).

One student was pleasantly surprised at her success once she made the transition to upgrade her skills:

> Wanted to get a good job with good pay. Realised I needed that elusive "piece of paper" or degree, to obtain my career goals. A friend had been to Uni and she encouraged me to go. I didn't really know about TAFE courses I could have done, but in hindsight Uni was certainly the best choice by far. I thought only "smart" people could go to University. Having come from a very small farming community and small school (3 students in my class), I didn't think I would cope with University life or the level of study required. I did, and I loved it, and I was a HD student offered Honours programme (217: Female).

For other students job security was an important reason for seeking to improve their qualifications and was linked to financial security for some students: “Wanted to be able to earn more money to raise my daughters. Also thought I was capable of having a more interesting career” (302: Female). Likewise, pursuit of a satisfying career and one that would bring economic stability to her family was the aim of one single mother:

> With two young children (aged 1 and 4) I had just separated from their father after our turbulent 7 year relationship. I felt as if I had lost the advantage of youth in the employment market and wanted to pursue a challenging and meaningful career path that would lead to a better life for my children and myself (025: Female).

While another:

> Needed to create capacity for employment options as I had significant family difficulties. I went to do a free course and I realised that my life would be doomed to menial low paying employment if I did not get a good education that would increase my employability (254: Female).

Related to job security was financial security, a major goal for some respondents: “I was

broke and going nowhere. I had always wanted a better education so I just decided to go for it" (223: Male). And:

> My children are grown to independence and for financial reasons I need a job. My qualifications are out of date and not possible to requalify easily. Still have 30 years left to work so I needed job skills - need HSC to get into most courses and didn't have, so went to OFP to obtain. Originally going to do teaching but speech pathology was the winner in the end. (143: Female)

Ironically, some students found they could only pursue higher education once they had achieved financial security: "I was financially secure so could start study … I wanted a career change" (074: Female). In this case it was already having achieved financial security that made her study possible.

A number of respondents cited the need for mental stimulation as a reason for enrolling: "I wanted to do something that was challenging and interesting" (059: Female); "I had completed an apprenticeship and wanted more!" (060: Male); I was working in a job that was not challenging. I knew I could achieve much more and decided to do something about it" (069: Female); "I was a stay at home Mum and wanted to return to work in something interesting, a career. I had no qualifications so set a five year plan. First stop OFP" (109: Female); "Ready for a new career start" (255: Female). These responses indicate that money and prestige were not the only factors influencing people's decision to pursue higher education.

In other instances, students were conscious of their stage of life and fitting their story into a biography that had some meaning or productive outcome that was linked to career change. Much like the idea of the biological clock, they felt they must make changes to their lives before it was too late: "I had 3 yrs left before I turned 40 so wanted to achieve something. Did not like current career" (300: Female). "I was at a crossroads, it was a chance to change jobs" (070: Female). Despite being quite young, this student considered the time for change had come: "I had a mid-twenties crisis. Decided I needed a change of life and career" (090: Male). In another case:

> I had been chasing endless winters working as a ski instructor. When I turned 30 I was no longer able to get an open visa to work in Canada. I looked into immigrating to Canada as I loved the mountains and lifestyle. However, after some inquiries I realised Canada had no want/need for more ski instructors/coaches in terms of skills shortages for immigration. So I realised that I should look into becoming qualified in

> something that was needed – and this began the path that I'm currently on[56] (343: Male).

All these examples citing links to career demonstrate that it is not a straightforward matter of deciding on a new career path. Career aspirations, particularly towards teaching, were prominent in the data, but so too were people fleeing careers they no longer enjoyed. These students also had many differing perspectives on the use of qualifications: wealth, prestige, security, credibility and legitimacy, while other students were simply looking to use their new qualifications to achieve a better life or to improve the self. In seeking to acquire institutionalised cultural capital as a means of economic advancement, and embodied cultural capital as personal fulfilment and for identity change, shows the complex interrelationship of Bourdieu's notions of capital that could sometimes be economic, sometimes symbolic and, as Chapter 10 demonstrates, sometimes have relevance for social capital.

The "right time"

112 respondents, and the most frequently cited response to the reason for enrolment question, was that it was the right time in their lives to pursue OFP. Another ten responses could be interpreted as falling into that category. 78 respondents, 77 of them female, referred to the independence of children as allowing them the time to engage in an activity outside those that catered to their children's needs.

Interestingly, the specific point of time that was 'right' differed among individuals. For some, as stated previously, it was when the children were old enough to attend pre-school; but for others, they could not allow themselves the luxury of study until their children had either left home or gone to university themselves, indicating a long term primary commitment to their parenting. Others indicated that attaining financial security provided the opportunity to enrol, while for others, being out of work or moving into part time work left a gap in available time that could be filled with study. For some it was only upon retirement that the time was right to pursue an interest outside workplace duties. As one man commented:

> I always regretted I had to forego the opportunity of attending University and attaining a degree. So, after retiring after a successful career in primary industry I decided to challenge myself to see whether I would have had the ability to succeed at University if I had been allowed to stay at school [and go to Uni]. OFP was the vehicle I chose to do the "testing" (063: Male).

Recovery from illness or trauma was another theme that emerged from the data, which made it the right time to enrol, but also provided a therapeutic environment for that

[56] This student was studying B. Physiotherapy.

recovery to take place. One woman who was "crippled by agoraphobia for more than 30 years" (056: Female) said that it was only with the help of her health professional that she was able to enrol.

A man who had been medically retired with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was looking for a new direction or challenge:

> I had previously thought of university but did not have the confidence. The OFP helped me gain this confidence and was great therapy for my PTSD (097: Male).

A number of students commented on their age or stage of life in relation to time: "I had turned 50 years, always had in the back of my mind to enrol, it was now or never. I never regretted it" (011: Female); "I was now at a point in my life where I wanted a good job" (037: Male); "I was turning 40 and wasn't where I wanted to be financially or personally" (141: Female); "I was nearing 40 years of age so wanted to achieve something" (300: Female). These students were conscious of their life trajectory and in the case of one (011), that she may not get another opportunity to study.

For some students the time to enrol accompanied moving back to the region and being able to access the OFP on campus courses: "I returned from overseas and decided to seek formal education" (027: Female); "Moved here from WA … needed a new direction in my life" (091: Female). For many students in this situation the perception of a blank slate that allowed them to make a radical change to their previous life was enabled because OFP was available to them. For one student the use of time was to fill a void after losing his job: "To fill in time and educate myself" (046: Male), his education appeared to be a secondary consideration. Likewise, one student commented: "Children at preschool and wanted to fill a few hours per week and see if I could still do something with my life" (031: Female). The sense of having no purpose outside parenting was evident here. Similarly: "Child with Special needs transitioned to high school. Once settled I decided to fulfil my dream of doing a degree and use up free time" (154: Female).

A "disorienting dilemma"

Relationship breakdowns and deaths in the family were also events that constituted a time in people's lives to re-evaluate where their future lay. This is considered in more detail below.

Mezirow theorized that transformational change among students begins with a "disorienting dilemma" [57] and although he later revised this position to acknowledge that it

[57] Mezirow, "Perspective transformation," 1978.

could be a gradual, cumulative process, [58] nevertheless, he saw some event as the catalyst for changing the way people see things and how they redefine meanings.[59] Whether sudden or gradual, Taylor points to the deep shift that occurs in some people's lives that sometimes may only become clear to them when it is over. [60] Benson *et a*l report that health crises resulted in several of their research respondents reconceptualising their futures; while a desire to break free of family violence was the primary reason another sought university qualifications and hence independence. [61] Because respondents provided qualitative answers and sometimes provided several reasons for enrolling, disorienting dilemmas were cited in almost 10% (n=83/834) of responses but constituted roughly 24% or almost one quarter of respondents. The disorienting dilemmas included death of loved ones or in one instance her own "near death experience" (181: Female); illness, accident or disability; relationship breakdown; or job loss.

Some students had a number of dilemmas to confront: "End of long term relationship, messy and nasty settlement. Job loss" (029: Female). Another commented:

> Shitty relationship ended, I had two very young babies – one with multiple disabilities, and I had always wanted to study psychology and was able to take an opportunity. I needed to do and be more to myself and my boys than a single parent with little future prospects. (127: Female)

The results of this survey indicate just how complicated and difficult some students' lives are outside the university setting. A number of female students indicated that their husband had sustained an injury or illness. One student saw enrolling as a temporary release from her disorienting dilemma. Her husband was severely brain damaged in a motor cycle accident. With two small children to care for as well she became overwhelmed. When a friend mentioned she had done the course and enjoyed it, she saw OFP as a golden opportunity "to get out of the house for a few hours each week and indulge myself – which I took" (252: Female).

Despite her disorienting dilemma, self-belief triumphed over what might seem insurmountable obstacles for the following student:

> I had goals of improving my level of education as I was unsuccessful in gaining entry back in 2004. I since then had suffered a mental illness and consequently sustained an acquired brain injury. During rehabilitation I had Doctor and close family

[58] Jack Mezirow, "Learning to think like an adult", in *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* eds. J Mezirow and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).
[59] P Cranton, "Teaching for transformation", *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 93 (2002), 64.
[60] E W Taylor, "An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999-2005)", *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 26(2) (2007).
[61] Benson., Hewitt., Heagney., Devos and Crossling, "Diverse pathways into higher education," 30.

> members telling me that I would not be able to complete academic studies. I completed OFP and finally gained entry still without [sic] no support from anyone." (043: Female)

This student demonstrated determination and resilience, qualities that sustained her while completing her studies. She also shows how a desire to prove those close to her wrong about her presumed lack of capability sustained or reinforced her commitment to succeed.

Another student confronted his own health problems by comparing his situation to someone close to him: "My cousin died after suffering a similar illness [to mine]. This inspired me to pursue a career in finance" (094: Male). Clearly he did not wish to suffer the same fate and set about pursuing a goal that was dear to him in which a career in finance was seen as a curative. Another student was seeking a diversion from cancer treatment that sparked his desire to qualify as a teacher:

> I had undertaken chemotherapy treatment for chronic HCV [Hepatitis C Virus] … became involved in St Johns PALS program as a volunteer literacy assistant at a local school as a constructive use of 'downtime' during treatment.

Terrible loss, and learning how to deal with it, was evident in many of the students' responses: "I was widowed in 2004 and after several years of being lost, I decided to go after a career I had always wanted since I was in high school" (335: Female); "The death of a baby after being born too early " (325: Female); "I lost a baby" (310: Female); "Death of my mother" (015: Female); "My sister had cancer during my years 10, 11 and 12 so I didn't study as hard as I should have and I had a lot of time off school" (049: Female); "Mum died and I lost my job" (245: Female). Death was mentioned as a precipitating factor to enrolment by over 3% of respondents.

The most numerous type of disorienting dilemma mentioned by respondents was, however, relationship breakdowns. 34 people, or just under 10% of all respondents referred to this event as precipitating change in their lives. Among these students the loss and emptiness was sometimes extreme. As one woman commented: "Separation after 25 years of marriage left me devastated and feeling worthless. I wanted to do something that was meaningful and useful" (099: Female).

Some students had suffered catastrophic injuries and could no longer return to the type of work they had been trained to do previously. One had a diving accident and broke his neck leaving him paralysed and in a wheelchair for 7 months. He could not return to construction work due to its physical nature, so decided to "give Uni a go and re-educate myself and give back what was freely given to me whilst in hospital (146: Male). Another respondent had been diagnosed with an incurable illness: "[I] was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis at the

age of 30 and was put on the Disability Support pension at 38. Didn't want to sit at home doing nothing" (191: Female).

The second highest category of disorienting dilemma related to job loss. Research has indicated that in Western culture, work is a source of identity and impacts on self-esteem and personal power.[62] The dislocation people suffer from job loss moves beyond decrease in finances and impacts on the way people see their worth within society more generally. One person's experience shows the ripple effect where a series of consequences result from losing a job: "Lost job. Couldn't find other work. Lost my rental property as a result, moved in with my parents in Newcastle" (213: Female). In some instances there was a business failure or the family business ended leaving the worker at a loss as to what to do (313: Female), or more catastrophically, a father's death caused the winding up of the family business "and I was then tied up with the settlement" (220: Male). Others wrote: "I left my job of 23 years and needed a purpose in my life" (079: Female); and "I was retrenched and finding it difficult to get a job" (088: Male).

Mental health was mentioned in a number of the reasons people gave for their enrolment. One student had been advised to attempt OFP by his psychiatrist as a form of therapy and so he could build his writing skills to transfer into a degree of his choice (020: Male); another said her psychologist had encouraged her enrolment (145: Female); while another had suffered postnatal depression and "thought it would give me something to do for myself as well as a self-esteem boost" (239: Female). For several other students, their decision was a result of a mid-life crisis or to combat depression (304: Male). Where the student had been advised by either a psychiatrist or a psychologist to enrol, confirms that for some people the educational experience was considered by professionals to be a legitimate therapeutic enterprise and they had faith that their client would be able to cope with the experience. Anecdotally, students who have suffered alcohol addiction have reported that they have been advised to undertake some form of education as part of their therapy. This is suggested in Table 13 where a student reported that they learned about OFP from a rehabilitation clinic.

Mezirow's contribution in theorizing about the significance of disorienting dilemmas has highlighted the importance of considering how some disorienting event can impact people's life course and how, when channelled into a productive educational experience, can turn people's lives around.

External factors

For a number of students their journey to OFP was influenced by external factors, by others' recommendations and encouragement or to act as a companion to someone who wished to

[62]Holmes., Hughes and Julian, *Australian Sociology*, 286.

do the program. Having financial support, or because the program was local and had flexible class times made it appealing to some students. One respondent indicated because it did not attract fees and was therefore affordable was a reason to enrol. One respondent wished to fulfil government obligations for their Centrelink payment, and in one case, enrolment was an act of divine intervention that she referred to as a "God incidence" (139: Female) and changed her life for the better.

Among those who were persuaded to enrol by others, a common theme was recognition by someone else of the potential of that student. In one case, the student's husband and children were all university educated and some held high ranking positions within the University. The mother had supported all her family's educational endeavours and it was one of her sons who felt it was now his mother's time to shine and pursue her own educational interests rather than taking a support role for all the other family members (334: Female). Another student explained: "My husband wanted me to do it with him" (152: Female); and "Persistent prompting from my wife" (258: Male) had led him to enrol.

Among those students who stated they enrolled to accompany someone else, only one male expressed companionship as a reason for enrolling, and even then he was motivated by a desire to improve his educational standing: "I was interested in some form of further education and this coincided with a friend asking me to do the Open Foundation with him (167: Male). More often, it was women acceding to the needs of others. One student's daughter asked her to enrol so they could study together:

> My daughter, then aged 21 years and in full time employment, asked me to join her in the OFP. Although I was employed as a dance teacher I always wanted to pursue further academic study. The OFP suited me in that I could attend either morning or evening tutorials/lectures without negatively impacting on work or family commitments. Unfortunately my daughter was unable to complete OFP due to work commitments - However, I did! (034: Female)

Another joined her daughter who was already doing a degree (071: Female); and in one case the student enrolled to accompany her daughter who was completing a Higher Degree Research thesis (284: Female). One student enrolled to support her sister who wanted to study:

> My sister decided to study Psychology at University but she needed to do Open Foundation to gain entry. So, because OF was free, I decided to do it with her for support (123: Female).

Other students were persuaded to enrol by friends. When asked why she enrolled one student responded: "Hard question! Not really sure. Didn't plan to study. Just got chatting

to a friend who was enrolled and I tagged along!" (139: Female). Another stated: "I enrolled with a friend who wanted someone to complete the course with" (202: Female); and "A friend had been to Uni and she encouraged me to go … I thought only 'smart' people could go to university" (217: Female). Clearly, her friend thought her capable and was instrumental in getting the student, despite her self-doubts, to make the commitment. Another student had similar encouragement from her husband to resign from a job in which she had "continual disrespect from my superiors" and to study. She said "I had wanted to study since graduating but was fearful of change and didn't believe I was capable" (218: Female). In such cases the financial support of family and the belief in the student's abilities were central to their decision to enrol, as was the idea that higher education was an enjoyable experience: "A friend said I would love it!" (334: Female).

Sometimes work colleagues could see that their peer had far greater potential than their current work situation allowed and had been pivotal in the student's decision to enrol: "I had been working in a Primary School as a Teacher's Aide and was told by my peers I would make a good teacher" (188: Male). Another commented she was "working with an inspirational group of women, all of whom had studied later in life" (050: Female); and another was "encouraged by work mates" (260: Female). In one instance, a workplace assessor saw the student's potential:

> I was an AIN [Assistant in Nursing] at a local hospital. I did my medical accreditation by outside education. Assessor of that said 'Why are you wasting your talents as an AIN? Why don't you become a RN [Registered Nurse]?' It was the first time anyone had given me encouragement that I could do better. So I did! (248: Female)

Family expectations sometimes weighed heavily upon students. One commented: "I had been made to leave school by my family when I had wanted to continue, so I guess I just saw it as a chance to fulfil my dreams" (048: Female). Another said that living up to his family's expectations of only entering blue collar work, leaving school at age 14 and contributing to the family's income had been deciding factors preventing further education in the past (063: Male). The theme that families had held them back either for financial reasons or because education was not deemed suitable for women or for working class people was expressed by a number of mature students. One stated: "I had always wanted to go [on to HE] but my parents wouldn't let me" (310: Female); "I was unable to finish school, my mother was a widow there was not enough money" (186: Female). The constraints experienced by these students affected their life course and when they had the opportunity to enrol, they embraced it. In another case the student wanted to seek higher education to "meet the expectations of my family" (172: Female).

Others found the convenience of access to the campus or to Distance Education and the flexibility of timetabling attractive reasons to enrol. Some were bound by government

obligations to situate themselves in study or saw the fact that the course was free (due to Federal funding) as sufficient reason to see whether they had the capacity to succeed. As mentioned, role modelling featured in a number of responses: "To encourage my grandchildren to attend Uni (it did not happen)" (131: Female), as did the desire to gain skills to assist children with their own studies.

There were other external reasons given for enrolling in OFP. According to McGivney[63] serendipitous events influence pathways to education. One student commented: "The ad said 'Want to change your life?' and that was exactly what I wanted to do" (317: Female). The impact of advertising campaigns in students' decision to enrol does not appear, according to Table 13, to be as prominent as the influence of word of mouth recommendations among this sample of former students. Friends' advice was the most frequently cited category for hearing about OFP, followed by newspaper advertising, family and the university webpage (although some respondents were unclear about what aspect of university advertising influenced them, so collectively the university's initiatives both within and via mainstream media might be seen as more influential than word of mouth at almost 55%). The university's direct advertising campaigns, that were recalled by almost 24.4% appear to be less influential than broader media advertising to which 30.5% attributed their enrolment. However, if "Other institutions" are considered as word of mouth recommendations rather than doing the recruiting work of the university, then that category that includes sources as diverse as a veterinarian and a taxi driver would be almost 45%. It also means that just over half (55%) of students had been influenced by the university's advertising and that the influence of friends and family and other word of mouth sources is also quite high (45%).

Some concluding comments on demographics and reasons for enrolment

Tedder states that "understanding an individual's learning career depends crucially on understanding the wider biography within which it is located". [64] Examining the reasons these students come to the OFP in the first place allows educators to realise that it may not be only for educative purposes or to pursue a vocation. It may also be because they have issues with their identity and wish to re-make themselves in some way or they may have had some disorienting dilemma and need to make a new life. There may also be external factors such as family influences or "tagging along" as one student put it, to act as a companion to someone else. For others it may simply be the "right time" in their life. Recognition that the reasons for which students enrol in tertiary preparation courses are multiple, diverse, complex and often interconnected may bear heavily on their motivation

[63] V McGivney, "Attracting new groups into learning. Lessons from research in England", in *Lifelong learning, participation and equity, ed.* J Chapman., P Cartwright, and E J McGilp, (Dordrecht: Springer 2006).
[64] M Tedder, "Making a choice? Insights from a life history approach to researching access students", *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* 9(2) (2007), 26.

to succeed. This research allows researchers to hear the voices and explanations of these students and to gain insights into their lives.

Bland advocates understanding who students are and what needs they have in order to provide a learning environment that genuinely encapsulates a student's personal growth and development. [65] Examining the reasons they enrol in tertiary preparation courses is a huge step in that direction. For HE policy-makers, this research encourages recognition that government provides educational opportunities not only to serve the needs of the economy, but also to serve the needs of the people, and that these needs are often not instrumental but altruistic or highly personal. These Open Foundation students can be seen to be seeking institutionalized cultural capital in the form of qualifications and skills, as well as embodied cultural capital in the confidence to pursue HE. The following chapters 8-10 report, in the students' own words, the impact of acquiring this cultural capital and how their habitus changed as a result of their educational experience.

[65] Bland, "Advising Adults: Telling or Coaching?" 6.

CHAPTER EIGHT
STORIES OF STUDENT TRANSFORMATION

So far this thesis has argued that within the field of enabling education, OFP has been instrumental in altering the embodied cultural capital and habitus of students. The history of the program has been outlined and the philosophical contribution, especially by the founder, Dr Brian Smith, shown to demonstrate the commitment of UON to student equity and the widening participation agenda. The reasons the students surveyed enrolled in the course have been found to be primarily about enhancing self-identity, with secondary intentions of improving their general education or career potential. These students' stories are enlightening and demonstrate that the UON's commitment to the program has been repaid in the tangible and intangible benefits gained by the students.

Open Foundation students are classified as "mature" because they must be turning 20 years of age or more in the year they undertake the course. Because they have not entered university by traditional pathways, all of their stories are characterised by additional life experiences and sometimes hardships. This chapter will examine stories from students who had additional challenges to surmount: Indigenous Australians; students who left school quite early and had limited educational experience prior to enrolling in OFP; students who came to the course with a disability[1]; and students who studied in the Distance program. It will highlight those who overcame adversity and went on to lead fulfilling, and sometimes exceptional, lives. In order to foreground the students' actual experiences, the chapter provides boxed summaries of students' narratives of transformation under the headings 'Background', 'Studies' and 'Outcome' for each of these groups, except for the largest group of students, those with a disability, where the more copious data are provided in tabular form. The main issues raised by each group are analysed in relation to the relevant literature where applicable. To begin, the first and smallest group of students who reported these transformative effects of their engagement with the OFP were the Indigenous students.

Indigenous students

Five of the self-selected sample of 350 students or roughly 1.4% stated they identified as Indigenous Australians, known as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI). None of these students characterised themselves as disadvantaged, yet for the purposes of Australian education, First Australians are often designated with that label in order to acknowledge the historical context and contemporary effects of colonisation. Across a range of health and

[1] Aspects of research on the following three categories of students are reported in Bunn, Rosalie J. "'Rewarding, enlightening, empowering, challenging': the importance of habitus and embodied cultural capital in restructuring student lives following successful completion of a tertiary preparation program", in Sam Broadhead., Michael Hill., Anthony Hudson., Caroline McGlynn., Stephanie McKendry., Neil Raven., David Sims and Tom Ward. *Widening Participation in the Context of Economic and Social Change, (*London: Forum for Access and Continuing Education, FACE, 2017).

social indicators, Indigenous Australians fare far worse than other Australians. According to Green and Saggers,[2] they are the most disadvantaged minority group in Australian society with a life expectancy of 67 years for men and 73 years for women compared to 79 years for non-Indigenous men and 83 for non-Indigenous women. ATSI peoples are twice as likely to report psychological distress as other Australians; 57 percent over the age of 15 years are either overweight or obese; and they are fourteen times more likely to be on kidney dialysis than other Australians. Non-Indigenous household income is 59 percent higher; and Indigenous people are fourteen times more likely to be imprisoned. ATSI peoples are still trying to gain constitutional recognition and any discussion about negotiating a treaty with them is met by intense resistance from conservative politicians.

In terms of education, despite the fact that there has been an increase in the number of ATSI students reaching Year 12, now at 60 percent according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), this is a recent development, with only 24% of 20-24 year olds holding a Higher School Certificate compared to 88% of other Australians.[3] This means they are underrepresented in higher education. Because many ATSI people have not qualified for traditional university entry, enabling courses like the OFP[4] are of particular value to them as a means of obtaining the equivalent of an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). Between 2012 and 2016, on average, 28 ATSI students completed OFP each year at the University of Newcastle.[5]

While Indigenous Australians comprise 3% of the population[6], according to Pitman, they constitute only 1.3% of the domestic student enrolments in higher education, the same proportion as chose to participate in this study. This figure has remained unchanged from 1998 to 2008.[7] The Federal Government's aim to change the balance of the student population to more closely reflect the composition of society as a whole, initiated under the Dawkins reforms of the late 1980s, has not been met in regard to Indigenous peoples. Interventions to improve their participation have been less effective than for other marginalized groups,[8] and despite initiatives over recent years to "redress their under-representation … [their participation] remains significantly below the population parity

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[2] Meredith Green and Sherry Saggers, "Race and Reconciliation", in John Germov and Marilyn Poole eds. *Public Sociology. An Introduction to Australian Society, (*Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2015), 294.
[3] Green and Saggers, "Race and Reconciliation", 294.
[4] UON also offers Yapug a pathway program designed to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gain skills for entry into undergraduate degrees at the University of Newcastle.
[5] University of Newcastle, Completions filtered by A&TSI and by enabling program. Extracted NINA (11.5.2017).
[6] http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001
[7] Pitman, Tim. "Widening participation in higher education: a play in five acts." *Australian Universities Review* 59(1) (2017): 41.
[8] James A Smith., Sue Trinidad and Steven Larkin, "Participation in higher education in Australia among under-represented groups: What can we learn from the Higher Education Participation Program to better support Indigenous learners?" *Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts,* 17 (2015): 12-29.

rate."[9] It has been argued that the disparity between the educational success of Indigenous people and that of other Australians is due to the failure to articulate and consider the importance of cultural factors,[10] "as well as financial pressures, social or cultural alienation caused by the academic demands of study, and insufficient academic support."[11] Poorer educational performance in part explains ATSI people's weaker position in the labour market.[12] In a report prepared for the Australian Government reviewing Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in 2011, Indigenous education was said to be in crisis and characterised by either high enrolment and low completions, or low enrolments and high completions.[13] The report indicated that regional universities[14], such as the University of Newcastle (UON), are more likely to have the capacity and willingness to develop alternative entry pathways. Collectively, 138 ATSI people completed OFP between 2012 and 2016.[15]

In the Executive Summary of their report, Pechenkina and Anderson state: "Education is a powerful tool in achieving better economic outcomes and is considered one of the main strategies for addressing Indigenous disadvantage in Australia."[16] These authors suggest that preparing educated people for leadership roles will be pivotal to raising health, education and economic outcomes for the broader Indigenous community and therefore reducing disadvantage. The following boxed summaries are from all five of the Indigenous students who responded to the survey and show their increased capacity to take on community leadership roles. Some background information about the person and their studies is given followed by what they considered as the outcomes for them. The summaries are discussed as a group afterwards.

Indigenous Student 1
(015: Female)

Background: This student was 35 years of age when she enrolled in Intensive Open Foundation (OFP), the most demanding offering because it compresses two semesters

[9] Judith Wilks, and Katie Wilson, "A Profile of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Student Population." *Australian Universities Review,* 57(2) (2015), 17.
[10] Johnnie Aseron., Simon Wilde., Adrian Miller and Stephen Kelly, "Indigenous Student Participation in Higher Education: Emergent Themes and Linkages." *Contemporary Issues in Education Research,* 6(4) (2013): 417-424.
[11] Ekaterina Pechenkina and Ian Anderson, *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education: Trends, Initiatives and Policy Implications.* Commissioned Research Paper #1, (Canberra: Australian Government, 2011), 12.
[12] Holmes., Hughes and Julian, *Australian Sociology*, 96.
[13] Pechenkina and Anderson, *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education,* 2011.
[14] While UON is not strictly classified as a regional university, it draws on the Hunter and Central Coast regions and was listed third out of 40 Australian Universities for average commencement numbers between 2004-2009 and sixth in Australia for average completion numbers according to Pechenkina and Anderson, *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education,* 8-9.
[15] University of Newcastle, Completions filtered by A&TSI and by enabling program. Extracted NINA (11.5.2017). Data is not yet available on transition of Indigenous students into undergraduate courses.
[16] Pechenkina and Anderson, *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education,* 1.

into one semester with twelve hours of face to face lectures and tutorials per week. Although she had completed her Higher School Certificate, she did not matriculate. She enrolled because her children were all at school and because the death of her mother had caused her to think about her own future.

Studies: In OFP she studied Basic Quantitative Methodology, a subject designed for use in Business; and English Literature. This student stated she "absolutely loved" the course and had great support from her lecturers. She also made enduring friendships in OFP who became part of her social networks in her field of social work. She completed three degrees: Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Sociology; a Bachelor of Social Work and later, a Masters of Health Science.

Outcome: She stated completing the course opened up lots of employment opportunities and eventually led to employment with a federal government agency with good pay and extensive travel opportunities. This "has expanded my life experience greatly". At the time of survey she worked in social work consultancy. She noted that the experience of studying was good role modelling for her daughter who also completed the OFP and became a Speech Pathologist.

Indigenous Student 2

(216: Female)

Background: This student enrolled at 35 years of age. She had completed her HSC and had also gained a Cert 1V in Business as she wanted to run drama classes. She undertook the compressed delivery Intensive course over one semester. She enrolled because she had volunteered in a high school to assist with remedial reading and wanted to assist high school students.

Studies: In the Intensive Open Foundation she studied Australian History and English Literature and Film. Her experience of the course was "positive, empowering and well supported academically." She found it refreshing to see many other mature age students in the course. This student also made enduring friendships while in OFP. She embarked on a Bachelor of Teaching majoring in Aboriginal Studies, Drama and History.

Outcome: At the time of survey she was three quarters of the way through her teaching degree and working as a Teacher's Aide. She had become more confident in the learning environment as a result of her OF experience and looked forward to a future career in teaching. She also noted that she felt she was a "more valuable asset to family, community and a role model for others". She now felt confident in her academic abilities and wished to assist high school students with queries regarding university.

Indigenous Student 3

(234: Male)

Background: This student was the only Indigenous male among these survey respondents and had enrolled at age 35. He had a trade qualification prior to entering OFP.

Studies: He studied in the part time course and his reason for enrolling was to "prove a point to myself". He chose Mathematics and Physics, the latter being one of the most difficult Open Foundation subjects which is recommended for those wishing to enter Engineering. His experience of the course was "good", his major concern "time management".

Outcome: Undertaking the course changed his life in that he "became more outgoing as well as confident". He completed a degree in Industrial design and now works in that area. He indicated the new job had not improved his economic situation but that he had met different groups of people through his university experience, although he did not make enduring friendships while in the course.

Indigenous Student 4

(159: Female)

Background: This student was 44 years old when she enrolled in Intensive Open Foundation. She had undertaken her School Certificate and a Certificate 4 at TAFE. In addition, she came to the course with a disability. She heard about the course from her husband who was a university student at the time, and enrolled because she had been made redundant from her job due to illness.

Studies: She studied Australian History and Social Enquiry which she found very difficult because of the challenge of essay writing. OFP was "challenging but very rewarding" and her experience of the course was that she "loved it". She also made enduring friendships. She completed a Bachelor of Education in Design and Food Technology.

Outcome: She went on to work as a tutor at Wollotuka, the Aboriginal Enclave at the University of Newcastle. At the time of survey she was working five days per week as a temporary teacher in a local high school. She had always wanted to teach: "it's been my dream, now it's coming true". Her economic situation had been improved as a result of her studies. She noted that her family was too poor to foster her educational aspirations when she was young and she had to leave school to get work to contribute to the family: "That's just how it was". In 2012 she enrolled in some postgraduate course work to develop her skills even further. With the start in OFP having allowed her to improve her economic position, she was "able to travel, pursue hobbies."

Indigenous Student 5

(284: Female)

Background: This student enrolled at age 45. She had only completed year 9 equivalent at high school and came to accompany her eldest daughter who was completing a thesis in Engineering. While her daughter conducted research in the library, this student filled in her time attending Open Foundation lectures.

Studies: She studied Philosophy and Celtic Studies in the Part time course. She found these subjects "confirmed my love of learning" and "helped me get ready for further study". However, she said the experience did not prepare her as much as it should have for dealing with the University itself. She did not make any enduring friendships. She did well enough to enrol in a Bachelor of Education specialising in Physical Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE).

Outcome: She now teaches PDHPE in addition to Science. She notes she would not have attempted university study without her Open Foundation experience and that her economic circumstances have improved as a result of this career path. She stated she is now more confident and independent and has "self-belief".

In all of these cases, the student was aged either in their mid-thirties or mid-forties. Eighty percent (4 of the 5) were female, which is consistent with the overall survey response rates (77.72% of all respondents were female). This group is also consistent with Pechenkina and Anderson's report that indicates Indigenous students in HE are more likely to be female and to be older.[17] Two had achieved a HSC but did not matriculate; two had a School Certificate; while the third had left school at the end of Year 9. Due to their intersectional features, Indigenous Student 5 is also discussed later in this chapter as an "early school leaver", and Indigenous Student 4 is discussed among those students who enrolled with a disability. To put these prior qualifications in context, only 21 people or 6% of the overall student survey sample had left school at the end of Year 9. 45 percent had a School Certificate or lesser qualifications and around 31 percent had achieved a Higher School Certificate qualification.

Three of these students chose the Intensive Open Foundation offering, while the other two studied part time. The reasons these ATSI students gave for enrolling in OFP were varied. The four females would seem to have been motivated to attend due to personal relationships or a desire to assist others; while the male was motivated by personal goals. This is consistent with research cited in the previous chapter and with the findings of the wider survey that indicates males tend to be more instrumental in their approach to their studies. Indigenous Students 1 and 4 had a "disorienting dilemma" that influenced their decision to enrol. It is also notable that for students 1 and 5 that they encouraged their

[17] Pechenkina and Anderson, *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education,* 11.

daughters to succeed in higher education with one becoming a Speech Pathologist and the other doing a Research Higher Degree in Engineering. These motivations to enrol are consistent with those of the overall sample.

These students' experiences of the course were mostly positive. One reported 'it was positive and empowering', another stated: 'It was challenging but rewarding'. Those who did raise concerns blamed themselves and the program: 'my major concern was a time management problem on my part,' which indicated he was aware of his own limitations. As a part time student he may have been juggling work commitments and recognised that this impacted the time he was able to devote to his studies. One female student commented: 'It did not prepare me for dealing with the University itself' suggesting her time in the program was well supported but this did not continue when she entered her undergraduate studies. This issue has been taken up in further research of Bunn *et al*[18] that looked at what was referred to as the 'double transition' these students must make, first into Open Foundation, then into undergraduate programs. The research looked at the existing support mechanisms and extent of collaboration (or lack of it) between OFP and the disciplines. Students in that study often commented on the cushioning effect of embedded support within OFP, which was not replicated in Undergraduate programs. The staff who were interviewed recognised that working in "silos" was unhelpful, that a team approach to transitioning these students within the university as a whole was helpful for staff and improved the students' progress to undergraduate studies.

The outcomes for all five of the ATSI students who completed OFP were remarkable. One became a social work consultant. She completed three degrees B. Arts (Sociology), B. Social Work, and a Master of Health Science and now advises the government on how best to meet the needs of other ATSI people. The three other women became teachers and role models for their families and community, exemplifying the benefits of education. The only male among this group became an industrial designer. Although it did not immediately improve his economic situation as trade qualifications can produce higher economic benefits than academic qualifications, it was possible that future career development may have improved his financial position. What was clear in this student's responses, however, was that he acknowledged the intangible benefits of tertiary study by indicating that his tertiary education had made him more outgoing and confident. Such qualities constitute embodied cultural capital and demonstrate an altered habitus, which increased his social interactions.

[18] Rosalie J Bunn., Anna Bennett., Erica Southgate., Sharon Cooper and Keryl Kavanagh, "Wow, I didn't know that!" The benefits of collaborative research on transition of Enabling students into Undergraduate Education Programs**.** Refereed conference paper presented at Foundation and Bridging Educators Conference New Zealand, Auckland, December 3-4, 2012.

The common theme running through all these stories is transformation through higher education that resulted in an increase in self-esteem as well as, in several accounts, a desire to enhance the lives of family and those around them by either providing role-modelling or directly contributing to educating others. In two cases, the student went on to postgraduate study, which is a significant achievement for someone who might be considered part of a marginalised or disadvantaged group. Chapter 9 discusses postgraduate outcomes in more detail. As is shown below, a desire to enhance the lives of others was also evident among the early school leavers' stories.

Early School leavers

Among the respondents were twenty one who had limited high school education. Three had left school at the end of Year 7 with only one year of high school (0.85% of the sample); four had left at the end of Year 8 with two years of high school education (1.13%); and fourteen had left at the end of Year 9 with only three years of high school education (3.94%) and no School Certificate, which is considered a minimum exit qualification for Australian children. Collectively, this cohort of students totalled 5.92% of the overall sample. The majority of students had a minimum qualification of a School Certificate (39.44%); Year 11 (7.04%); Higher School Certificate (30.7%); TAFE qualifications (13.8%); and eleven (3.1%) already had a university qualification but were looking to study either for leisure or to change careers.

Year 7 completions: "My family think me more capable and not just a survivor."

Year 7 completions 1
(078: female)

Background: This student is an Australian born female, enrolled in OFP at the age of 26 and identified as having a disability. She enrolled because she disliked her first office job and wanted to test her abilities in writing which had greatly impacted her confidence and opportunities for study and employment.

Studies: She found OFP extremely challenging. "I completed the program with barely a pass mark". She could not understand the steps for studying, the format for assignments and had problems with literacy skills. She came to OFP with a disability, as yet undiagnosed: "The major impact [of OFP] for me was the identification that I could have dyslexia and the referral to a study being conducted at Newcastle University." Once diagnosed "it has literally changed my whole life". She studied Language & Communication and Social Enquiry in OFP.

Outcome: She made enduring friendships both professionally and personally during the course which: "assisted my early career prospects with support and links into networks and employment opportunities". Those who became personal friends "added depth, value and resilience to my life ... [OFP] provided the support and framework to have faith

in my ability and changed my life in so many ways for the positive ... for the first time in my life I found out that I was not dumb or lazy as I had been told most of my life". This student was quite insistent that I note her resilience and determination to succeed, in spite of any adverse circumstances. She stated: "Please note, to this day I have never informed an employer or any education provider that I have a learning challenge, or applied for any support when undertaking studies".

She had "not yet" undertaken a university degree, but the wording indicated that it was a possibility. Instead, she worked in hospitality, community services in a field staff position with Home Care, and then moved to a community development position. She completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualifying as a community educator, progressing to a senior educator position developing and implementing education programs. She said "I have continued to develop my career path at a management level over the past nine years." She was later appointed in successive positions as education team manager with the extra responsibility of securing funding for the development and implementation of new education programs. Her new career had dramatically improved her financial situation. "It has provided the slowly increasing stable income that provided the ability to service a house mortgage on my own. It has significantly increased my superannuation balance".

She stated that all her relationships had "changed in a positive manner. My family think me more capable and not just a survivor".[19] Her personal network of friends has changed to more academic and artistic types of people, but the main change in her life as a consequence of completing OFP was "a sense of personal self-worth and the ability to expand choices in education and career. No other education I have ever undertaken has provided the gateway to opportunities and lifelong support which this program provided me".

Year 7 completions 2

(228: Female)

Background: This student is an Australian born female, enrolled in OFP at the age of 50 and identified as having a disability. Her reason for enrolling was due to her divorce and becoming a single mother to three children. She wanted to obtain a degree "but [I was] hesitant and decided OFP could be a stepping stone towards my goals to enter university studies.

Studies: "I recorded all lessons. My daughter would help me with re-words and editing. I loved studying. Assistance in tutoring on campus helped. The hearing loop (portable) was

[19] Rosalie J. Bunn, "'My family think me more capable and not just a survivor': Journeys of some early school leavers through an enabling course". Paper presented at Equity Practitioners Higher Education Australia (EPHEA) Conference, Geelong VIC, 2015

not in use until my arrival. Scribes were very few. Some of the lecturers did not want to wear the microphone associated with the hearing loop setup. It was a wonderful feeling to graduate". She studied Visual Art and English Literature and Film in OFP.

Outcome: She did not make friendships during the course, but it changed her life because "It gave me more confidence to enter into more conversations with people. In the workplace (theatre) it broadened my knowledge of creative arts, for example, Film and Literature Studies".
She entered a Fine Art Degree but did not complete and remained working for a council who managed a theatre until her retirement in 2011. Her study did not improve her economic situation, but she found she "had more conversations. Because I was more widely read I could argue for and against opinions on a subject". She also became a Student Mentor so she could help other students. She entered art exhibitions because she now had more confidence "that OFP instilled in me." She went on to win an Art and Culture award through one of the local councils.

Year 7 completions 3
(301: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born and enrolled in OFP at the age of 62. Her reason for enrolling was that she had given up work and "I was always interested in social justice. I also had a strong desire to learn about other cultures and just to educate myself, which I never had the opportunity to do before".

Studies: "It was a wonderful experience for me. The lecturers and other students were most accepting of me as I had reservations about enrolling due to my age". She studied: English Literature and Social Enquiry in OFP.

Outcome: She made enduring friendships during her time in the course. "I feel it was life changing for me in many ways. I became much more aware of life and others in general". She entered a Bachelor of Social Science and graduated from the university in 2009. She did not undertake a career and there was no change to her economic circumstances.
She indicated her relationships did change and she was "able to participate in discussions with family, and feeling more confident. She repeated that "being confident enough to express opinions on current affairs and speak up for the marginalised" was the main change in her life.

Despite just one year of high school education, all these women succeeded in various ways. One (078) found a way to deal with her disability, became a workplace educator and her sense of self-worth escalated. She now feels she can make constructive choices about her future. It is also notable that she used her OFP contacts as professional contacts, thus building a network of social capital. While another (228) did not complete her degree, it nevertheless gave her confidence to pursue her artistic talents. The last woman (301) did complete her degree, and while at retirement age and not planning to use her qualification

to enter the workforce, she had become more confident to express her opinions and advocate more forcefully for the social justice principles she aspired to learn more about prior to entering the course.

Year 8 completions: "It increased my family's regard of me."

Year 8 completions 1

(056: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born, enrolled in OFP at the age of 59 and identified as having a disability. Her reason for enrolling was a referral to the course by her psychologist. She stated "Due to life circumstances I was unable to complete a basic education but have always been interested in further education. After being crippled by agoraphobia for more than 30 years and just able to leave my home with the help of a mental health professional, I enrolled."

Studies: She studied Social Enquiry and Aboriginal Studies in OFP and "Loved it".

Outcome: She did make enduring friendships during the course and "It has changed my life in the way that education does change people's lives. Due to my age, realistically, it has probably changed it more from a personal sense of self and accomplishment". She enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Science which was ongoing at the time of survey, and later enrolled in an Honours degree investigating the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Her family and social relationships did not change as a result of doing the course. She gained "satisfaction due to accomplishment" and hoped to interest her grandchildren in higher education.

Year 8 completions 2

(077: Female)

Background: Australian born, enrolled in OFP at the age of 21 and identified as having a disability. Her reason for enrolling: "I wanted to further my education as I was interested in learning, but wasn't keen on Distance education or TAFE, and wasn't clear on what career path I wanted to take".

Studies: She studied Chemistry and Core Mathematics in OFP and "Loved it!"

Outcome: She did make enduring friendships during the course and said it changed her life: "Yes, it made me realise that I can study and learn, it's not as scary as I thought". She enrolled in a Bachelor of Science (Chemistry) but did not complete. She did not pursue a career and her family and social relationships did not change. However, "It made me aware of a great passion for chemistry that I never knew I had".

Year 8 completions 3
(131: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born, she enrolled in OFP at the age of 56. Her reason for enrolling was "I thought I would enrol in a university course mostly to encourage my grandchildren to attend uni (it did not happen)".

Studies: She studied English Language and Australian Economic History in OFP which she "enjoyed immensely. I found the exams stressful, but achieved a better result than I expected".

Outcome: She did not make enduring friendships while studying, but it changed her life: "It did show me I could cope with university studies … I attempted a Bachelor of Occupational Health and Safety" but did not complete, and did not pursue a career. She explained: "My then husband violently objected to my university studies. I could not cope with the abuse, so I did not pursue my studies in the OH&S course". Nevertheless, she still had "A continuing desire to learn".

Year 8 completions 4
(135: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born, enrolled in OFP at the age of 56. She enrolled because "I was feeling a void in my life. Also felt I would benefit from further education".

Studies: She studied Australian History and Social Enquiry in OFP: "Absolutely loved it. It helped improve my self-esteem and exposed me to other women in similar circumstances, but also opened my eyes and gave me a better understanding of the way human nature works".

Outcome: She did make enduring friendships during the course. OFP **"**gave me confidence in social situations and I believe it increased my family's regard of me". She completed a Bachelor of Arts in 2010, but did not pursue a career. However, her relationships changed. She said: "Yes. I am able to converse with intelligent/educated people. My husband now regards me differently, with more respect I think".

The stories of these women who only had two years of high school tuition are testament to their resilience. In the case of one (056), who overcame thirty years of entrapment as a result of agoraphobia, the stakes were very high in breaking with her past. The self-satisfaction gained from completing OFP and the hope to influence her grandchildren to study were positive outcomes. The fact that she was able to continue her studies and succeed at a level high enough to be accepted into an Honours program shows talent, determination, strength and courage. For (077), the revelation that study was not as hard as she had thought and that she had a passion for chemistry had enhanced her life. Although

she did not continue with her higher education, she was now aware that she had the capacity to do so, which gave her personal satisfaction. (131) was another student who wished to encourage her grandchildren to study. She also learned that she could cope with the rigors of tertiary study. Unfortunately, her words indicate that she was a victim of domestic abuse and that situation forced her to withdraw from her studies. This case study also draws attention to the fact that some people's lives outside the university setting are characterized by extremely difficult circumstances in which partners may actively sabotage their spouse's studies. Shame often prevents students reporting the abuse or seeking counselling and an invisible suffering affects these students' lives. Despite this, (131) still saw learning as a positive experience.

Three of these women were in their late 50s when undertaking OFP. It is notable that all three made enduring friendships during the course that sustained them later. (135) felt that something was missing from her life, an emptiness she decided to fill with education. By completing a B.A she felt her family's regard of her had increased and that she was capable of engaging in intelligent conversation, that her views were now respected. In each case, a more confident person emerged from the experience.

Year 9 completions: "I felt like I wasn't such a failure."

Year 9 completions 1
(009: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born, she enrolled in OFP at the age of 45. She enrolled because: "I wanted to achieve a higher education because I had been in the A classes at school but left early because I needed the money. I listened to the ABC and a lot of what I heard I didn't fully understand. I wanted to know more."

Studied: Australian History and Basic Quantitative Methodology (BQM) in OFP which she found: "Daunting at first. Essay writing was a challenge. Intensive course was very demanding, many dropped out. Very glad I stuck at it though."

Outcome: She maintained friendships from OFP "for a while." Her life was changed because "I gained confidence in expressing opinions in front of others. I learnt more about the economy and political issues; about people and human behaviour." She enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts and competed an Honours degree, followed by a Master of Education. The career she entered was Secondary teaching, which improved her economic circumstances ... While I already had a certain financial independence, I gained independence in forging a new pathway."
Her family and social relationships changed: "Yes. Some friends and family felt threatened by my change in social status."

Year 9 completions 2
(027: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born, she enrolled in OFP at the age of 29 because: "I returned to Newcastle from overseas and decided to seek formal education."

Studied: Social Enquiry and Earth Science in OFP which she found: "Overall, a fantastic, positive experience. Some challenges, lots of learning and enjoyment."

Outcome: She did not make any enduring friendships but her life was changed because: "I was able to pursue my dream of attending university". She was awarded a Bachelor of Psychology (Hons). "I started a PhD but withdrew". She became a Psychologist and her economic circumstances improved after completing her degree. "I learned that I could write." Her family and social relationships changed: "Yes. [I am now] more content, able to have more informed conversation and feel better about myself which led to a richer experience at university."

Year 9 completions 3
(035: Male)

Background: Australian born, enrolled in OFP at age 31: "I enrolled essentially for two reasons:
1. I wanted to recommence study as a way of finishing formal education after leaving school very young to pursue a sporting career and trade.
2. It coincided with a relationship breakup."

Studied: Australian History and Chemistry and the Life Sciences in OFP which he found: "Excellent, a pivotal experience that enabled me to commence a future of lifelong learning."

Outcome: He did make enduring friendships from his OFP courses and his life was changed by it: "Yes, many lifelong skills were gained in this process and a great sense of achievement. A real journey of self and professional development." He completed a Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics; was awarded the Faculty Medal and then pursued a Research Higher Degree. He became a dietician and academic. However, his economic circumstances did not improve as a result of his career change. He commented "No financial change, however, which is disappointing." OFP "brought skills in self-directed learning; a feeling of belonging to a group, ie. University connectivity." His social relationships changed: "Yes. Sought out new social relationships that had intellectual value."

Year 9 completions 4
(046: Male)

Background: This student was Australian born, enrolled in OFP at age 59 due to "Job loss and to fill in my time and educate myself".

Studied: Earth Science and Chemistry and the Life Sciences in OFP, which he found: "Busy, intensive, made me think – see a different side".

Outcome: He did make enduring friendships during his OFP studies, and it changed his life. "Yes. It allowed me to complete a university degree that no other member of my family has achieved." He completed a Bachelor of Environmental Science (ACU) but did not pursue a career. His new-found knowledge "gives me something else that I can use to interest other persons in". His relationships did not change.

Year 9 completions 5

(059: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born, enrolled in OFP at age 42 because: "I always wanted to do something – had done TAFE courses – husband injured and I needed to look at doing something (job wise) that was interesting and challenging. I only had a "job" to earn money – it was mostly mundane."

Studied: Chemistry and Earth Science in OFP, which she found: "Very positive, stimulating – met people with similar interests and goals."

Outcome: did make enduring friendships during the course and she simply said "Yes" when asked: Did completing the program change your life? She completed a Bachelor of Nursing and a Diploma of Midwifery in 2000 and works as a registered nurse in Aged Care. Her relationships did not change, but OFP "opened learning pathways that were stagnant in my brain – inspired others to do education."

Year 9 completions 6

(101: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born, enrolled in OFP at age 25. While she did not have a disability at the time of enrolment she later became hearing impaired. She enrolled because: "I wanted to complete my education and I wanted to teach English. I wanted to be a professional and I wanted a future. I also loved language. I am so glad that I did my Open Foundation and completed a degree. Very thankful for my education."

Studied: Classical History and Earth Science in OFP which she found: "Brilliant. [The lecturer] is a fantastic asset to the university."

Outcome: She did not make enduring friendships during the course but it changed her life: "I completed a degree and it is the best thing I've done with my life." She completed a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching in 2007 and became a casual teacher, which did

improve her financial circumstances. Her relationships changed: “Yes. It’s complicated. As a woman it has given me independence.” She also gained “Respect from my family. Self-fulfilment. I love being a professional.”

Year 9 completions 7

(110: Female)

Background: Australian born, enrolled in OFP at age 52 and identified as having a disability. She enrolled because: “I just wanted to go further with my education. I’m a bit of a sticky beak and would have liked to get into research of some sort (Pathology or Statistics), but not realising my inability to stay awake for study because of undiagnosed sleep apnoea, I was not a very successful student, even though I passed.”

Studied: Australian History and Linguistics in OFP. “I loved the lectures, found them so interesting. Loved the challenge of finding books from the Library (both at the Uni and Lake Macquarie Council Library at Speers Point). Hated the mosquitoes in the native Australian bushes at night, they were savage.”

Outcome: She did not make enduring friendships and did not enrol in an undergraduate degree. She did not respond to the question about life change.

Year 9 completions 8

(133: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born and enrolled in OFP at age 36. “I enrolled once my youngest child commenced school. I hope to gain qualifications so I could find a job/career path.”

Studied: Chemistry and Earth Science in OFP. “I had a wonderful introduction to tertiary education. My entire world changed forever. I made new friends, enjoyed my studies and the achievement that followed. OFP staff, teaching and admin, were great.”

Outcome: She did make enduring friendships during her course. OFP changed her life: “Yes. I went on to complete undergraduate studies at Newcastle University and Postgraduate studies at UNE. Once I started my undergraduate studies I was offered work as a trainee town planner. My career path has followed urban and regional planning stream.” She began a Bachelor of Environmental Science then transferred to Bachelor of Science and Postgrad studies at UNE. She took up a position in Urban and Regional/Environmental Planning.
Her relationships changed “Yes. There were many ups and downs. I experienced disapproval and praise. My sons became more independent and husband learned to cope with my evolution ... I think I am a much better thinker and analyst today. I’m more objective and addicted to lifelong learning. My confidence definitely has grown since this experience”.

Year 9 completions 9
(146: Male)

Background: This student was Australian born and enrolled in OFP at age 33 because he had a diving accident and broke his neck leaving him paralysed and wheelchair bound for seven months. He made a full recovery but was unable to return to construction work, so decided to re-educate himself and "give back" to the community.

Studied: Philosophy and Social Enquiry in OFP. "It was awesome". He claimed his lecturers were inspirational and helped him to believe in himself and in the opportunities that are available if he applied himself.

Outcome: He did make enduring friendships during the course. OFP changed his life: "MOST DEFINITELY. DREAM – BELIEVE – CREATE – SUCCEED. I gained a belief in myself that anything is possible if you are willing to work for it. I am still studying via Distance Education and have 5 subjects to go before completing a degree in Social Welfare … Who would have thought, and it all started with teachers believing in me when I didn't really believe in myself." He enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Welfare (CSU) which he has almost completed and hopes to work in social welfare.

Year 9 completions 10
(203: Male)

Background: This student was Australian born male, enrolled in OFP at age 51: "Partly due to unemployment, but mainly just out of interest."

Studied: Philosophy and Earth Science in OFP which he found: "Very satisfying."

Outcome: He did not make enduring friendships but added "though I may be in touch with friends again later." OFP changed his life because: "It enabled me to begin a BSc degree which I am about half way through and will probably complete some day". He enrolled in a Bachelor of Science majoring in Geology and Chemistry and some Biology. As a career: "I do music at the moment but I'll maybe go back to Science." OFP did not change his family or social relationships, but: "It got Centrelink off my back when I wasn't motivated to earning more money."

Year 9 completions 11
(208: Female)

Background: Australian born, enrolled in OFP at age 43 because: "I had been divorced for three years. My son was around nine and a half [years] and not as needy. I felt I needed to do something for myself. I was still employed, but only part time."

Studied: Australian History and Classical Studies in OFP which she found: "Having not been in formal education for 28years I was apprehensive about starting as I was doing it

alone. My apprehension disappeared within the first two weeks. The experience was both rewarding and positive. Both subjects were interesting as were the lecturers who made the subjects and OFP enjoyable." She did make enduring friendships in OFP and "It made me more confident as a person. It enabled me to continue to study." She completed a Bachelor of Social Science majoring in Welfare in 2002 and commenced a career in Youth Work.

Year 9 completions 12

(278: Female)

Background: Australian born, enrolled in OFP at age 56 because: "I had, and still have, a great passion for learning – and a very supportive family."

Studied: English Literature and Australian History in OFP. "When I began, I had given myself a week-at-a-time promise, with no thought of a degree. I had found what I was looking for."

Outcome: She did make enduring friendships while in the course and noted that she is "still in contact with several people" [over 30 years after graduating]. It changed her life because: "It fulfilled a great need. I found a new career, made enough money to travel, still had a great family and a much broader mind." She completed a Bachelor of Arts and studied some Postgraduate Education Coursework. She took up a career in adult education after which her economic position improved. Her relationships both changed and remained the same. [OFP] "opened doors and closed others. Now I wanted and still have a very great need to know".

Year 9 completions 13

(284: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born and enrolled in OFP at age 45. She identified an Indigenous Australian. Her reason for enrolling was: "To accompany my eldest daughter to the Newcastle Uni at night while she completed her thesis in Engineering. I did this [OFP] while she researched at libraries."

Studied: Philosophy and Celtic Studies in OFP which: "confirmed my love of learning. It helped me get ready for further study. It did not prepare me as much as it should have for dealing with the Uni itself."

Outcome: She did not make enduring friendships during the course, but did feel it changed her life: "Yes, I became a qualified teacher 5 years later. I would not have attempted Uni without OFP experience and my TER [equivalent ATAR]". She completed a Bachelor of Teaching/PDHPE in 2001 and began a career teaching PDHPE and Science. Her economic circumstances improved. Her family relationships also changed: "Yes. Independent from Husband/Family." She gained: "Confidence. Self-belief."

Year 9 completions 14
(328: Female)

Background: This student was Australian born and enrolled in OFP at age 42 because: "I wanted to improve myself and career prospects. My children had grown a bit older."

Studied: Chemistry and the Life Sciences and Linguistics in OFP which she found: "Very positive. It made me realise that I could complete a degree if circumstances were different."

Outcome: She did not make enduring friendships in OFP, but "It gave me confidence to get a part time job. I did not have the finances to do a degree as I had to work to support my kids. I am proud to display my [Attainment] certificate in my resume." She did not go on to further education or a career. However, her relationships changed: "Yes. I felt I could contribute to conversations more, I felt like I wasn't such a failure".

These summaries give some indication of the circumstances that prevented students from continuing their education in high school. Some talk of a "longing" for more education and being pleased they "stuck at it" to complete OFP. Kurantowicz and Nizinska[20] examined access and retention practices of non-traditional students. They found that by examining the biographies of these students there were three stages through which they passed to learn to cope with obstacles and "stick it out". These were: struggling where they used the resources of their habitus to sustain them; patchworking where they looked for alternative sources of support; and finally, balancing where they produced functional retention practices. Generating such practices is far more difficult for those who have had less experience of the education system. In Kurantowicz and Nizinska's study, interpersonal relations were found to be the most beneficial retention strategy, so it is not surprising that over half, or eight of the fourteen students who left in Year 9 formed friendships during the course that they maintained throughout their degrees and into their working lives.
The following table (Table 17) demonstrates the variety of interests and educational destinations of all the early school leavers when they initially enrolled in their degree programs.

Table 17: Early School Leavers Degree Destinations

Degree	Completed	Ongoing	Not completed
B. Fine Art			1
B. Social Science	2	1	
B. Social Welfare		1	
B. Arts	3		
B. Psychology	1		

[20] Ewa Kurantowicz and Adrianna Nizinska, "How students 'stay the course': Retention practices in higher education." *Studies in the Education of Adults* 45(2) (2013), 141.

B. Science	2		1
B. Environmental Science	1		
B. Occupational Health and Safety			1
B. Nutrition and Dietetics	1		
B. Nursing/Midwifery	1		
B. Teaching	2		
TOTAL	**13**	**2**	**3**

*Three early school leavers did not enrol in a degree

Further, in terms of degree progression, overwhelmingly, these students who had a limited high school education chose to continue with their studies upon completing OFP (See Table 18 below). 71.4% were either still studying, had completed a degree or had gone on to postgraduate study. One of those who had completed only to Year 7 went on to become a workplace educator with TAFE qualifications but indicated she may yet come back and do a university degree.

Table 18: Early School Leavers: Degree Progression

	No degree	Enrolled but did not complete	Ongoing in degree	Completed degree	Enrolled postgraduate
Number	3	3	2	8	5
% of this cohort	14.3%	14.3%	9.5%	38.1%	23.8%

A common theme among these students' biographies is the confidence they gained to express their opinions. According to Kurantowicz and Nizinska:

> Being a student affects their social status, the community's appreciation of them, the attainment of professional expertise and the achievement of personal, as well as civic, capability.[21]

This change in social status, and effectively in their habitus, is reflected in these students' comments about the skills they acquired, their newly gained independence, their pride in being first in family to complete a tertiary degree, and for those who entered professional careers, being able to report the outcome of their intellectual labour. Their change in status, however, was not always appreciated by those close to them. (009) commented that some friends and family felt threatened by this change in her social status when she became a school teacher, while (278) noted that while new doors were opened to her from her educational attainment, others closed.

[21] Kurantowicz and Nizinska, "How students 'stay the course," 146.

Given that this cohort might be seen as educationally disadvantaged and were traditionally people who did not matriculate or qualify for university entry, their career outcomes are remarkable (see Table 19 below). While only two progressed into teaching degrees, two who trained in other areas also became school teachers. In the case of the dietician, he also became a University academic and was now teaching others in his area of expertise. For (027) who became a psychologist, her dream of attending university was rewarded with a sense of contentment and recognition that her writing skills demonstrated a level of competence she was later able to execute in her profession. For the student who became an urban and regional planner (133), an awareness of this achievement is matched by the enjoyment her studies brought to her life. Her story also shows the adaptions that were required by her immediate family as she progressed into her career.

Table 19: Early School Leavers' Careers

Career	n=
No career	7
Work unrelated to OFP attainment	3
Still studying	2
Teaching	4
Psychology	1
Health Dietician and Academic	1
Nursing	1
Urban & Regional/Environmental Planning	1
Youth work	1
	21

Worthy of note is that 9 of the 21 or almost 43% of the early school leavers were aged 50 years or over at the time of entry to OFP that indicates that their capacity to complete a degree and enter the workforce may have been limited by their age. Five of the early school leavers and one of the ATSI students also had a disability, so the challenges they experienced were compounded.

Students with a (Dis)ability

Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines people with disabilities as having "long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."[22] Contrary to framing these students as embodying "disability", this chapter instead focuses on their substantial "abilities" and like Smit,[23] problematizes disadvantage and deficit discourses that do not appreciate the capacity of these students to successfully complete university study and, in many cases, enter

[22] United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities.* New York: United Nations, 2006.
[23] Renee Smit, "Towards a clearer understanding of student disadvantage in higher education: problematizing deficit thinking", *Higher Education Research & Development,* 31(3) (2012): 369-380.

professional careers that enhanced both their own lives and contributed to the wider society. It is clear, as evidenced by their comments, that the habitus of these people transformed as a consequence of undertaking this tertiary preparation course. But it is also possible to see that the habitus of the university is changing in response to the need to support this cohort of students and to comply with equity policies.

Among all respondents, 38 or 10.85% identified as having some form of disability upon entry to OFP. Because of their number, their summaries are not given. Instead the analysis proceeds by the use of tabular data to convey their experiences. The ages of these respondents ranged from 21 to 59 years as Table 20 shows.

Table 20: Sex and age of student respondents with (dis)abilities

Females	n=	Males	n=
21-26yrs	5		
32-39yrs	8	32-37yrs	6
40-47yrs	9	40-43yrs	2
50-59yrs	9	51-55yrs	2
Total	28		10

Given the fact that the majority of the whole sample included 78% females and 22% males it was not surprising that the majority of students with disabilities were female. Likewise only 23% of the whole sample was aged 29 years or younger and these data on students with disabilities also reflect a lower percentage of young people with disabilities aged less than 30 (13%). Around 58% of those surveyed who had a disability were aged 40 years and older.

The data in Table 21 demonstrates the range and intensity of conditions OFP students in this survey presented with. Some had overcome significant obstacles and displayed great courage in attempting to return to study.

Table 21: Self-disclosed conditions of student respondents with (dis)abilities

Psychological illness	Mental illness	Depression	Acquired brain injury
Severe arthritis	Dyslexia	Physical illness	Car accident injuries
Sleep apnoea	Muscular dystrophy	Multiple sclerosis	Hearing loss
Agoraphobia	Blindness	Post traumatic stress disorder	Tinnitus & Meniere's disease

The student with Multiple Sclerosis had been an Australian Federal Police officer with onerous duties in the drug squad. When injured at work, the 'force' promised to look after him, but did not fulfil that commitment. His return to study was a means of retraining in a Business degree in order to establish a new career, as well as providing social connections. This student became an advocate for other disability students at the university and was instrumental in compelling the university to provide disabled access to a number of buildings on campus that were previously inaccessible. The student with severe arthritis felt

she was on the 'scrap heap' but found a love of philosophy led to a temporary new career. Other stories were equally as inspiring. What was characteristic of these data was that the majority of these students (28) or 73.7% entered degree programs despite the considerable impediments their conditions entailed. Also of note in Table 22 below was the diversity of disciplines they chose to study in.

Table 22: Degree destinations of student respondents with dis(abilities)

Degree	n=	Degree	n=
B. Social Science	8	B. Social Work	1
B. Arts	6	B. Nursing	1
B. Teaching	5	B. Fine Arts	1
B. Business	2	B. Speech Pathology	1
B. Science	2	B. Occupational Therapy	1
TOTAL			**28**

*Ten students with disabilities did not proceed to a degree

There was also a diversity among the choice of teaching degrees with Early Childhood, Special Education, English as Second Language and High School as chosen destinations. One of the Social Science graduates also went on to postgraduate studies in Rehabilitation and Counselling.

Table 23: Career destinations of student respondents with (dis)abilities

Stage	n=	Career	n=
No career	13	Teaching	3
Still studying at university	7	Human Services	2
Still studying at TAFE	2	Finance/ Finance Management Counselling	2
		University Lecturer	1
		Industrial Relations Dispute Resolution	1
		Remedial massage	1
		Senior Workplace Educator	1
		Occupational Rehabilitation	1
		Administration	1
		Public Service	1
		Welfare worker	1
		Local Council	1
TOTAL	**22**		**16**

65.8% (n=25) of this cohort had either gained employment or were still studying. Among those who did not pursue a career were people who were unable to enter the workforce due to the severity of their condition. One student with Muscular Dystrophy, for example, was content to complete a B. Arts and provide a good educational role model for her son.

Evidence of transformation: change of habitus and gains in cultural capital among (dis)ability students

Bourdieu and Wacquant[24] argued that habitus could be restructured from experiences. Similarly, DiMaggio[25] stated it can be continually modified by encounters with the outside world. This transformation generates the meanings that are made and internalized deep within both the conscious and subconscious mind as well as in the corporeal world of experience. In Bourdieu's words, it is a meaning-made-body[26] that is not deterministic but includes "a wide repertoire of possible actions, simultaneously enabling the individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action"[27] that are "turned into second nature,"[28] so automatic, and "expressed through durable ways of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking."[29] On the one hand it implies a tendency "to behave in ways that are expected of 'people like us'[30] and excludes practices that are unfamiliar to certain groups; but at the same time it allows for the possibility of internalizing new ways of behaving and thinking. The stories of these students with a disability indicate a changed habitus and enhanced confidence and self-belief.

The survey included the question: "Did completing OFP change your life in any way? If so, how?" Four students with disabilities did not answer this question. Another three answered "No" (only 16/350 answered "No" to this question), but one of the three qualified her answer by saying "No. I didn't finish a degree as it was long distance learning in SA. I became a Mum of four, studied part time at TAFE and now have my own business. I still study". Of the remaining 31 former students with a disability, their answers fell into the broad categories of "embodied" or "educational" change, which could also be construed as gaining embodied or institutionalised cultural capital.

The difference between embodied cultural capital and habitus, explained in Chapter 2, is best explained by the "game" metaphor used by Bourdieu to describe cultural capital as providing tangible advantage or benefits of credentials; as distinct from habitus, which is knowing how to play the game or having a feeling for it.[31] A habitus that allows students to feel like a "fish in water",[32] comfortable and secure in the academic setting was expressed by these students as acceptance of their new situation and confidence in their position within it. Embodied cultural capital was expressed as gaining confidence, enhanced sense of self, accomplishment, achievement, learning who I was, learning to stand up for myself,

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[24] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 134.
[25] P DiMaggio, "Review essay on Pierre Bourdieu", *American Journal of Sociology,* 84, (1979): 1460-74
[26] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 43.
[27] Pierre Bourdieu, "The field of cultural production, or: the economic world reversed", *Poetics,* 12 (1983), 341.
[28] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 63.
[29] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 70.
[30] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* 77.
[31] S. Michael Gaddis, "The influence of habitus in the relationship between cultural capital and academic achievement", *Social Science Research 42 (2013): 2.*
[32] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology,* 127.

pride in self, broadened knowledge, learning she was "as good if not better than most." The effects of acquiring Institutionalised cultural capital were expressed as opening the mind, education as life changing, transition to degree programs, overcoming ignorance, furthering one's prospects, a "stepping stone' to future academic success", gave courage to pursue a degree.

These data show the extent to which confidence levels and sense of self-worth were reported as life changing for these students. One student who reported she "stopped feeling dumb", for example, demonstrates the way that habitus opened up occupational choices and created a framework of opportunities that were previously unavailable to her. The internalizing of a habitus that allowed these people to view the world in a different way and gave them courage to change their circumstances also disrupted the notion that "people like us" with disabilities were unable to do so. Their Open Foundation experience was a new socialization, one which, as Reay[33] comments, added another layer to earlier socializations and resulted in outcomes that were quite unexpected:

> It gave me the tools and the skills to be able to work successfully through the degree. I also am comfortable around the campus because of my time in OFP … I have an Honours degree, am half way through a Masters which is something I never thought I'd be able to do ... It rekindled my obsession with learning … I went on to further education, gained confidence. (187: Female)

And

> It enabled me to progress down a path of constant learning (both formal and informal) that helped me re-adjust after feeling that I had been thrown on the 'scrap heap' as far as meaningful employment went. It was the best course I ever did, including my degree. (190: Male)

The Distance students

Distance students traditionally have the highest levels of attrition. In Australian enabling education the overall attrition rate can be as high as 70%, with 47% the highest completion rate in one study of enabling education.[34] Completion rate in one specific area promoting Women in Science and Technology was 13.2% compared to on-campus students whose completion rate was 47.3%.[35] This study found that while distance programs had higher enrolment rates the outcomes for students, not only in completion, but also in attrition from undergraduate study were higher than for internal students. The Grade Point Average (GPA) for these students was also found to be lower. A study of online students at UON was

[33] Reay, "They Employ Cleaners to Do That," 356.
[34] Bookallil and Rolfe, "University-based enabling program outcomes" (2006).
[35] Bookallil and Rolfe, "University-based enabling program outcomes," 98.

silent on the matter of overall attrition from Distance OFP, but did note that attrition was higher for enabling students transitioning into university, 23% compared to that of direct entry students at 18%.[36] What this study did identify, however, is that on-line enabling programs enrol higher numbers of students from equity groups, women accounted for 75% of enrolments due to the flexibility offered by this mode of delivery. Online delivery assists disadvantaged students to gain access to tertiary study and may, as O'Shea *et al* comment, result in no study at all if no online option was available.[37] This mode of study was found to be particularly difficult for first-in-family students who had no prior experience of the rigors of either academic or online study.

Given the difficulties faced by these students, my own research was keen to investigate the journeys of the 22 OFP students who responded to the student survey. Their details are reported in full in Appendix 4. The Distance students were across the age spectrum from 20 to 70 years of age, but most were in their twenties (n=8) or thirties (n=8).[38] Six students chose not to pursue a degree and 2 went on to study at TAFE. Of those who took up the offer of a degree program (n=14) or around 64%, also went into diverse areas of study ranging from: Teaching degrees (n=4); Science (n=2); Arts (n=2); Health Science (n=1); Physiotherapy (n=1); Commerce (n=1); Nursing (n=1); Business (n=1); Social Science (n=1). Four were still studying at the time of survey. In terms of their career destinations, five took up teaching of some kind: Primary (n=2); Special Ed (n=1); Casual academic at University (n=1); TAFE Welfare teacher (n=1). One became a nurse; one became a Financial Advisor; one went into Health Information Management. Of the remainder, two stayed in their current job; one was self-employed; two went into careers with TAFE qualifications (remedial massage and workplace education). Five of these students did not pursue a career.

All the Distance students, except one, claimed that studying in the OFP changed their life in some way. Analysis of their qualitative comments indicates that 54.5% (n=12) referred to the benefits of learning as an outcome of the course:

> The learning experience gave me the desire to learn more and did change my direction in giving me more confidence. [It provided] awareness that study can enhance your life and gives you more self-confidence. (022: Male)

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[36] Mahsood Shah, Elizabeth Goode, Susan West and Helene Clark, "Widening Student Participation in Higher Education through Online Enabling Education." *Widening Participation in Lifelong Learning* 16(3) (2014): 36-57.

[37] Cathy Stone, Sarah O'Shea, Josephine May, Janene Delahunty and Zoe Partington, "Opportunity through online learning: Experiences of first-in-family students in online open-entry higher education." *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 56(3) (2016): 146-169.

[38] This finding is consistent with Bookallil and Rolfe, "University-based enabling program outcomes," 2006, who found that 50% of distance students at CQU were aged 21 years or under, suggesting this mode of delivery is favoured by younger students.

Half of these students indicated that from their OFP beginnings they simultaneously gained *institutional cultural capital* (five said it took them into their chosen degree or gave them educational choice; three mentioned gaining experience; three referred to career change as a consequence of completing the course that may also have included acquisition of *economic capital*) and *embodied cultural capital* (eight mentioned gaining confidence; three gained self-worth or esteem from the experience of studying while others referred to life satisfaction, self-improvement, gaining a sense of curiosity, learning self-motivation). They also acquired *social capital* (two mentioned being able to meet people and making social contacts; one student remarked that she had met her husband during her studies and that had been life changing for her). Interestingly, despite the fact that these people were enrolled in Distance programs, seven indicated that they had made enduring friendships during their OFP courses, which suggests it is possible to establish meaningful connections in the online space. One indicated that her friendships had sustained her after completing the course and had become part of her professional networks.

Some of the qualitative comments also pointed to a changed habitus in which students now felt comfortable with an academic environment:

> I became more confident that I could take up studies and enjoy it all; not feeling like I was too old to cope. In fact, surprising myself at how good a student I was and how well I did. (033: Female)

And

> I realised that not only could I study but I actually really enjoyed learning new things, in particular, learning new things about the body which I previously had no idea was happening in my body… amazing!!! I feel like I have a future. (343: Male)

Of the students who did not pursue a degree following OFP, the experience was mainly positive:

> Completing this program changed my life by teaching me new skills and learning how to use them in everyday life. It also gave me the opportunity to expand my limitations of past education through the subjects I undertook. It gave me the experience to help my children. (062: Female)

Another commented on the change in her life experienced before and after completing OFP. She had enrolled because her children had left home, she wanted a career and a change, and was unhappy at work and at home. She found the experience of doing the program "great fun. I would tell anyone to try to do it." While the outcome for this student did not take her into undergraduate study, she commented: "I feel satisfied with my life today" (068: Female).

Some concluding comments about student transformations

From anecdotal evidence it is known that some former OFP students have gone on to lead very remarkable and interesting lives. One became a Walkley award winning journalist whose empathy, research and perseverance initiated the "Shining the Light" campaign into institutional child sexual abuse; others became professors of gender studies and criminology at a G08 university; senior bureaucrats in the ABS and Department of Education; while another was already established as a popular country and western singer. For all these enabling students, the acquisition of cultural capital is evident when examining the life changes brought about by their pursuit of tertiary entry. As discussed in Chapter 1, cultural capital does not emanate merely from one's parents. As Werfhorst explains:

> Cultural capital is something that can be *achieved.* Although it may be probable that it is achieved if people are endowed with parental cultural capital … the schooling system may have changed with educational expansion, where the school culture itself becomes less exclusionary and more inclusive of the school orientations of working class families.[39]

This applies equally to tertiary institutions that have a widening participation agenda. Rather than parents directing children into fields of study where cultural skills are taught and possessing them helps students to perform well, Werfhorst suggests that institutions such as schools and universities are in a position to facilitate the transition of "communicative resources"[40] that can serve students just as well. Learning how to learn effectively (gaining educational or institutional cultural capital) and providing the space to allow people's self-confidence to grow (engendering embodied cultural capital) can also be a means of acquiring the kinds of cultural capital that inevitably transformed their lives.

In his journal article entitled "Bourdieu, 'Habitus', and Educational research: is it all worth the candle?" Nash states that "Our core concern must be with causes of social differences in access to education" and poses the questions:

> What is the contribution of family resources, of income, educational knowledge, and social connections…What of the correspondence theory between the system of economic production and the system of educational production?[41]

These questions point to the core reasons for educational inequality and explain why those in society who are already advantaged appear to perform better in higher education. Nash asks whether the conceptual tools provided by Bourdieu provide some of the answers: "As for Bourdieu: is it all worth the candle?" His answer: the struggle to work with Bourdieu's concepts "is worthwhile, just because to do so forces one to think. Without concepts – the tools of thought – we will not make much progress".[42] The stories included in this chapter

[39] Werfhorst, "Cultural capital," 159.
[40] Werfhorst, "Cultural capital," 164.
[41] Nash, "Bourdieu, 'Habitus', and Educational Research," 185.
[42] Nash, "Bourdieu, 'Habitus', and Educational Research," 185.

indicate that, given the opportunity, students who follow non-traditional pathways into higher education can and do succeed in a variety of ways that break down inequitable, and sometimes invisible, barriers.

In the case of Indigenous students, early school leavers, students with a (dis)ability, and those who came through OFPs Distance program, it is certainly worth holding up that candle to see that it is possible to provide cultural capital and change one's habitus despite the tremendous challenges people face. These stories demonstrate that for many, they have the capacity to live more productive and fulfilling lives if offered the chance of further education. Even for those who did not proceed on to higher education, expressions of satisfaction with the experience of an enabling program are also a productive outcome, which for most, moved them in some way. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant[43] habitus is transformed by the structuring and restructuring of people's dispositions resulting from their educational experiences. Nash[44] argues that students who want to be educated "possess an effective habitus that generates practices in accordance with that desire". Rather than the potential for habitus to be a dominating force or a means of conferring symbolic violence as argued in some interpretations of Bourdieu's reproduction theory such as Reay's argument that "Choices inscribed in the habitus are limited … bounded by a framework of opportunities and constraints… it makes some possibilities inconceivable others improbable and a limited range acceptable," [45] this thesis is arguing that it can be liberating and transformative.

Open Foundation creates a space for students to realise their potential, acquire sufficient cultural capital to succeed in professional careers and restructure their habitus, making choices available to them. And, to their credit, universities are responding and changing their habitus by attempting to find new and innovative ways to respond to the needs of these students who may be classified as educationally disadvantaged in some way. As the outcomes of the students in this research show, it is worth the effort. Chapter 9 elaborates some of the transformations that occurred in OFP students' lives as they relate to their career destinations. While not all students benefitted economically from this life change, most expressed satisfaction with the educational journey they had undertaken.

[43] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*, 134.
[44] Nash, "The Educated Habitus, Progress at School, and Real Knowledge," 28.
[45] Reay, "It's all becoming a habitus," 435.

CHAPTER NINE

IMPACTS OF OPEN FOUNDATION ON STUDENT CAREER PROGRESSION

In the previous chapter the thesis charted the experience of specific groups identified in the study and positioned their evidence within a Bourdieuian framework that revealed the nature of the transformation they underwent in terms of embodied and institutionalised or educational, cultural capitals and habitus. The purpose of this chapter is to situate this explanation within the larger group of survey participants, to analyse the degree progression and choices, career destinations, economic impacts, embodied impacts, and social and familial change that affected the lives of the students included in the survey study.

Murray argues that little research has been conducted in Australia on the wider social benefits of higher education despite its significance for policy development.[1] The message that appears to prevail is that tertiary education is a private rather than a public good. Other academics who have explored this issue argue that the public good of higher education is only conceptualised in terms of economic benefits and cost/benefit rationalities, which also influence funding of the sector.[2] As discussed in Bunn and Westrenius, this vexed issue pits stakeholders in enabling education against each other[3] and diminishes the value of education to the life of the wider society.

This section reports on findings from the student survey of 350 former Open Foundation students about their experiences after completion of OFP, including study options and career destinations. Although, as stated in Chapter 1, the findings are not claimed to be generalizable as this was a self-selected group, they do provide some useful indication of program outcomes and the diverse career destinations of the students. The findings point to the success of equity programs through acquisition of institutionalised cultural capital in the form of qualifications, embodied cultural capital in learning how to exhibit the academic skills they have learned and how their habitus has changed now they have learned to play the academic game.

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[1] Joy Murray, "The wider social benefits of higher education: What do we know about them?" *Australian Journal of Education* 53(3) (2009): 230-244.

[2] Brad Hensley., Mika Galilee-Belfer and Jenny J Lee, "What Is the Greater Good? The Discourse on Public and Private Roles of Higher Education in the New Economy." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 35(5) (2013): 553-567.

[3] Bunn and Westrenius, "Enabling and changing lives," 55-73.

One of the ways in which equity programs such as enabling courses can measure their outcomes and success is through tracking before and after stories of people who complete courses. Despite over 40 years of operation, little was previously known about the destinations of former students of the University of Newcastle's OFP where, between 1974 and 2013, well over 26,000 people had attained OF qualifications.[4] What is most notable about the data collected for this study is the diverse career paths of respondents enrolled in the course between 1976 and 2012 and the numbers of students who took up a university undergraduate degree and proceeded into the workforce. The data demonstrate the rich contribution these people have made to society as educators, health and welfare practitioners, in business, public service and a variety of other vocations as well as to their families where they act as role models to generations both older and younger.

Degree choices or not after Open Foundation

Not all students proceeded to an undergraduate degree as Table 12 in Chapter 7 demonstrates. It cannot be assumed that undergraduate study is always the student's purpose, as the analysis of data about the students' reasons for enrolling covered in Chapter 7 revealed. While 87.71% of students surveyed did proceed into a degree, 0.58% said they might do so, but 11.71% had not. Among those who did not proceed to undergraduate study, as Table 24 demonstrates, six instead chose TAFE courses as fitting in with their career progression. One, for example, was offered support to do a Diploma of Financial Planning as part of her job in a bank, another became a library technician. Six students indicated they had health issues that prevented further study. Some students had caring responsibilities for family members and were unable to proceed, some had personal problems at home, or cited their age as a barrier to progression. One of these issued the sage advice about taking the opportunity to study while one is young: "It made me appreciate the reason to keep learning all of your life and don't leave it too late as I think it gets harder as you get older" (199: Female).

A number of students cited the cost of a degree as prohibitive. One wrote that "The cost of HECS[5] was too high" (030: Female); and another student "Worried about getting into that amount of debt" (333: Female), so the financial impost on their family budget was a consideration. Among the rest of the students who did not proceed to undergraduate study several expressed satisfaction that they could do university study if they chose to in the

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[4] UON's Corporate Governance records were not kept in a central repository for the initial years of the program and are variously reported in terms of initial enrolments, completions and those who took up UON undergraduate places.

[5] The Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) is available to Australian citizens who are enrolled in Commonwealth supported places by the Census date. The loan is repaid according to taxable income once above the compulsory repayment threshold of $54,869 at a rate of 4%. This increases on a sliding scale to 8% if income is $101,900 or above.
http://studyassist.gov.au/sites/studyassist/payingbackmyloan/loan-repayment/pages/loan-repayment#WhenDoIHaveToRepayMyHELPDebt
The Open Foundation Program is one of a number of enabling courses across Australia that are federally funded and no fee is attached. The students must buy their own texts and equipment.

future. One realised she was not too old to study and had surprised herself at her results in OFP. Another commented:

> It gave me a kick that I managed to finish it and I was going to continue on but found it very difficult and obviously was not driven enough to go ahead with a degree (166: Female).

For others, the need to work and support their families was their main priority, and for one man it was "Only from the fact that I would have liked to go on further, but circumstances made that difficult in that I had a young family and was running a business" (167: Male); and for another he "Had a vehicular accident towards the end of the course and was not supported by my employer so bought into [a franchise] to keep income stream, and did not succeed with application into Industrial Design" (207: Male).

As was shown in the previous chapter, many students reported that a sufficient outcome from their studies was gaining self-confidence during the course. One of these said: "It made me realise I can do what I want when I want to" (049: Female); while another commented:

> I've learned to think about issues, develop my own opinions. I've also discovered the joy of learning and realised my potential academically (previously thought I was the "dumb" one of the family) (113: Female).

Another student expressed personal satisfaction in completing the course as sufficient proof to himself that he was capable of passing. Of the remainder, several indicated that the knowledge and skills they had gained were sufficient to satisfy their needs, while another used those skills to engage in voluntary work. Despite all these, often compelling, reasons for not continuing to undergraduate study, nevertheless only 9 of the 43 who did not proceed to undergraduate degrees indicated that OFP had not changed their life in some way. Two indicated that they had "not yet" enrolled, which signifies an intention to do so in the future.

Table 24: Student respondents not/not yet proceeding to careers resulting from a degree

Circumstances	Current Career	(n=)	%
Still studying (University) **Still studying (TAFE)**		85 1	
		86	**48.58%**
No career		**45**	**25.42%**
Jobs not relating to Open Foundation qualification	Administration Bookshop retail Financial Planning Franchise IT Networking Library technician Managerial Counselling Medical research data entry	2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	

	Mineworker Public Servant Remedial Massage Therapist Retail Management Sales representative Seafarer Union Organiser	1 1 2 1 1 1 1	
		17	**9.6%**
Remained in current job		**14**	**7.9%**
Retired		**9**	**5.08%**
No career yet		**5**	**2.82%**
Career not specified		**1**	**0.56%**
TOTAL		**177***	**100%**

*The percentage in this table refers to the 177 students who did not nominate a career that resulted from their studies. However, many did proceed into a degree program.

Of the 307 students who did enter university degree studies, what was characteristic was the diversity of interests and degree programs they chose to enter. Table 25 specifies 75 different areas students enrolled in, with Arts, the degree to which students were originally restricted in the early years of the OFP, accounting for over one fifth of enrolments and the largest category. The health sciences were also popular (nearly 17% enrolments) and while nursing was the single most popular course in this category, the data also shows the large variety of other health related degrees that students were drawn to, including biomedical science that can provide a pathway for students to transition into Medicine, the one degree they cannot enter automatically from the OFP.

Table 25: Initial Degree choices of student respondents upon completing OFP

Discipline	Degree	Number	Percentage
Arts	B. Arts B. Arts/B. Law B. Arts (Communications) B. Communications B. Arts (Japanese) B. Arts/B. Psychology	54 4 3 2 1 1	
		65	**21.17%**
Health Sciences	B. Nursing B. Biomedical Science B. Speech Pathology B. Occupational Health & Safety B. Occupational Therapy B. Podiatry B. Food Science & Human Nutrition B. Nutrition & Dietetics B. Medicine (Biomedical Science) B. Medical Radiation Science B. Diagnostic Radiography	19 5 4 4 4 4 3 2 1 1 1	

	B. Physiotherapy B. Health Science (Occupational Therapy) B. Oral Health B. Health Science (Health Information Management)	1 1 1 1	
		52	**16.94%**
Education & Teaching	B. Teaching/ B. Arts B. Early Childhood Teaching B. Education (Primary) B. Teaching (Early Childhood) B. Teaching (Primary & Special Ed) B. Education (Adult Education) B. Teaching (Aboriginal Studies, Drama, History) B. Education (Early Childhood) B. Education (Design Technology & Food Technology) B. Education (Health and PD) B. Teaching (Textiles) B. Teaching (PDHPE) B. General Studies/ B. Teaching B. Education/ B. Social Science B. Training & Development	29 5 3 2 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	
		51	**16.61%**
Social Sciences	B. Social Science B. Social Science (Tourism & Leisure) B. Social Science (Social Work) B. Development Studies B. International Studies B. Political Science	40 2 1 1 1 1	
		46	**14.98%**
Sciences	B. Psychology B. Science B. Environmental Science B. Science (Psychology) B. Applied Science B. Applied Science (Consumer Science) B. Astronomy B. General Studies (Science) B. Science (Microbiology) B. Science (Palaeontology) B. Veterinary Science	14 12 5 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	
		40	**13.03%**
Business, Commerce Management, Law	B. Business B. Commerce B. Economics	7 6 2	

	B. Management B. Law B. Commerce (Commercial Law) B. Recreation & Tourism Graduate Certificate of Migration Law & Practice	2 1 1 1 1	
		21	**6.84%**
Visual Arts	B. Fine Arts B. Natural History Illustration B. Graphic Design	7 3 1	
		11	**3.58%**
Social Work	B. Social Work B. Counselling, Mediation & Welfare	9 1	
		10	**3.26%**
Architecture & Engineering	B. Architecture/B. Science B. Chemical Engineering B. Civil Engineering B. Technology (Aviation) Mining transfer Program	2 1 1 1 1	
		6	**1.95%**
Design & Technology	B. Computer Science B. Applied Information Technology B. Industrial Design B. Visual Communication Design	2 1 1 1	
		5	**1.63%**
TOTAL		**307**	**100%***

*The percentage relates to the 307 students who entered degrees.

Education was the next most popular degree, the choice of 16.61% of students, and while the broad teaching/arts was nominated by the majority, closer examination of these data revealed that eight respondents trained in Special Education; eight in Early Childhood; 13 in Primary; 14 in High School teaching; one in Adult Education; one in Training and Development; and another six did not indicate which area of teaching they studied. But given that eight or 15.68% were drawn to special education shows a particular interest in this specialisation, as the following comment shows: “It gave me a rewarding career and financial security (223: Female). One student was motivated to help others because of her own suspected learning disability:

> I was working with someone who had children with learning difficulties. She gave me information about her children and a DVD about different styles of learning. It hit me that I could do something for children who didn't fit in with mainstream. I also had a suspicion that I have had dyslexia all my life and worked around it. So I wanted to help others like me. It became a passion (214: Female).

The idea of the "passionate" career is developed in May *et al's* article where the authors argue a commitment to certain careers offered not only a better life for themselves and their families in terms of economic usefulness, where they could enjoy a job they loved doing but also contribute to social enhancement, which "gave meaning to their efforts".[6] Table 26 provides the career destinations of students following completion of their degrees.

Table 26: Career destinations of student respondents after completing undergraduate degrees

Category	(n=)	%
Teaching	44	25.43
Health	31	17.91
Caring professions	25	14.45
University	18	10.4
Business/Management	11	6.35
Public service	9	5.2
Administration	7	4.04
Building and Construction	4	2.31
Information/Technology	4	2.31
Youth work	4	2.31
Artist	3	1.73
Environment	2	1.15
Law	2	1.15
Research	2	1.15
Industrial relations	1	0.57
Media	1	0.57
Engineering	1	0.57
Veterinarian	1	0.57
Pilot	1	0.57
Student/work exchange	1	0.57
Migration Agent	1	0.57
TOTAL	**173**	**100%**

Teaching as career

As Table 16 in Chapter 7 revealed, teaching was often expressed as a profession respondents had always "dreamed" about, which suggests it was a vocation they had thought about, perhaps both consciously and unconsciously, over a long period of time. Given the gender disparity in this sample (78% female: 22% male), it is not surprising that the majority of teachers were female (see Table 27). This figure would be even more slanted towards females occupying teaching positions if the figures for academic positions were added in.

[6] Josephine May, Janine Delahunty, Sarah O'Shea, and Cathy Stone, "Seeking the Passionate Career: First-In-Family Enabling Students and the Idea of the Australian University." *Higher Education Quarterly,* 70(4) (2016): 384-399.

Table 27: Teaching as a career of student respondents

Teaching Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Early Childhood	0	2	2
Special Education	0	7	7
Primary	4	10	14
High School	0	16	16
ESL	0	1	1
Adult Education	0	1	1
TAFE	0	2	2
University	0	1	1
	4	**40**	**44**

(007: Female) became a Special Education teacher in a high school. She came to OFP at age 33 as a single mother with two young children at school. She had left school after completing her School Certificate. She commented:

> I had always wanted to be a teacher and found OFP was the best way to start … It changed my life. I went on to do a double degree … It gave me confidence to do this … I have been able to support my children and have a stable life/work … It has given me a sense of achievement and self-worth. My son (now 19) told me that he was very proud "Look at what you have achieved."

This student's dream of teaching was matched by the pride her son felt in her achievement, in turn, raising her self-esteem. Another special needs teacher who was 43 when she enrolled stated:

> Completing OFP re-established a love of learning. It increased my sense of self-identity as someone other than a 'Mum'. I gained improved confidence and self-esteem. It was also the pathway to further study and a new career which has had a positive impact on my life in a variety of ways (026: Female).

Indicative of how OFP stimulated a desire for lifelong learning was one woman (050: Female) who was 31 at entry and who also became a Special Education teacher. She said she now wanted to pursue further study after completing her double degree, BA/Primary Teaching (Special Ed). (223: Female) who enrolled at age 40 and completed her degree was now studying a Master of Special Ed (Behaviour/Emotional Disturbances) in order to advance her knowledge and career. Her postgraduate studies also demonstrate her capacity for higher learning, a commitment to professional development and lifelong learning. Finally, one woman (150: Female) was 58 when she enrolled. She became an ESL (English as Second Language) teacher after gaining a B. Ed in Adult Ed. and a TESOL Certificate. She said:

> I wanted to further my education for a long time. I was divorced, family self-sufficient and I felt the time was right … I wanted to have more mental stimulation and the OFP certainly offered that … I stopped feeling 'dumb' and became open to career possibilities … My daughter and brother were particularly pleased with my efforts which made me feel really good.

The idea that students thought they were 'dumb' was a common theme in the data. (274: Female) surprised herself in terms of recognising she did have the intelligence and ability to qualify as a teacher:

> Open Foundation gave me experience and skills that I needed for further study. I had never written an essay, knew nothing about referencing and found out that I actually had a brain … I am very proud of my achievements. When I passed OFP and then my degree I felt that even if I never worked a day using it, just knowing that I did it was enough. Of course now I'm happy with the money.

The search for fulfilment was sometimes demonstrated as a kind of missionary zeal some students felt for a teaching career:

> I had travelled to a lot of third world countries doing work with the poor and orphans. I left school in Year 10 and no real expertise to help children in a substantial way. After 13 years I felt I needed to/was called to pursue teaching, which would in turn better help these kids and those also in my own country … I found the teachers helpful and encouraging, which respectively encouraged me to succeed, even when my faith in my own ability was minimal. I went on to complete a Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Arts. The Open Foundation did exactly what its name implies - it opened the door to doing a degree and gave me the foundation of learning experience to make it possible. I was now able to move in circles of influence I had not previously been able to. I affected them (the children), and they affected me. I also moved to Canberra to teach in the private system … it opened the door to an education that opened a whole new world of people, places and experience. Thank-you, I am very grateful for the journey (177: Female).

A number of the students who became primary teachers had had a disorienting dilemma generated by relationship breakdowns and were attempting to establish new lives for themselves, and sometimes for their children. One woman (025: Female) had:

> two young children (aged 1 and 4) I had just separated from their father after our turbulent 7 year relationship. I felt as if I had lost the advantage of youth in the employment market and wanted to pursue a challenging and meaningful career path

> that would lead to a better life for my children and myself … I was surprised at my ability to complete the OFP so successfully. I found content at a level that allowed me to succeed.

Another (041: Female) had recently become divorced:

> I had just completed 12 months maternity leave and my husband left. I returned to my job as a bank officer but knew I didn't want to do that forever. I moved back home with my parents, took a career break from my job and enrolled in OFP part time … I loved going back to study ... [OFP] had great staff, very understanding of individual circumstances. I would recommend it to anyone, even younger people not sure about career/future at 16, do some work, try OFP later.

When asked if OFP had changed her life in any way, she responded:

> Absolutely, I regained my confidence so I knew I could handle a double degree at University. I met and continued to study with other mature aged students, in the same degree, which made being at Uni so much easier. I got great results which got me into the degree I wanted ... I got a full time job after my degree so I became financially independent and bought a house … Having something else to focus on outside my divorce and custody dilemmas was great.

Yet another woman (312: Female) stated:

> I started the course a year after separating from my ex-husband. I had also left my job and was looking for a career change … It was enjoyable to open up to learning again after a long break. It helped to satisfy my wish to further my education. The staff were supportive. It helped me regain my confidence to go to further study as well as take control of my own future ... [OFP made me] more open minded. More determined to succeed.

These stories demonstrate how these students were able to turn their lives around and pursue a career that would utilize their own education to, in turn, educate others. They also show their determination to respond to hardship by immersing themselves in the path to teacher education.

Some of these students did exceptionally well in their degrees, reacting against the habitus their families expected of them**.** (220: Male) stated:

> I always felt I should have gone on to Uni after school but it was never an option in our family. I felt like Open Foundation gave me the chance to prove I could do it ...

> I went on to complete a B. Teaching/B. Arts with 1st Class Honours and was awarded the faculty medal with Special Education. I was a targeted graduate appointed to a [local] Primary school and have gone on to be appointed a School Leader. I could not have done it without the Open Foundation Program … [OFP] allowed me to achieve what I thought I had in me. Sparked a continued love of Philosophy.

Another student who did extremely well in her primary teaching degree despite her family's lack of belief in her abilities commented: "My parents considered my intellectual abilities to be inadequate to complete a degree. The confidence I gained through OFP enabled me to complete a degree with 1st Class Honours and a Faculty medal." (157: Female)

OFP was not only beneficial for the skills and confidence students gained from it, but also for the wider social networks students established to facilitate their careers and enhance their relationships with their spouses. (072: Female) commented: "doubt with a young family I would have managed my degree anywhere near as well without the research skills as well as confidence that I gained during Open Foundation … [It provided] better social capital. More equal relationship with partner." (322: Female) stated: "My partner also studied B. Teach/B. Arts as a result", which is an example of the ripple effect OFP has been found to have on family and friends.[7] However, the greatest impact was when students realised their own potential.

Health as career

As with the teaching careers, females figure more prominently in careers relating to health. As Table 28 shows, in this study, no males entered the nursing profession from the survey group. Across the western world men constitute only one in ten nurses largely because the profession has in the past been synonymous with femininity. One study found males who choose to work in this field have been found to distance themselves from traditional motivations of caring as a vocation in order to preserve their masculinity.[8]

Table 28: Health as a career of student respondents

Health Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Dietitian	1	0	1
Disability rehabilitation	0	1	1
Exercise Physician	1	0	1
General Practice Manager	0	1	1
Health Information Management	0	1	1
Medical Contracts	0	1	1
Medical Doctor	1	0	1

[7] Fagan., Albright and Oshan, "The Ripple Effect, 2014.

[8] Tom O'Connor, "Men Choosing Nursing: Negotiating a Masculine Identity in a Feminine World." *Journal of Men's Studies* 23(2) (2015): 194-211.

Nursing	0	11	11
Midwife	0	2	2
Nursing OHS	0	1	1
Nutrition Health Promotion	0	1	1
Occupational Health & Safety	0	1	1
OHS Manager	0	2	2
Occupational Therapy	0	4	4
Oral Hygienist	0	1	1
Radiation Therapist	0	1	1
	3	**28**	**31**

Of the men who entered the health field, one became a medical doctor[9] who changed careers because he "hated" his previous job. He was looking for a better career and "direction in life" (117: Male). A second male who was also interested in pursuing a career in Medicine enrolled in OFP because he "found work difficult to come by and saw Uni as an option to improve my skills." His life changed in consequence of completing the course because he "achieved a Uni degree. Have applied to Med School" (126: Male).

One man (035: Male), who left school after year 9, became a dietitian and an academic. As was shown in Chapter 8, while he gained a "great sense of achievement," his financial situation did not change. This story is one of several that indicated that taking an academic career path did not result in economic enhancement. However, this man still experienced many benefits that resulted from this journey such as learning valuable skills and being awarded a faculty medal, a most prestigious accolade. All three men indicated that they had made enduring friendships during their OFP year that they continued to enjoy and utilize long after.

Disability rehabilitation was the career choice of one student (155: Female) who indicated that her OFP experience also had an impact on her children. When asked if the OFP changed her life, she said:

> Yes. I have completed a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) and I am now doing an Honours year. I have gained a promotion at work with a significant pay rise. It has also inspired my children to enter further education. My eldest completed Newstep[10] and is now enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts and my 2nd child will enrol in Newstep next year with the aim of completing a Bachelor of Engineering … my completing this course inspired my children to undertake higher education to secure their future, which of course is most important to me. OFP improved my confidence, motivation and ambition. Expanded my horizons.

[9] There is no direct entry to Medicine from OFP. Students must use other undergraduate pathways to enter this discipline.

[10] Newstep is the sibling program of OFP specifically designed for school leavers and those under 20 years of age.

As noted with teaching, the ripple effect could extend to partners. Another woman (031: Female) was completing a PhD in Occupational Health and Safety when she took the survey. Her destination was not so much a career goal but a test of whether she could pursue a more fulfilling life experience. Her higher degree pathway had also impacted her husband who decided that he would “have a ‘go’ at OF – he did and he completed a Bachelor of Education.”

Two other female students had become managers in Occupational Health and Safety. One (206) enrolled because she had “not received the UAI[11] that I needed to enter Uni after school”. She “Loved” her OFP course and added she was very happy that exposure to Uni life and the expectations around study had been made clear prior to starting her degree: “Without completing this program I would not have been able to enter the Uni and go on to complete a post grad certificate; this in turn has changed my career choices, income potential and given me a much broader understanding of how to handle situations and just life in general”. The experience of (217: Female) was similar, she thought only "smart people could go to University” and was surprised that she became one of them, gaining HD grades and being offered an Honours programme. She said OFP “dramatically changed my life. I love my career path and I'm very competent in my job.” Her degree qualification made her a highly sought after employee: “I get regularly poached. I have great opportunities come my way. I always get the job over other candidates because of my degree.” She is now “treated differently by friends/colleagues. Much more respect. Considered to be "smart" and a professional, which surprises me.” She said her “whole life changed for the better, in fact I can't imagine my life without it.”

The two students who became midwives had to jump extra hurdles to get into their chosen career, which requires a higher entry qualification than a nursing degree. Their stories show the passion they felt for this area of work. One woman (124: Female) enrolled because her youngest child had started school. She thoroughly enjoyed OFP and appreciated the adult learning experience. She said she had encouraging and inspiring teachers compared to her schooling experience. She was another student who “found that I had a brain.” Her life was changed because she went on to do a Bachelor of Nursing, then did a Graduate Diploma in Midwifery. She commented: “I achieved my lifelong dream. I have worked in midwifery for the last 7 years. Personally, it increased my confidence and self-image”.

The second midwife (313: Female) enrolled due to uncertainty about what job to train in following the sale of the family business in which she had worked part time since leaving school. She briefly described her overall OFP experience as “amazing and life changing as well as stressful! I had three young children and it was a totally new experience. The

[11] University Admissions Index which determines university entry on a competitive basis.

lecturers were brilliant and I learnt valuable skills that assisted in my university studies." OFP gave her the confidence to apply for the Bachelor of Nursing that totally changed her life. She then went on to the Graduate Diploma in Midwifery and is now a Clinical Midwifery specialist. She said: "I absolutely love my career and cannot imagine doing anything else!"

Another woman (059: Female) had also trained as a midwife but was working as a registered nurse in aged care. Her life had been changed because OFP had stimulated her thinking. Her experience inspired others to pursue further education. The common theme of the ripple effect on those around her is also evident in this account. A desire to be closer to her family motivated another nurse to change her career from flight attendant. She commented: "I have formed a closer bond to my son (most importantly!) as I now have more time to devote to him" after changing careers.

Impact on family is also a feature of the experience of another respondent (091: Female) who remarked: "I inspired the rest of my family." Her career change to nursing had brought financial security by improving "the life and finances for my family". For other nursing graduates, their journey into nursing was characterised by the struggle to succeed. This nurse (092: Female) commented that she enrolled because:

> After 12 years at home with children, no formal skills, I tried to get numerous jobs. No-one would employ me. Left school at 15 years old in 1973 year 9 but did go to Technical College in 1977 and completed School Certificate at night. I was of the belief that I was not smart enough to do University. High School had a negative effect on me.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> I was ready to leave after my first essay was returned to me. I did terrible, but my lecturer stated that I can only get better and encouraged me to continue. In Chemistry I received free tutoring after hours on campus. Without that I would not have been able to finish.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Yes, I started my degree the following year, also doing Bridging courses. Graduated 2001, Post Graduate Certificate 2009. Living comfortable, no debts, no mortgage, my kids both working. Without this we would have continued on one small wage. Husband a blue collar worker … I became the main breadwinner, this can be a negative effect on marriage.
> **What other changes did OFP bring to your life?**
> Knowledge, continued learning, became an educator myself, job satisfaction.

Another student enrolled because she was looking for something to occupy her time after her children had left home. After a 30 year gap in her education (192: Female) commented:

> My children had left home to follow their own career paths. I had no qualifications (I worked for years as a care assistant in nursing homes and disability services).
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Wonderful learning curve, with tutors who encouraged me to pursue an academic path and instilled in me the confidence that I could do this after 30 years since finishing school and having not studied since.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> I went on to enrol in Bachelor of Nursing at Callaghan and after completion in 1991 have worked at a Base Hospital as an RN, now Clinical Nurse Team Leader, student educator and authorized Mental Health Practitioner since graduating ... [OFP] gave me the confidence to pursue an academic/professional career as a mature age person.

The pride in achieving a nursing qualification and gaining a paid position is expressed by (257: Female) who said she gained new friends and a better paying career:

> I was working part time at 2 jobs with little pay ... at a Hospital in Admin and thought I could do Nursing. It was one of my goals as a student in the 1970s but I was not able to continue to higher education at that time.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> FANTASTIC. We had committed lecturers and committed students. The atmosphere and camaraderie was engaging and encouraging.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Yes, I now work in the Hospital system as a nurse, which was my goal. I have made friends with an array of people whom I would never have met otherwise … Confidence, vast amount of knowledge and pride that I could attain a University qualification.

Caring Professions as a career

All these stories show a commitment to a career goal that proved satisfying and rewarding. Other caring professions dealing with the emotional wellbeing of their clients was also a popular destination for former Open Foundation students as shown in Table 29.

Table 29: Caring Professions as a career of student respondents

Welfare Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Caseworker (Mental Health)	0	1	1
Community services Educator	1	1	2
Community Welfare	2	2	4
Counselling	1	2	3
Psychologist	0	4	4
Social Welfare	1	3	4

Social Work Social Work consultant	0 0	6 1	6 1
Total	**5**	**20**	**25**

However, students sometimes found a backlash from family for taking time out to study. Once one woman (105: Female) had decided what career she wished to pursue, however, the path to additional learning was opened when she entered the OFP. She found the program "a good intro back into study" that changed her life:

> I came from a blue collar migrant background. I was the first to finish HSC, it was expected that I get a job. After growing up a bit OFP allowed me to follow my dream of a career. It was hard adjusting financially and I didn't expect the backlash I got from family and some friends. But it opened new doors … [OFP gave me] confidence to pursue my chosen career path and attend university.

University participation also changed her social circle, she said: "I have a much broader range of friends. Initially my school friends dropped off/family issues - I was suddenly too smart etc." The idea of the 'tall poppy syndrome' in Australia stems from the nineteenth century when a characteristic 'underdog' culture and resentment towards authority was said to be at odds with the promotion of an egalitarian society.[12] O'Neill *et al* refer to a 'culture of resentment toward successful individuals'[13] whereby the behaviour is used to negatively label, marginalize them from peers, and isolate them from the institution they attend.[14] It is a process of 'cutting people down to size' and may also have a cultural dimension.[15] In the case of this woman (105: Female) a migrant background was identified and her discomfort at being considered "too smart" for friends and family weighed upon her. Peeters identifies targets of criticism as also succumbing to an Australian discourse that can be analysed in terms of the norm of egalitarianism, which is highly valued in Australian culture.[16] This criticism extends to anti-intellectualism where the knowledge claims of the knowers are discredited. Having the resilience to withstand these criticisms is a common feature of many Open Foundation students' stories, but the penalties for challenging accepted habitus were quite severe for some students.

One of the few males who entered the caring professions became a community services educator. He (112: Male) enrolled because he was looking for a career change. He had been

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[12] N T Feather, "Attitudes towards the high achiever: The fall of the tall poppy." *Australian Journal of Psychology,* (41) (1989): 239-267.

[13] Maureen O'Neill., Angela Calder and Bill Allen, "Tall Poppies: Bullying Behaviours Faced by Australian High-Performance School-Age Athletes." *Journal of School Violence* (13)(2014), 212.

[14] O'Neill., Calder and Allen, "Tall Poppies," 219.

[15] Bert Peeters, "'Thou Shalt Not Be a Tall Poppy': Describing an Australian Communicative (and Behavioural) Norm." *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 1(1) (2004a): 71-92.

[16] Bert Peeters, "Tall poppies and egalitarianism in Australian discourse." *English World Wide,* 25(1) (2004b): 1-25.

working in the building industry for many years, just separated from his ex-partner and was living at his mother's home with shared care of his two year old boy. He said he was “feeling very stagnated”. He added that “OF was a great move, have since finished a degree … It was very empowering for me … I enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Science, finished last year, so now have a total career change. [OF] has changed most aspects of my life”. Another man (253: Male), also a community services educator, said that studying had made him more politically aware. He had lost his job and also wished to change professions. He found taking on a "new challenge" was enjoyable and his life changed because he “developed a new awareness of the socio-economic factors that can hinder a young person's ability to survive in today's society … [He became] more politically aware of the social injustices in today's society”. Based on the work of Freire[17], Williams refers to this as the development of a “sense of social and political agency … [which] constitutes a powerful basis for authentic learning and active critical citizenship in an unjust world.”[18] His new career provided a vehicle for this student to put some of what he had learned into practice.

Among the students who became psychologists, a common theme was improved self-esteem and higher regard from families. One had enrolled to make up for an aspiration she had long held:

> Always wanted to go [to university] but parents wouldn't let me. I had just left work because I lost a baby, so I was not actually losing income to attend Uni, so it worked out well.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Great, encouraging, positive, supportive.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Yes, changed from previous employment. Better money, lifestyle. People treated me differently … Good role model for my children. They assumed they must have a degree … I felt more fulfilled.

One student (016: Female) who chose a career in Social Welfare noted:

> I am the first person in my family to complete a university degree, my Mum has since graduated with the same degree and my younger sister is now a first year student in Social Work. My children have increased opportunities and are hoping to gain a university education themselves.

Another student who became a welfare worker (314: Female) was confronted with overcoming an injury and persisted with OFP despite being in pain. She said:

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[17] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 1970.
[18] Jo Williams, “Remaking education from below: The Chilean student movement as public pedagogy.” *Australian Journal of Adult Leaning* 55(3) (2015), 498.

> It made me realise that if I set my mind to do something I could do it well. Once I had completed the course and my therapy, I enrolled in some TAFE courses to move into an administrative role … I felt more confident in my abilities and ensured my daughter was stronger, more striving for knowledge - it didn't work so well with my son. It allowed me to move into a career that was totally unexpected and very rewarding emotionally. It also allowed me to mentor my daughter at Uni.

It is interesting to note the multiple and wider purposes served by completing OFP. What is also evident among these women's voices is care and concern for their families at the same time as juggling their own interests. This respondent (320: Female) had also had a car accident prior to enrolling and was unable to continue in her job:

> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Exciting, confusing, challenging, competitive.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Went on to further education, gained confidence.
> **How did your social or familial relationships change as a result of undertaking Open Foundation?**
> Family, siblings motivated to seek further education
> **What other changes did OFP bring to your life?**
> Social acceptance. I changed from a machinist to a professional with academic prowess.

This student's account shows the accumulation of symbolic capital in the form of an enhanced reputation, social capital at play in the form of passing on her educational legacy to her family; economic capital is implied in the move from machinist to welfare worker with academic qualifications; and cultural capital in its embodied (pride in self) and institutionalised (qualifications) forms.

Among those students who became Social Workers, one woman (204: Female) commented that she: "Realised I was capable of studying at University level - smarter than I thought I was!" The realisation that she was not "stupid" was also a feature of the story of (287: Female). The OFP changed her life significantly:

> Yes, my life has changed greatly! I have a well-paid job and career and contribute to society. My work and abilities impact on people's lives. I have better self-esteem and worth, confidence and an identity. I have a broader view of thinking and different perspective on life. My education through OFP has dramatically changed my life and through my hard work I have achieved what I NEVER thought possible … I now have my own income and security and showed I had the ability and strength to continue with 2 degrees. I have the ability to achieve something my teachers at school

> thought I'd never achieve. I'm not stupid! Without doing OFP I would not be where I am today or who I am.

Another Social Worker (193: Female) had left school at age 15, worked until she had enough money saved to travel and spent many years overseas. She enrolled in OFP at age 49:

> I had always had a social justice outlook and on hearing of OFP, decided to pursue this avenue to see if I had the ability to obtain the qualifications for work in humanities.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> A wonderful and challenging experience. In particular, Social Enquiry enabled me to utilise different theory and perspectives to analyse many aspects of life, TV, newspapers and governments. The OFP gave me confidence and an eagerness to learn and continue learning.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Yes. It enabled me to pursue a career in humanities, something I had always wanted to do. I did a double degree, first in Counselling, Mediation and Welfare at SCU then a Social Work degree at CSU and became a Social Worker with dementia patients at … [a] Hospital. It was a wonderful experience, enabling me to make a difference to others as well as self.

A consistent theme in these narratives was a desire to improve the lives of others as well as the value of engaging in lifelong learning.

Academic careers

Recognition of the value of education is also evident in the stories of the students who themselves became university academics (see Table 30).

Table 30: University careers of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Academic	0*	17	17
Laboratory manager	1	0	1
	1	**17**	**18**

*Dietitian mentioned in Table 31 was also a male academic performing a dual role in Health outside UON

Featured in a newspaper article was the story of a boy who dropped out of school at age 15, returned to study through OFP, and eventually became a Professor of Criminology at one of the most prestigious universities in Australia.[19] This kind of transformation was characteristic of many of the stories of students who themselves became academics, some

[19] http://www.theherald.com.au/story/4686772/uni-changes-to-hit-hunter-the-hardest/ (Accessed 26.05.2017)

of whom were discussed in Chapter 8. They lectured in areas as diverse as: Australian History, Biomedical Science, Business/Management, Commerce, Communications, Graphic Design, Philosophy, Psychology and Sexology, Sociology and Speech Pathology. These students were all interested in providing an educative environment that recognised their own struggles to reach academia.

Business/Management careers

A smaller group, outlined in Table 31, undertook careers in Business and Management. Unlike the groups who pursued careers in education, health or academia that were dominated by women, this group of 11 people had slightly more men (n=6). For example, one man (060: Male) pursued a career in finance and ended up in a senior management position in an international role. He enrolled in OFP at age 25 because he "had completed an apprenticeship and wanted more!" The course changed his life as he now had an "understanding that there is so much to life, you just have to have a go". Likewise, another man (144: Male) was employed by a supply chain in resources. He said OFP had changed his life: "100% I am now very successful in my career - Sydney based, national General Manager with one of the largest employers in the world! Did Grad Cert in Finance … I left my old life behind!! and succeeded. Tripled my income and more = Career." This formula for success had significantly improved this student's life, indicated by several underlines and exclamation marks attached to his answer to that question.

Table 31: Business/Management careers of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Accountant	0	1	1
Finance	2	0	2
Finance & Insurance	1	1	2
Marketing	1	0	1
Organisational Change Management	0	1	1
Product Manager	0	1	1
Manager Supply chain	1	1	2
Hospitality	1	0	1
	6	**5**	**11**

Public Service careers

As Table 32 shows, a number of former students had entered the public service in a variety of roles and significant responsibilities. The student who was employed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (309: Female) was 40 years of age when she enrolled. She said she had "always felt that I had not reached my academic potential". She went on to complete a Bachelor of Social Science, "even gaining HDs in many subjects including Metaphysics. I would not have achieved these results without the OF program". She said "some people found it difficult to understand why I felt the need to do it, others were incredibly supportive," but overall it had given her "intellectual confidence".

Table 32: Public Service careers of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
P.S Management	0	2	2
ABS	0	1	1
Policy (Disability)	0	1	1
Regulation Food Science	0	1	1
Policy (Project Officer)	0	1	1
Public Servant (Unspecified)	1	0	1
Urban/Regional & Environmental Planning	0	1	1
FACS (Welfare)	0	1	1
	1	**8**	**9**

Another of the women in this group (109: Female) went into a government position formulating disability policy:

> After being a "stay at home Mum" I wanted to return to work - but wanted something interesting - a career. I found I did not have any qualifications, so I set myself a "5 year plan" to become qualified for something - no idea at the time. Open Foundation was the first step.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> I loved it!! It opened my mind and I thrived on learning - I couldn't get enough of it. For the first time in years I was using my brain.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Open Foundation has completely changed my life!! Being a single Mum I was destined to work in low skill and low paying jobs. I am now financially secure in a well-paying job that I am enjoying. My two daughters have also seen what a difference study can make - one has a Masters Degree and the other a trade qualification and is undertaking a management course. [OFP gave her] confidence to go for something - and achieve. I am a lot more engaged with current affairs - I look at society through different eyes than I previously would have.

One respondent (302: Female) was also a single mother. She had “just divorced and wanted to be able to earn more money to raise my daughters. Also thought I was capable of having a more interesting career.” She “completed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. My undergraduate degree enabled me to obtain a well-paying job in an area I was interested in. She entered a new career that “provided a good example of what Higher Education can do for your life and for my children”.

Administrative careers

Seven students, all women, became administrators in the private sector (see Table 33 below):

Table 33: Administrative careers of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Admin Officer	0	1	1
Bursar (School)	0	1	1
Clerical work	0	1	1
Administrator (Higher Education)	0	1	1
Human Resources	0	2	2
Human Services	0	1	1
	0	**7**	**7**

For the student who became a school bursar, her entry to OFP was encouraged by her employer:

> My boss at the time asked if I would consider doing a degree. My immediate supervisor was to retire in the coming years and that I would be a good candidate for this position, but would need further qualifications to qualify. The time was right for me as my children had left school. It was an excellent introduction to tertiary studies. Without the OF I would never have gone onto further education as I always believed it was out of my reach.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Yes - it allowed me to complete a degree, but at the same time made me realise how much I still had to learn. It led me to secure a very good position in senior management. Good employment prospects, good salary, enjoyable experience.

One woman (087: Female) had been out of the workforce for 24 years when her circumstances changed. She enrolled in OFP "just for personal interest originally. Continued to commence BA but husband became unemployed, hence I sought employment. I believe I was selected partly due to having some University background." While she did not complete a degree, she did find the experience useful in securing paid work. (296: Female) found she was "At home with two young children (aged 3 & 5) and bored! Her administrative career followed completion of a Bachelor of Arts, after which she "accepted a part-time position at the University. I now work full time as the Associate Director, Faculty Services in the Faculty of Health".

This next respondent (272: Female) gained a position in Human Resources. She found she had time to spare when her youngest child started school. She had "always wanted to give studying at University a go - found out I liked it". OFP gave the opportunity to "try" University without having to apply through UAC and pay fees. She said she gained greater awareness of how content of OFP subjects related to everyday life, which changed her way of thinking. Another woman (219: Female) also commented on how OFP changed her world view. Her reason for enrolling was:

> Partly because my children were grown, but also because I'd done several counselling courses at TAFE and I found TAFE too slow and boring. I was after a challenge and wanted to learn how to study at a university level. I also needed a TER score to get into Uni. Even though I thought I could probably gain entry via a test or LPL, I really wanted to nurture myself into Uni.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> It was absolutely wonderful. The best thing I ever did. Most of the students were older so I felt a part of something. We got so much support and guidance, it really prepared me for entering into a degree program. It was interesting and exciting and very, very hard work. I loved it so much.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Absolutely. Totally. I learned so much about the world, who I really was, who my real friends were. I had to learn to stand up for myself and speak up. I entered the B. Social Science, got a degree, my yearly income went from a maximum possible $32k to $84k for doing the same work. My whole world changed forever … One close friend from Uni ended up being my partner and then we married. We have been together 10 years now, successful, happy, like-minded people.

In this case not only was there a significant financial improvement in her circumstances but a new and fruitful relationship with one of her peers.

Building and Construction careers

While this area is traditionally regarded as a male dominated vocation, one woman broke the mould and ventured into this area as a mature age student and later forged a career as an architect (see Table 34 below).

Table 34: Building & Construction careers of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Architect	1	1	2
Construction Manager	1	0	1
Industrial Design	1	0	1
	3	**1**	**4**

While the male architect had entered OFP at the age of 34 years, the female architect was 45 years of age when she decided to make a career change and enjoyed several years in that profession prior to her retirement. She enrolled in OFP because:

> My job was unrewarding and boring, I was looking for a more interesting career but did not have the qualifications that, as a mature age student, would allow me to enter the architecture degree. University information informed me that if I achieved

> 80+ in Open Foundation I would be able to get into the Architecture degree. I chose subjects that I felt I could achieve that goal in.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> I was amazed at how easy study was after so many years out of education, also how interesting and rewarding it was. Rewarding in a way having a job never is.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Enabled me to enrol at University in a course I was interested in, and that changed my career path to something much more interesting and challenging. [It] showed me that with hard work I could achieve my goals.

The student who became a construction manager (262: Male) found study a little difficult at first:

> It was difficult with my limited education and my understanding of calculus was unfortunately not sufficiently grasped. However, [my lecturer] was fantastic and will always be remembered as an inspirational Physics teacher - it was this mark that gave me entry into Uni.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Made me realise I had achieved my goal of gaining entry into the Civil Engineering Degree. It then started my goal of getting a degree, and so much more.
> **How did your social or familial relationships change as a result of undertaking Open Foundation?**
> Gained more respect from family and friends, gave me more confidence in myself.
> **What other changes did OFP bring to your life?**
> Helped me appreciate the benefits of learning and the opportunities it can provide - currently started a Masters in Applied Project Management through Adelaide Uni by correspondence.

While this category of occupation tended to follow careers traditionally occupied by men, it was pleasing to see that an older woman who had the courage to enter this field as a mature student, and was successful, could also show that it is a legitimate pathway for women. It is also notable that despite his initial concerns regarding his inability to grasp calculus, that (262) was able to complete his degree and was undertaking postgraduate studies at another university.

Careers in Information Technology

As Table 35 shows, all the students who followed information/technology as a career path were male. (024: Male) stated he “needed to set my UAI up to be eligible to enrol in my selected degree. I found [OFP] quite helpful. Having never been a great studier, it changed my learning habits for the better. I feel that if it wasn't for this course I would still struggle to study IT as I have to, as new technology arrives. It enabled me to join the course I wanted and set me on the path to a career in IT”.

Table 35: Careers in Information Technology of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
IT	1	0	1
IT Management	1	0	1
Information Management	1	0	1
Software Development	1	0	1
	4	**0**	**4**

(081: Male) was looking for a **"**change in profession." He was a pilot and needed a more secure, well-paying job/career. [OFP] reintroduced him to study, which he found "very easy and allowed entry to an undergraduate opportunity**."** It gave him a chance to get into a competitive course. He stated: "I now have a Masters, have a strong commitment to higher education, have good friends from Uni and I am a senior manager in a global finance giant. [OFP created] a desire for learning - particularly Science". (081) said he now had the respect and admiration of family and friends that was lacking before. This area of work was also characterized by an absence of women as a career path.

Careers in Youth work

Those entering youth work given in Table 36 were equally divided among men and women. (116: Male) found a fulfilling career in youth work and was utilizing research skills he first learned in OFP. He was confident that his work was changing people's lives.

Table 36: Careers in Youth work of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Youth Participation, Technology & Research Officer	1	0	1
Youth Services	0	2	2
Youth Work NSW Govt	1	0	1
	2	**2**	**4**

(116: Male) stated:

> I now work in an international Cooperative Research Centre which wouldn't have been possible without the chance to learn how to research and write academically. I started on $50k and have gone up to $65K in the first 12 months. More importantly, I have my dream job and am making a difference to the lives of a million young people across Australia and countless more across the world. Got involved in NUSA which was another big factor in steering my future direction and building my skillset.

(174: Female) was looking for a pathway back to study. She said OFP **"**allowed me a second chance at studying and becoming qualified as I struggled with mental health issues in High

School". She was able to use her own experience to assist others who may have had similar issues. One of the other students who entered youth work did not complete a degree, but found the skills she had gained sufficient to follow the career she wanted. (090: Male) stated he had had a **"**mid-twenties crisis, decided I needed a change of life and career." He found OFP was "the best twelve months of my life. I loved the entire experience and it changed my life. I enrolled in a degree, made new friends, new career path and expanded my ways of thinking. Did not finish degree but had subjects converted into a Diploma and have a fantastic career. It gave me a confidence boost, showed me I could study and do well." Again, a degree itself was not the necessary catalyst to a successful outcome, the experience and skills he gained on that journey were the catalyst to a rewarding life.

Careers as Artists

A number of notable artists have come through the OFP, including Dr Prue Sailor who gained a PhD, and now teaches undergraduate Visual Art, exhibiting her amazing work in art exhibitions around the country. All the artists who completed the student survey, as shown in Table 37 were also female.

Table 37: Careers as Artists of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Artist	0	2	2
Botanical History Illustrator	0	1	1
	0	**3**	**3**

One artist (018: Female) enrolled because her youngest children were just finishing university; she had rekindled an interest in art and had a need to know more than a local art group could teach her; she had an association with the Art faculty at Newcastle University and could test her ability to do a degree course after so many years away from study. She found that the other subject she had chosen, Earth Science, fed into the Visual Art subject "in a most satisfactory way." She stated:

> After completing the course I was accepted into the Fine Arts degree course at Ourimbah. I was still working part time so it was a challenge, but I learned many new skills and eventually became a professional working artist with some success. So yes, it did change my life … It boosted my confidence, made me look at life in a different way. It helped me realise a long held ambition. I think my family was proud of my achievement.

(186: Female) was also waiting for her children to be self-sufficient before returning to study art, which she loved but could not pursue because her mother was a widow and could not afford to assist with higher education when she was young. The return to study meant she "had less time for the unimportant things and valued my time with my children more."

(149: Female) found OFP an “excellent experience which resulted in a life changing opportunity … After completing Open Foundation I enrolled in Natural History Illustration degree at Newcastle University. Through skills learnt in this degree I have established a reputation as a Botanical Artist. I am now completing my final year of my degree and will hopefully continue to work in this field.”

Environmental careers

While only two respondents had secured jobs in the environmental sector, as Table 38 shows, their career choice demonstrates the wide variety of careers open to the OFP students upon successful completion of the program.

Table 38: Environmental careers of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Environmental Ecologist	1	0	1
Environmental Scientist	0	1	1
	1	**1**	**2**

(093: Female) sought this career after her previous job became obsolete. As in the case of several former students, she gained a position teaching into the very course in which she was a student:

> I enrolled due to my previous job becoming obsolete due to computers (I was a graphic artist with no formal training, but did have "on the job" traineeship. Did flat art, but the job became a computer based, rather than fine art, job).
> Loved the course, great introduction to uni. Went on to teach in OFP and run geology field trips.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> I realised I could do anything I set my mind to. Went on to an Enviro Science degree (Earth Science major). Did Honours and PhD (did not complete due to conflict with supervisor), then Dip Ed. Taught for 4 years as a secondary science teacher. Now working in Greenhouse gas and carbon pricing for a global chemicals manufacturer. [OFP resulted in] an enormous change in the level of respect I received in the workplace. Uni was a very healing experience for me after previous work in a very sexist environment.

Careers in Law

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a large number of former Open Foundation students have entered the law as a profession and are practicing solicitors. In one case, both mother and daughter came through OFP, the mother set up a practice in Family Law and now employs her daughter. It has been suggested that these students demonstrate emotional intelligence because they bring their mature age experiences to the practice of law. In the data, as shown in Table 39, both lawyers were female.

Table 39: Careers in Law of student respondents

Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Law Insurance	0	1	1
Solicitor NSW Govt	0	1	1
	0	**2**	**2**

One lawyer (235: Female) enrolled after the birth of her third child:

> Yes. OFP did change my life. I was encouraged to believe that it was possible for me to try something new and learn/achieve something for my future. I appreciated all the support and encouragement I received from both the lecturers and my peers. I believe my three children have benefitted as well from my decision to study, as they have watched me and copied my example in their own education at their respective schools. I have recently commenced employment at a local law firm in Newcastle, as a paralegal with a view to employment next year as a lawyer. I believe I have achieved a higher level of independence in my home life and my relationship with my husband … I am more confident and feel more prepared to tackle new challenges with a positive attitude. It is worth giving it a try - well, it has been for me!!

The experience for (229: Female) was similar, although she juggled the exigencies of being a single mother as well:

> Had a child, single parent, decided to raise him and expand my employment opportunities. I believed if I could have a child and raise him on my own from birth, then I could achieve almost anything. So I set the goal of finishing OFP then became a lawyer.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Daunting at first, scared and nervous; then once into the swing of things, loved it. Became more confident and enthusiastic to learn and achieve! It was a wonderful experience and one which I remember fondly. I recommend it all the time!
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Yes, it gave me the confidence to set goals and achieve them. It gave me the ability to enter into Bachelor degrees. It provided me with the fundamental foundations to enter 1st year undergrad studies. (Now qualified as BA LLB, Dip Leg Prac and work for NSW Government as solicitor).

Other careers

There was a range of other careers former OFP students entered that further exemplifies the diversity of their occupational choice. Their stories inform some of the less usual career paths reported in this study, as Table 40 indicates.

Table 40: Other careers of student respondents

Career	Specialisation	(n=) Sex: Male	(n=) Sex: Female	Total
Industrial relations	Dispute Resolution	1	0	1
Media	Journalist & Media Advisor	1	0	1
Research	Researcher/Historian	0	2	2
Engineering	Process Engineering	1		1
Veterinarian	Veterinarian		1	1
Pilot	Pilot	1		1
Student/Work exchange	Exchange officer		1	1
Migration Agent	Migration		1	1
		4	**5**	**9**

*Note: Some career categories overlap. For example a Public Servant may have identified as a manager or an Early Childhood teacher may have identified as a Special Education teacher. Categories were selected on the basis of the respondent's classification.

(090: Male) entered a career in industrial relations dispute resolution that required intense negotiating skills. He enrolled because he:

> Had a workplace accident in 1993 and was unable to perform the type of work that I had been doing. I was not sure what I wanted to do and [enrolled].
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Fantastic. Both courses were terrific. The skills that I learnt in Philosophy have been invaluable and used on a day-to-day basis in my current role.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> It enabled me to progress down a path of constant learning (both formal and informal) that helped me readjust after feeling that I had been thrown on the "scrap heap" as far as meaningful employment went. It was the best course I ever did, including my degree. It improved my self-confidence and instilled in me a belief that I could achieve further education which is something that never ends.

During the course of his year in OFP the journalist (134: Male) became involved in the production of a documentary film on an aspect of the history of the region. He had regretted not pursuing higher degree qualifications earlier in his life:

> University had always been on my mind. During High School, however, my HSC results reflected my lack of career direction at the time. My lack of motivation at that time made taking a break from study the best option so that I could try to refocus. When a friend told me about her positive experiences undertaking OFP I made some enquiries and realised it was the ideal way for me to re-engage, re-focus and give study a go.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**

> A fantastic opportunity to gain an understanding of university study. The environment was supportive and encouraging, lecturers obviously passionate about education and the fact that you were studying with a diverse range of people made class time an engaging and interesting change from high school.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Yes!!! I finally had focus, aspirations and a genuine interest in education. It provided the ideal transition from high school to University study, taught me how to learn for enduring benefit rather than because you "should" have a particular skill, and gave me the confidence to believe I could achieve my goals. I also gained personal satisfaction at having set and achieved goals, self-confidence and a belief in myself that had been lacking.

He was able to use the historical research skills he learned to good effect. Another student (280: Female) whose skills resulted in a career in historical research recounted that she enrolled because:

> I was a secretary in a hospital surrounded by people who I saw had choices, involved in a professional capacity, whereas I was following orders, in a job I saw as mundane, that gave me no choice and no challenges.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Frightening at first. I was not comfortable with having to speak up in front of other people. It was all new and foreign. I nearly gave up before the end of the year but wanted to see the year out. Probably chose one subject that was a wrong choice but by the end of it I was hooked.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> Indeed - my life has totally changed. I am 5 months away from PhD completion. I have worked since 2006 as a professional evaluator/researcher and am currently moving into History writing. I will turn my PhD into a book for publication. I have gone from working for over 20 years in clerical roles to a professional with my own business. I went from someone who let life happen to me, to someone who makes my own choices about my life.

The other researcher (346: Female) took her skills into a government position:

> Had just divorced. Last child going to school next year. Always intended to finish education - regretted leaving early. Was previously too difficult with little children (getting out - getting babysitters etc).
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Very exciting, stimulating, inspiring. Great opportunity to try University level work. Gateway to a whole new world.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**

> Very much so. After graduating OFP I went on to University to Honours level, working at University in research, then in Commonwealth Government to Senior Officer level. It changed my ideology and political views. It created new friendships. [OFP brought] new social contacts, economic situation (improved), greater awareness and understanding of issues.

The engineer (098: Male) enrolled because he "believed there was something better than a manual labouring career" that he had pursued prior to sustaining a back injury. He said it was "difficult to commit to the workload of study, but enjoyed the experience of learning". OFP gave him "confidence to pursue a degree. This has given me economic freedom as a result of current employment". Whereas the pilot (138: Male) was seeking a means of entry to training within the Royal Australian Air Force:

> Was applying for RAAF as a pilot but didn't have the qualifications. Didn't have a tertiary education result (TER) from High School and wanted to go to Uni.
> **Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP?**
> Very pleased with both lecturers who were extremely well qualified and the courses were taught and presented in a manner that was easy to understand and absorb. A lot of it was taught from fundamentals as opposed to rote learning taught at school.
> **Did completing this program change your life in any way? If so, how?**
> It made Maths at Uni very easy to understand, more so, any Maths that is used in any training I've had, has been easy to deduce from the fundamentalist approach taught in the OFP subjects.

The student who became a veterinarian also overcame a lack of understanding of basic scientific knowledge necessary to her profession through mastering the basics in science. (316: Female) had "wanted to go to Uni but had failed my HSC and 1st year of Science degree." She "loved" the course and "got into Uni, did well and (finally) completed a degree. I'm now a Vet! I felt like I actually COULD achieve academically."

OFP student respondents seeking postgraduate qualifications

A finding that was most unexpected from this study was the number of former OFP students who went on the postgraduate study, reported in Table 41 below. At the time of survey 22 of them had either completed or were in the process of completing a PhD. This is remarkable given that many in this cohort may be considered to have come from some kind of disadvantaged background and may have had their education disrupted during their early years.

Table 41: Postgraduate qualifications of former OFP students

Postgraduate Qualification	n=
PhD	8
PhD candidate	14
Masters	25
Honours	7
Certificate	2
Diploma	2
Total	**58 or 16.54%**

Like the degree choices generally, the destinations for postgraduate study given in Table 42 were also diverse:

Table 42: Postgraduate choices of former OFP students

Postgraduate qualification		(n=)	%
PhDs & Candidates	Architecture	1	
	Biomedical Science	1	
	Business management	2	
	Clinical Psychology	1	
	Commerce	1	
	Communications	2	
	Cultural Studies (Melbourne Uni)	1	
	Environmental Science	1	
	Graphic Design	1	
	History	2	
	History & Anthropology	1	
	Literature & Film	1	
	Occupational Health & Safety	1	
	Politics	1	
	Psychology	1	
	Sociology	3	
	Speech Pathology	1	
		22	**6.29%**
Masters degrees	Applied Linguistics	1	
	Applied Project Management (Adelaide Uni)	1	
	Arts (Research)	3	
	Astronomy (Swinburne Uni)	1	
	Business & Technology	1	
	Business Administration	2	
	Clinical Psychology	1	
	Education (Research)	1	
	Education (Coursework)	1	
	Education Special Ed – Behaviour & Emotional Disturbance	1	

	Education & Psychology Leadership Management Education Health Science Occupational Health & Safety Rehabilitation Counselling Science (Food Science) Social Science Social Work Taxation Law	1 1 1 2 1 3 1 1 1	
		25	**7.13%**
Honours degrees	Ancient History Education Occupational Therapy Psychology Sociology Teaching/Arts	2 1 1 1 1 1	
		7	**2%**
Certificates	Business Finance	1 1	
		2	**0.56%**
Diplomas	Education Midwifery	1 1	
		2	**0.56%**
Total		**58**	**16.54%**

This figure of 58/350 indicates almost one in six of the survey respondents went on to postgraduate study, which indicates a commitment to lifelong learning. These OFP students were prepared to follow their talents to achieve even higher qualifications.

Economic impacts of moving to new careers

Table 43 indicates that 51.4% had either improved or expected to improve their financial position, while 48.6% either did not improve or had no change to their previous financial position. Given that 86 or 24.57% of all respondents were still studying, some people had retired and others did not enter the workforce due to caring responsibilities, this figure demonstrates the productive input to the region[20] that results from educational improvement. However, as argued in the next chapter, it should be noted that the region benefits through the widespread acquisition of embodied cultural capital in the form of confidence in their own abilities reported by almost all of the students in this study. The benefits of education are thus not only economic but also personal and societal. As the stories of these students powerfully indicate, discussed further in relation to habitus, the raising of confidence and self-esteem were also significant outcomes.

[20] Demographic data from Student survey shows that 90% of respondents remained in the Hunter or Central Coast regions.

Table 43: Change in economic status of student respondents as a result of the OFP pathway

Improve	**158**	**45.15%**
Expects to improve	22	6.25%
No change	149	42.6%
Did not improve	21	6%
Total	350	100%

Some concluding comments on career pathways

This chapter has examined the impacts of the OFP on students' degree and career destinations. It discussed the numbers of students who proceeded to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, which indicated the extent of lifelong learning as a characteristic of mature learners. The chapter also looked at the diversity across and within careers chosen by these students and examined some of the stories told by people who pursued certain types of career. It looked at whether there was substantial economic improvement in the lives of these students and concluded that, while over 45% did indicate they were financially better off, there was still a substantial number of students who had not yet completed their degree but who "expected" to improve their situation. In addition, many people were not enrolled for the purpose of improving their career prospects as their age or other responsibilities, such as caring commitments, precluded them from entering the workforce. Some had changed career for work satisfaction rather than economic gain. It can therefore be concluded that the majority did, or were likely to, improve their financial situation. However, economic measurement is only one form of outcome and these data show that personal satisfaction is also a measure of OFPs success as gauged by the comments about raising confidence and levels of self-esteem. In the next chapter the thesis goes on to explore the wider impacts to family and social relationships.

CHAPTER TEN

IMPACTS OF CULTURAL CAPITAL ACQUISITION AND HABITUS CHANGE ON OPEN FOUNDATION STUDENTS

While the career outcomes for students who began their academic journeys in the Open Foundation, discussed in the previous chapter, produced profound changes in their lives, other impacts were diverse and keenly experienced. An examination of both student surveys and oral histories of UON staff, revealed that people's lives and relationships were impacted in various ways as a result of attempting and/or completing OFP. This chapter examines those impacts including the way in which OFP can be seen as a means of acquiring cultural capital, which in turn creates a wider skill set among the population, and produces capable students who have been given a "second chance" at education. Staff observed that students lived richer lives and made a contribution to society as citizens, factors that reflect UON's mission for the region. Respondents also commented on students' self-growth. An unintended consequence of OFP is the value generated by friendship formation and the development of social capital among its students. Extending each of these impacts is the 'ripple effect' on the families of OFP students.

Provision of cultural capital

OFP was deemed by interview respondents to enrich the undergraduate programs by providing well skilled, articulate and confident students who performed as well as, or better, than those coming from traditional entry pathways.[1] Teaching staff found that OFP students were well prepared for their future studies and this had an effect on other students. In their study of former OFP students, Cantwell *et al*[2] concluded that OFP students showed greater evidence of commitment, persistence and intrinsic interest in their degree programs. They argued these were attributes of mastery orientation that were more apparent among this cohort when compared to non-OFP entry students. Their study showed that the skills cultivated by OFP students meant that the equity and access objectives of the program appeared to be met[3] as the OFP students demonstrated successful outcomes as well as satisfaction with their knowledge acquisition. According to Dr Angela Cowan, long time academic staff member, the fact that OFP students were well prepared for their future studies had a flow-on effect to undergraduate programs and to other students:

> Beyond that you've got … that flow on effect of students who've been through the Open Foundation course who then go into their Undergraduate courses and they

[1] Wright, *Looking Back, a history of The University of Newcastle,* 137-8.
[2] Cantwell et al, "The effectiveness of enabling programmes for university entrance," 17.
[3] Cantwell et al, "The effectiveness of enabling programmes for university entrance," 19.

> bring, then, their knowledge and skills … a certain level of maturity and knowledge and empathy and skills, so for other students they've had a profound effect. For the lecturers they bring an effect. So you know, in a sense, when they're in tutorials or they're in lectures, they actually act as role models for other students and they help guide other students.

Lecturing staff in OFP also observed that the intellectual quality of students coming out of the program had further flow-on effects for student retention and success rates in undergraduate programs. Three separate comments illustrate this:

> I think it's been far more important than the University is aware, both in terms of that steady flow of prepared first years … you are looking at a serious influence on the University, a serious input to the University's quality. (Dr Barry Hodges, former lecturer and Program Convenor).

Terry Mather, Mathematics lecturer, referred to higher success rates of OFP students and commented: "When you look at the statistics[4] [they] will tell us that the Open Foundation is, historically, very important to the University. That's backed up by pure mathematics". While Jan Watkins, Administrative Officer, commented on the "high calibre student who wanted to be there", which she said "was the difference between them [and other students]."

What these staff noticed was the students' success in acquiring academic and higher education ways of knowing and responding. Bourdieu theorised the acquisition of legitimated forms of knowledge as "academic capital"[5] and, as reported in Chapter 2, he conceded that it was possible to acquire this form of capital in later life. It was not simply a matter of being born into a family that could procure it for you. According to Bernstein "educational knowledge is a major regulator of the structure of experience"[6] and this allowed the OFP students to compete favourably in their undergraduate programs. Research has acknowledged that learning to "become"[7] a successful HE student while transitioning into HE is a matter that is becoming increasingly important as more mature students enter the sector.

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[4] English Language and Foundation Studies Centre. "ELFSC at a glance." (2013) Published the number of enabling enrolments between 1974-2013 at approximately 45,246 and the number of students attaining an enabling qualification at approximately 24,142. These figures included the 2 other enabling programs Newstep and YAPUG as well as OFP enrolments and completions.

[5] Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

[6] Basil Bernstein, *Class, codes and control. Volume 111: Towards a theory of educational transmission.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 85.

[7] Trevor Gale, and Stephen Parker, "Navigating change: a typology of student transition in higher education." *Studies in Higher Education,* (2012): 1-20.

Providing chances, opportunities and enriching lives of students

When reflecting on the purpose of OFP a common theme that emerged from the oral history data was the way the program had enriched and empowered the lives of students. An observation that kept recurring during the interviews with staff was that there was hidden talent in the community that simply required acknowledgement and OFP was the vehicle that allowed formal recognition of capability:

> I realized in my earlier time at the Tech College, fifteen or twenty years earlier, there were bright people in Newcastle, from homes that didn't have many books or any traditions and they just needed a chance to see how they could go. That's what Brian [Smith] gave them, a chance. (Professor Don George, former Vice Chancellor)

It has been suggested that notions of capability include social and moral consciousness that in turn have implications for a student's wellbeing.[8] It is therefore deemed important that the experience students have not only allows them to realise their potential, but also to flourish in ways that enhance their personal wellbeing and relationships. The opening-up of educational opportunities for individuals had other flow on effects that empowered students and allowed them to achieve outcomes they never thought possible:

> It was more to do with giving people opportunities who had different sort of lives and backgrounds. So the importance of it from that broad, kind of soft sense, is that they're intruding that into the University … So I think whatever their reasons are, bringing their stories, and bringing their experiences, and that's got to enrich the general life of the University.
>
> **What observations then, can you make about the impact of Open Foundation has had on the students you've taught?**
>
> The only way I'd know that I guess is when they tell me what happens next. So you sign off, and then down the track you see them around the campus and they say "I'm doing this" or "I'm doing that". So I think the impact on them has been, and I hate to use this word, but it empowers them to pursue other things that they want to pursue … So the impact on students, I think, was empowering and opening up prospects that they wouldn't have otherwise had. (Associate Professor Bill Warren, former Philosophy lecturer).

Some of the students' stories were considered inspiring by executive staff who officiated at the end of program Recognition of Attainment Ceremonies (ROAC) or heard of them through communications with other staff who had direct contact with students:

[8] Merridy Wilson-Strydom and Melanie Walker, "A capabilities-friendly conceptualisation of flourishing in and through education." *Journal of Moral Education,* 44(3) (2015): 310-324.

> I tend to get the emails and stories at the Attainment ceremonies and the speakers afterwards … they do bring a tear to your eye when you read them. In a morning when bureaucracy is maybe getting on your tail or something like that, you read that and you say "Wow, this is why I do my job", and so, it's inspirational. I never cease to be inspired. That's what keeps a lot of us going. (Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Director).

Appreciation of the dedication and hardships for the OFP cohort was particularly well understood and felt by a former Chancellor who recalled most vividly the stories of the students. He always took the opportunity to talk to students and their families at ROAC conducted at the end of the program. He observed:

> Here were a group of people who had taken hold of an opportunity that many thought was not available to them, and were just so grateful for the opportunity that they flung themselves into it. It was a scary experience for most of them. They tell their stories, that it was frightening. But the support they received from the staff who regarded it as being their mission, as it were, to bring them up to express all that they had, made it much easier for them. And they then, on the day, would turn up and even though they weren't gowned you could see that they had by and large, presented themselves well for the opportunity. And the fact that they would be involved in a ceremony where there was an academic procession, where people were gowned, would come across the stage when their name was called out, that shook hands with the Chancellor and were given a certificate, was a big moment for them … And then afterwards to walk around and chat with people at supper, they wanted to come over and meet you, and they wanted to talk about their experience and how much it meant to them. And the enthusiasm and joy was palpable in that. And then of course there were the speeches that were made that are indelibly written in my mind of people who told stories of saying "Two years ago I was in a Women's refuge" or "Eighteen months ago I was in a psychiatric ward" or, you know, "I had three children and someone said you ought to go to University and now I'm doing Medicine", you know (laughs), and you just, jaw droppers they were, they just bring you to tears to see these. And they are stories that I think just bring out in everybody a peak of experience that otherwise would not be available to them. So they are fine events. I would still like to go to them.

The opportunities afforded students who successfully completed the program and their stories of achievement clearly impressed the staff involved in OFP. Respondents commented on the way OFP enabled a new direction for an untapped resource of intelligent people, benefitted UON by expanding the diversity of students and empowered those students as individuals.

Changes to the self and habitus

Reay argues that "the concept of habitus enables links between individuals' inner emotional worlds and external social and structural processes; it both animates the social in the psychosocial and allows us to better understand how the psyche is formed in and through the social."[9] The social environment created by OFP and the university were instrumental in bringing about this change. The change in habitus was quite transformative for one student who commented "I left my old life behind! And succeeded." (144). Many of the respondents attributed the change in their relationships to gaining confidence as a significant factor. One noted this new-found confidence had spread to "all parts of my life" (064), another said he now felt "much better about myself" (042). Confidence led to "self-improvement and enjoyment" of life, which for one student "generated positiveness" (103), for others, independence and autonomy (289), and self- sufficiency (292). This strengthening of self, a form of embodied cultural capital, operates alongside "emotional capital"[10] and lays the groundwork for future success.

Knowledge that enhanced emotional capital led to more satisfying relationships: "[it] help[ed] me understand people in my family in more depth" (036). This student found she was better able to relate to and empathize with her family members in consequence of the theories she had learned. According to Lehmann, gaining new knowledge, growing personally, changing their outlooks and developing new dispositions and tastes were features of habitus transformation through which working class students, for example, might distance themselves from the culture in which they grew up.[11] In some cases, the injuries endured by being seen to move out of a working class habitus were keenly felt. One student commented that her studies created "family issues, I was suddenly 'too smart'" (105). This suggests that, as in the case of (162) "My new way of thinking was not always accepted by family". A degree of resentment was experienced when family members had to take on more domestic labour "to allow me time to study. They don't really understand what is required" (089). Another commented "I was no longer just a wife or mother – I became a uni student with a life independent of husband and kids" (095).

A changed habitus was evident in comments about self-strengthening and impacts on students' health and wellbeing: "Now I feel like I have a future. I think more about the future than I ever have, and I believe I am healthier and happier than ever" (343). The changed habitus had, in some instances, created a more disciplined body in order to deal with the rigors of life and study. One student commented that the course and subsequent study had caused 'a few more pressures on myself to do things" (143), thus intensifying her

[9] Reay, "Habitus and the psychosocial," 22.

[10] Diane Reay, "A useful extension of Bourdieu's conceptual framework? Emotional capital as a way of understanding mothers' involvement in their children's education?" *The Sociological review* (48) (2000): 568-585.

[11] Wolfgang Lehmann, "Habitus Transformation and Hidden Injuries: Successful Working-class University Students." *Sociology of Education* 87(1) (2013): 1-15.

commitments and time allocation. Another student had become more guarded in how she allocated her time "I am selective with my time now as it is limited" (299). Preserving time for herself and her studies was essential when regulating her relationships. Gaddis refers to habitus as a "mediator" between cultural capital and academic success.[12] This mediating role involves "altering their mindsets regarding intelligence"[13] and making them realise that being intelligent is not innate but something they can learn to become by being "better prepared and exposed to valued culture"[14] such as that offered as knowledge within the university.

Several respondents commented on the way in which OFP had enhanced students' self-esteem. In Bourdieu's terms, this constitutes acquisition of embodied cultural capital.[15] Most often manifested in increased confidence, this embodied capital was seen to be linked to goal achievement:

> The transformation of confidence is what you see a lot of. So for some students it's realizing the dream of getting into the Undergraduate degree that they want. For other students it's the fact that they've finished something important, and even though they may not go on to University that's still really important to them (Annette Morante, Learning Support Advisor).

> They grow as people and they say to me that they get a new perspective on life, so that's a positive impact. They often ring me when they graduate and say "Come to my Graduation". And so I go to Medical Graduations, Science, Physios, Bio Med, Midwives, Podiatrists, and Engineers. So you know, in terms of an academic impact it's huge because it's changed their life. But there's also the social side of things. They've grown as people, their family situation changes for the better usually, they have a whole new perspective. (Cathy Burgess, Life Science lecturer)

In addition to self-pride, students were seen to have pride in OFP:

> One of the other amazing things as well is the pride our students have in their programs. I've been involved … in ELICOS[16] for a long time and I often feel that some ELICOS students are a bit ashamed of their period in ELICOS because that was a sign that they had a disadvantage or something like that. But I've never met an Open Foundation student … who wouldn't say "I did Open Foundation and it was the best

[12] Gaddis, "The influence of habitus in the relationship between cultural capital and academic achievement," *1-13.*
[13] Gaddis, "The influence of habitus in the relationship between cultural capital and academic achievement", *10.*
[14] Gaddis, "The influence of habitus in the relationship between cultural capital and academic achievement", 9.
[15] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 245.
[16] English Language course for international students.

> thing I ever did". Even when they've achieved the top position in any area they always refer to their enabling experience. And I think that's because it made a huge difference to their lives … And you know, people say enabling education changes their economic status. It's not that alone, it's the confidence, the feeling about a person. So that's why enabling education is multifaceted. It's not like neoliberals would like to say "Change economics", it just changes people's lives. We just cannot look at it only from an economic viewpoint. (Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Director).

Success for OFP students was not only in completing the course and going on to a degree. One staff member commented that identifying that the program was not what they really wanted to secure a particular career, was also a form of success. The idea that undertaking the program helped them find the right path that may not have included higher education was also considered a positive outcome:

> I think sometimes with students when they do Open Foundation, sometimes withdrawing from the program is actually successful, because sometimes they come along thinking they want to go to Uni and then they realize the sacrifice they have to make, and they say "No, I don't want to do this for another four years. I might just finish Open Foundation and that's going to give me HSC equivalence. And I'm going to be able to work my way up through my current job. I might go into management or something". And I think sometimes there's validity in identifying that Uni is not for you, because it's not for everybody … So I suppose sometimes when people withdraw from Uni it doesn't necessarily mean that it's a bad thing. (Deanna McCall, Counsellor)

The changes to students' lives was observed as far greater than the possibility of economic improvement. Through the application of the concepts of cultural capital and habitus in the field of enabling education, Bourdieu helps us to understand the multi-valent nature of impacts on students' lives that enhances their experiences, their relationships as well as the wider society. Individual developmental impacts such as acquiring embodied cultural capital enabled students to realise their abilities. Students expressed pride in the program and valued its contribution to their lives, but for some, realising they did not wish to pursue HE was also deemed successful as this level of study was shown not to be for everyone. People could also realise their potential through other directions.

The embodied joy of learning

Appendix 8 indicates the full range of 1,023 responses to the question: What was your experience of OFP? Table 44 below, however, cites the most frequent answers and categorises them according to whether those experiences were positive or challenging. The term "negative" was not used to counter pose the positive responses because students did

not necessarily convey an adverse experience. Rather, the experiences that could not be categorised as pleasurable or affirmative were often indicative of the challenges and exigencies that are necessary for commitment to higher education studies. Overall, the positive responses numbered 905 while the more challenging responses numbered 118. That means that overall, of the 1,023 responses to this question, roughly 88.5% were positive and 11.5% represented challenging experiences that also included feelings of stress, being overwhelmed, finding it daunting and "scary". Some of these responses reflect the way in which bodies react to study.

Theoretical approaches to analysing the corporeal aspects of education were initially introduced by theorists such as Bourdieu in his discussion of embodied cultural capital and habitus, and by Foucault in his discussion of power. Shilling took this direction further and argues that classical sociology did not see the body as a central concern and that human embodiment was treated as an 'absent presence.'[17] In his review of Shilling's work, Benton notes that "humans *are* organic beings, whose embodiment is the outcome of both social and biological evolutionary processes, as well as enabling and constraining social life in many complex ways."[18] Scholars began to argue that individual and social identities are tightly bound together within the embodied self.[19] The way in which learning might be experienced by the body is articulated in many of the students' responses to their experience of OFP. Learning to become a student is an embodied experience where the disciplining and associated bodily activities required of a student become part of a new habitus.

Learning to become a university student requires what Watkins refers to as habituated actions that are repeated to the point at which "they no longer require conscious attention."[20] This process, Watkins argues, is essential for learning. Time is also important because it takes time for individuals "to embody particular dispositions that generate practice."[21] For OFP students the skills they gain become part of their social identity and are learned by their bodies while performing the kinds of academic practices that are required to qualify for their courses. Learning can therefore be seen to shape bodies in various ways. According to Figueiredo and Ipiranga, "the person who embodies a skill not only *has* the knowledge that describes their professional formation, as the embodiment of a skill changes the whole person, transforming them into a skilful body."[22] As the students in Table 44

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[17] Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory,* (London: Sage Publications, 1993).

[18] Ted Benton, "Book Review of Shilling, Chris *The Body and Social Theory*" *The Sociological Review* 42(4) (1994): 804-807.

[19] Ian Burkitt, *Bodies of Thought: Social Relations, Activity and Embodiment*. (London: Sage Publications, 1999).

[20] Megan Watkins, "Book Review Reassessing bodies. Chris Shilling: *The Body in Culture, Technology and Science" Cultural Studies Review* 11(2) (2005), 229.

[21] Watkins, "Book Review Reassessing bodies," 230.

[22] Marina D Figueiredo and Ana S R Ipiranga, "How Can We Define Mastery? Reflections on Learning, Embodiment and Professional Identity." *Brazilian Administration Review* 12(4) (2015), 350.

report, they have learnt skills and acquired confidence that became part of their repertoire. But more than that, and the most frequently cited response is that OFP was experienced as enjoyment. Their bodies experienced this learning as pleasurable and something they reflected on positively, evidenced by the number who said OFP had changed their lives for the better.

Table 44: Most frequently cited experiences of studying in the OFP

Positive Experiences	(n=)	Challenging Experiences	(n=)
Enjoyable	105	Challenging	31
Good introduction to Uni	78	Difficult	16
Supported	70	Hard work	10
Good teaching	61	Stressful	7
Loved learning	53	Coping with Disability	4
Instilled confidence	32	Overwhelming	4
Skill building	26	Steep learning curve	4
Encouraging	24	Daunting	3
Excellent	22	Not true preparation	3
Made friendships	22	Exhausting	2
Learnt a lot	22	Isolation	2
Stimulating	22	Scary	2

When students comment on the challenges, difficulties, hard work and steep learning curve as their experience of OFP these can make the experience of what may have seemed unachievable at the time of enrolment even more pleasurable when they find they have been able to succeed despite these challenges and obstacles. When, however, they comment on the exhaustion, isolation and feeling scared, those are bodily manifestations that cause discomfort and something that support networks within universities are designed to address. The majority who said OFP was challenging also said it was rewarding and enjoyable and that they felt supported: “I found it enlightening. I hadn't expected to have to do 2 subjects but found that Earth Science fed into my Art in a most satisfactory way. It was challenging, but I found I could cope, which was the object of the exercise. I learned a lot

and enjoyed it all" (018: Female); "enjoyed the experience. It was challenging, however at the same time very supportive. I was given good guidance and continued support" (053: Female).

Among the students who expressed enjoyment comments were typically:

> I really enjoyed my experience of Open Foundation. I was able to get back into studying at a pace that wasn't overwhelming, get to know a few people from all different walks of life and gain confidence in my ability to complete studies and pursue a different career. It was overwhelmingly positive (017: Female).

And, "It was fun and enjoyable. It was also exciting to be learning about new and interesting ideas from lecturers highly respected in their fields" (039: Male). Hughes' research found that adult learners who gain pleasure from the learning environment also express empowerment and motivation as characteristics of that experience.[23] Comments such as: "empowering - it helped give me a feel for my own capabilities and where I might fit for the next ten years (057: Male); "I found the program empowering and exciting. I discovered that I had the ability to attend University. I found the experience of study at university one of the few positives in my life at a particularly difficult time" (097: Male) - indicate OFP provided a direction in life and perhaps a refuge for some students. These comments should, however, be tempered alongside the fact that this study was sourced from students who were mainly successful in the program and the possibility that not all students were able to overcome the challenges and difficulties is an area for further research.

OFP friendships and the building of social capital

Making friendships was seen as an important feature of OFP. These relationships were considered by students not only to sustain their involvement in the program but also to include them within a community of students. This was especially important for those for whom English was a second language:

> I've got one student who's now going to go into his second year of Social Science, and he was telling me the other day how he felt it was really, really important to try and make friends. So he's identified that, he identified that ages ago. And he was kind of in a different situation. He'd come up from Wollongong so he didn't have the community around him already in Newcastle. He's from Burundi, but he didn't really know the Burundian community in Newcastle. So when he came, he made it his mission to make friends, not necessarily the Africans, but whoever he felt. He said it was really important to find people who understood him. And I know he was talking about his language, about people who understood the way he spoke, but I kind of also think that it taps into understanding the kind of person he is as well. And he did,

[23] Christina Hughes, "The pleasures of learning at work: Foucault and phenomenology compared." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 28(3) (2007): 363-376.

> he made some really good friends on campus and he still has them, so that's really nice. (Evonne Irwin, ESL Support)

As borne out in the survey data and reported in Chapter 7, more than half of the students surveyed (55.14%) reported they had made enduring friendships while in OFP. Friendships have been shown to contribute to better quality learning outcomes and to increase retention:[24]

> And the other impact I think Open Foundation has, is that very often they make lifelong friends. They're their new friends when they come, they're dependant on somebody to be friendly to them, to show them what the word "campus" means, what a lecture theatre is, so they sort of muddle along together. So yeah, that is a big part of an Open Foundation student's experience. (Jan Watkins, Administrator)

As discussed in Chapter 8 students themselves reported that the networks they built during their OFP year were utilised later as professional connections when they had established careers. This form of social capital provides particular advantages that offer alliances that are separate from class, race or gender.[25] Bourdieu saw social capital as one of the four important forms of power in society, and a significant advantage for those who were able to utilize it.

Among the almost 45% of respondents who did not report making enduring friendships, some made transitory friendships that ceased as they moved to different courses, some reported limited time outside study and family commitments to engage in friendships and some had been enrolled in Distance Programs where it was less likely they would pursue friendships that endured over time.

Students who were challenged by their OFP experience

A full examination of responses reported in Table 44 to the question about students' experiences of OFP revealed that they were overwhelmingly positive, 905 affirmative expressions were used, while 118 responses could be classified as, and inclusive of, the expression "challenging", rather than negative. While being challenged is not necessarily a negative experience, these responses were also an indication that their educational journey was not always easy. In some cases the student's self-doubt about their abilities clouded their assessment of the experience. Two people mentioned feeling "isolated"; another two were "scared"; two found the experience a "shock", while another found it "frightening". These comments and others such as: discomfort, fear of failure, lonely, nervous, intimidating, can be interpreted as emanating from the individual's embodied reactions to

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[24] David Kember., Kenneth Lee and Natalia Li. "Cultivating a sense of belonging in part-time students." *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* 20(4) (2001), 326.

[25] Miles, "The Cultural Capital of Consumption," 155.

their learning situation. They are a reminder that these perceptions may be strongly internalised and that deconstructing notions of capability is an important part of orienting students, especially in the early period of enrolment. A critique of the concept of capability among enabling students is provided by Burke et al[26] who argue that meanings attached to this concept shape the experiences of these students, their practices and their sense of belonging. Their findings indicate that familiarizing students with and problematizing this concept may prevent some attrition. As such, acknowledging the self-doubts of students, also present in this research data, is a feature of good practice in the enabling space.

The qualitative comments of many students also indicated that they were challenged by impositions on, or the breakdown of, their relationships either immediately before or during their studies. This should also be considered an impact of the program. Comments reported in Appendix 5 such as "my marriage suffered and still does due to my Uni load" (001); "Divorced! Feel much better about myself" (042); "My partner and I separated in my Honours year. He felt we no longer had anything in common and was intimidated by my study. I am currently a PhD candidate at Uni of Melbourne" (048) are an indication of the strains and tensions that arise along with study commitments. One student commented: "My then husband violently objected to uni studies. I could not cope with the abuse" (131); while others reported that the time spent studying impacted their relationships: "My relationship with my husband isn't as good. It is hard to find time for everything" (179). For some students there was a combination of both "disapproval and praise" (133) and adjustments and coping were required by the student, their partners and families. Almost 60% of respondents reported changes in their relationships in consequence of their studies, many for the better, but as reported in Appendix 6 and 7, respondents' comments also reflected very real challenges that impacted the lives of students and their families.

There were very few comments that might have caused concern about the quality of the courses or the teaching apart from three people who felt it was "not true preparation" for their undergraduate studies; another said it was "inconsistent course preparation"; one student found it "confusing"; one said it was "disappointing"; another said it was "out of control". Only one person stated there was "poor teaching". Of the people who found it challenging, only ten responses could be interpreted as critical of the course, less than 1%. It is, however, beholden on educators to move students out of their comfort zone. Meyer and Land's edited collection provides insights into exposing students to "threshold knowledge" in a range of disciplines that requires confronting them with unexpected effects, disentangling complex issues and encouraging them to gain emotional capital by learning

[26] Penny Jane Burke., Anna Bennett., Cathy Burgess., Kim Gray and Erica Southgate,"Capability, belonging and equity in higher education: developing inclusive approaches." Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, February 2016.

about others.[27] Any discomfort may not be appreciated by students at the time, but is expressly part of the role of universities when imparting knowledge.

Some concluding comments regarding impacts of OFP on students

This chapter has drawn on qualitative comments within the student survey data and oral history interviews to reinforce the argument that students acquire cultural capital in its institutionalised and embodied forms. Their qualification, an OFP attainment certificate, not only in most cases allowed entry to an undergraduate degree, it enhanced their self-esteem and proved to themselves and others that they were capable of tertiary study. Their certificate was a material representation of their mastery of academic literacy. The data also confirms that their habitus changed as they became comfortable with the tertiary environment and with their own location within it. Students expressed improvement to their health and wellbeing, increased discipline of their bodies and a habitus that embraced the learning environment with joy. While the overwhelming majority indicated that undertaking OFP had impacted both bodies and minds in a positive way and for some, was a source of social capital that would not have been possible in their former lives not all students reported a positive experience. Their change of habitus coincided with relationship breakups, adjustments and accommodations within their family lives. In some cases, students perceived their families as being threatened by their new found change of social status. The final chapter discusses the impacts OFP has had on the University of Newcastle and on the regions in which it is delivered.

[27] Meyer, Jan H. F. and Land, Ray eds. *Overcoming barriers to student understanding: threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge.* New York: Routledge, 2006.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE IMPACTS OF OPEN FOUNDATION ON THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AND ITS REGIONS

"I mean the University without Open Foundation would simply not be the University it is now."[1]

Using survey and interview methods, the current study has centred on the reported impacts of the OFP on students and to a lesser extent on the staff in the program, set within the wider historical context in the field of HE. Based on oral history evidence, this chapter reports the understandings about the impacts OFP has had on both the University and the communities that UON serves held by experienced staff of UON from all professional levels - executive, teaching, student support and administrative. The chapter demonstrates that university academic and professional staff members associated with the program remember the impacts of OFP as far reaching. Many of the respondents have now achieved some 'critical distance' from their involvement in the program having retired or moved on to other positions, so their reflections were not clouded by current involvement in or with the program. However, it should be noted that in some capacity, respondents nevertheless had some investment in the program whether as decision-makers, lecturers or support staff and may therefore have recounted a particular narrative about OFP. Further, because they were asked about impacts, this may have precluded them from speaking about other aspects of OFP, although they were asked at the conclusion of the interview whether there was anything additional they would like to discuss. Their comments are shaped by their subjective evaluations based on the kind of involvement they had with the program. The oral history evidence of impacts does, however, provide perceptions about impacts at the level of individuals and their families; impacts that affected the university itself and its standing within the community; and impacts that had a flow on effect to communities and the broader regions in which OFP is taught.

As some of these respondents noted, there is an absence of hard evidence about impacts of the OFP despite its longevity. One recent review of the program however gave an indication of the type of numbers involved in the program. Bennett *et al* concluded that, from 2007-2013, 5,885 students entered the University of Newcastle via the OFP and that 'a significant number of these students have achieved excellent results in their undergraduate study. For example, in 2011, 12.8% of the University of Newcastle medal recipients had qualified for

[1] Professor Brian English.

entry through completing Open Foundation.[1] A fuller measurement of the hard data about impacts of the OFP however is yet to be carried out.

In what follows, respondents' discussion of the impacts of OFP on UON is presented in two sections. In the first section they recall economic impacts deriving from increasing its student intake, on provision of funding for UON, and the enhancement of its regional reputation because of the link OFP created between community and university. OFP was also seen as a vehicle for UON to meet its equity responsibilities as well as, particularly in the early days of the program, a philanthropic endeavour. Respondents also commented on OFPs effectiveness as an alternative pathway to tertiary studies at UON, in part, because the program has developed a particular philosophy of enabling education over time that contributes to the professional teaching skills and practices at UON. The second section of this chapter examines the respondents' views of the impacts of OFP on the Hunter and Central Coast regions in terms of creating a more highly trained and professional workforce, a better educated population and therefore increased human capital, as well as broader social advantages for the regions including enhanced community engagement. The chapter begins with a discussion of the oral evidence for impacts at the level of OFP's impact on the university in which it is taught.

Impacts of Open Foundation on UON

The majority of respondents to the question about what impacts OFP had on UON framed their answers in terms of provision of undergraduate students to the university. This impact was construed in economic terms. These respondents understood that the university was funded by the Federal Government per student[2] and further that the University profited in offering the OFP not only in terms of enabling load but also due to the increase in undergraduate enrolment numbers when these students went on to degrees. As one former lecturer commented:

> If you thought about it in economic terms alone, it's actually channelled thousands of students into the University and kept them at Newcastle University so that they didn't necessarily go off to other Universities. So it's attracted them to the University, it's brought them a huge student population, a huge student base … So there's a whole range of benefits of having Open Foundation students within that University … even if they go on to other universities.[3] (Dr Angela Cowan, Social Enquiry lecturer)

[1] University medals are awarded to students achieving the highest results in their subject areas. A Bennett., D Powter., H Clarke and E Goode *Open Foundation Program: Program Self Review Report.* Newcastle NSW: English Language and Foundation Studies Centre, University of Newcastle, 2013, 1.

[2] The funding allocations were discussed in Chapter 6.

[3] A proportion of students each year enrol at other universities upon completion of the program. Some of these students have been Distance students and lived in other locations, while others seek specific courses or universities elsewhere.

The observation that students could go on to enrol in other universities indicates the primary aim of OFP as access to education in and of itself, rather than the objective of only seeking students and therefore income for UON.
Nevertheless, meeting student load was acknowledged as an important strategic objective for the university:

> in terms of bean counting, it's fed some people in who might not have otherwise gone [to University] so if you're short of numbers that would obviously be a good thing. But if you're not short of numbers then you wouldn't care … But if you want to count beans, then I guess we get some students we wouldn't otherwise get. (Associate Professor Bill Warren, former OFP Philosophy lecturer)

While this lecturer was uncertain about the significance of the enrolments originating from OFP, this need to fill student load was seen as critical by a former Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) who had the responsibility of overseeing enrolment and funding priorities for the university as a whole:

> Oh, central. Critical. I mean in a very practical sense, as I said before, managing its enrolments. You'd never get under enrolled if you've got a program you can enrol fully every year if you want to. Quality candidates that are filtered in a process that prepares people for University. I mean in one sense I was surprised when you told me how many people [have graduated] but on the other hand, I'm not surprised how many students come through Open Foundation. I mean the University without Open Foundation would simply not be the University it is now. It wouldn't have the same intake reputation … There are still a number of professional courses at Newcastle that had higher UAIs than the relevant Sydney Universities because of the quality of our candidature ... I mean that kept the Admission Index for Newcastle much higher than it otherwise would have been. (Professor Brian English, former Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic)

The flow on of "quality" mature students was a source of pride within UON, elevating its prestige among other universities as well as providing a significant number of students for the first year undergraduate intake. Di Rigney, ELFSC Registrar, talked about "the hard and fast numbers game" when she noted that the university gleaned anything from 14% to 17% of the commencing group of students from the OFP.

While many respondents were in awe of the number of students OFP had contributed to UON, some were also critical of a perceived lack of recognition of the role it played in providing enrolments. For example Terry Ryan who taught for many years in both enabling and undergraduate courses, commented that: "In many ways it's saved the joint." He thought that "it's been immeasurably influential in the development of the University,

which is why I can't understand why some administrators don't think as highly of it as we do."

OFP also provided an important source of funding for UON. As described in Chapter 6, the program attracted Federal funding in the 1990s at a rate of half the equivalent of the full time student load per student and later, HEPPP funding. One long term administrator of the program said:

> Well, we know that it's financially significant. I haven't got the data, the exact data … Financially Open Foundation did very well once they started to get funding for it. (Jan Watkins, Administrative Officer)

Some staff were cynical about how the funding was allocated, and suspected that some went into general revenue rather than being spent on the programs for which it was allocated. It was suggested that external Review panels had also been concerned about the level of funding allocated to OFP by the university, especially given the large percentage of Low SES students in the OFP:

> Over the years we've had very large classes, a very small amount of tenure for the staff … So they [Review Panel members] were talking of the need for it to be adequately resourced, to maintain it, that it needed to be kept as a program and that they had numbers on the low SES students who'd done the program. There's been up to 40% of numbers of low SES people in the program, significantly higher than the overall Uni student population.[4] (Di Rigney, Registrar)

While acknowledging these economic impacts on the University, the high quality of the students was regarded by interviewees as a more important outcome of the OFP and was another one of the common themes raised by respondents. The high quality of students who transitioned into undergraduate programs was seen to enrich student interactions due to the life experiences of the mature students. When considering OFP's contribution to the university a former lecturer and Director commented that there were other spin offs, including for those who did not complete the program:

> And so it [OFP] was important to the University:
> a. Because it was students who wouldn't have been there; and
> b. Because they were well prepared students.
> They were doing well. And there were other spin off matters. I think a lot of people who didn't finish the Open Foundation went away much better people. They went away aware of a world they weren't aware of before. And they went away thinking

[4] Low SES does not attract higher funding in the allocation dependent on total numbers still enrolled by the census date. However, it does contribute to the case for additional funding such as HEPPP.

> somewhat differently, and that's got to be a plus. So I think the significance of the Open Foundation is not just in the apparent things like so many students, and so many students who did well. Another plus was, and especially in something like Philosophy, it's a damn sight better to speak to a group of students that's got a sizeable sprinkling of adults in it who've got a little bit of life experience. I mean, I don't despise brash kids just out of school and so on, because a lot of them are very clever little devils and they're good people. But, to teach a group that's got life experience changes the sort of teaching you can do, and changes it in a way that has an effect on the other students as well. So it's an enriching process. (Associate Professor Ralph Robinson, former lecturer and Director)

In addition to producing students who coped well in undergraduate programs, this comment indicates that the academic literacies and critical thinking skills acquired whether a student completed the program or not, were beneficial. They assisted broader understanding of arguments and as attested in the students' own reflections, recorded in Chapter 8, resulted in much more self and social confidence. The OFP was also seen as contributing to the prestige and reputation of the university.

Economic considerations relating to student numbers and funding were inevitably linked to the reputation of the university. A theme that recurred within the responses about regional impacts of OFP was the part the program had played in promoting the various levels of reputation of UON: locally, nationally and even as a drawcard for some international students:

> Whether you like it or not, that [reputation] is a measure of your prestige and the ranking of the University. So it provided good students, it provided funding, it helped the prestige of the University (Professor Brian English, Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic).

According to the second Director of Community Programmes who was also involved in the program from 1974, there were three areas in which UON was known to excel: its Medical Faculty, its problem-based learning model and its OFP:

> Other good things have come out of the University of Newcastle, no doubt, but they are the three things that I think distinguished the University of Newcastle from most other Universities in Australia, and internationally as well …There was at times, great nervousness about it [OFP]. It wasn't universally accepted as a good thing ... We didn't know, we didn't have grand ideas of what we were doing, or grand ideas of our importance at the time. We fought hard to give it a good name within the University, and outside the University. But looking back, I think the Open Foundation Course, and to some extent Community Programmes more generally, was a bold

> experiment … Without the Open Foundation Course I think the University of Newcastle would have found a much more hostile regional community than it has on several occasions. (John Collins, former lecturer and Director)

Other respondents saw the reputation of the university as very much connected to its links with the community and that spreading the word about the success of OFP was largely a result of students who came through it. John Hill, who was the first full time lecturer appointed to Community Programmes and worked in the Department for many years, commented that personal recommendations were 'immensely significant', especially because its older demographic students tended to have well established networks in the region.

Another long-term lecturer who eventually became Director of the Centre also commented that OFP led to the dismantling of the 'ivory tower' for UON in its community:

> The standing of the University in this community is much higher because of those things. No-one can see the University as just an ivory tower because it's just so much involved with the community. And it has so much listened to the needs of the community by providing something like the Open Foundation. So I think, as well as the obvious benefits, there are the other benefits you mightn't think about. But it's enriched the University quite a bit. (Associate Professor Ralph Robinson, former lecturer and Director)

The enhancement of the university's reputation was particularly evident at Recognition of Attainment Ceremonies (ROAC) recounted in Chapter 6 where a former Chancellor observed the impact of the ceremonies on both students and their families. What he referred to as "harvest festivals" of students following completion of their course provided a source of enjoyment for those officiating and also an opportunity for UON to showcase the students' achievements. The ritual and ceremony accompanying the occasion of the Attainment Ceremony added legitimacy to the enabling credential the student was receiving but also elevated the importance of the achievement by conferring the award in such a formal and official setting. The décor, the robing of officials and academics and in more recent times, the robing of OFP students, adds to the significance of the occasion:

> Well, it's enhanced the University. It's enhanced the University's reputation as a place where education happens and not just students enrolled. It's given, along with the problem-based learning … it's given a particular edge to the University. (John Collins, former lecturer and Director)

According to a number of respondents, OFP was seen to have become part of the identity of UON, and more than that, a program that belonged to the region and in which people felt some ownership:

> So many people have had their lives enriched by the Open Foundation course. And the image of the University has also been enriched as well, because people in the University, people in the Newcastle community see the University as being *their* University. It's not an elite institution out at Shortland. It's there for their children, even if their children didn't quite get through high school, it's there for them and their children. So I think that it's very good. I mean, it's good for the image of the University. (John Hill, lecturer Community Programmes)

Annette Morante, Learning Support Advisor, had a similar view:

> I think Novocastrians have this belief that the University of Newcastle is "for them". Whereas in Sydney I assume that people have a choice of Universities so they don't see "a" University as being "their" University. But I think when a University like Newcastle is very supportive of everybody coming in, then that has to impact on the community as well. So I think it's quite significant.

It was noted that despite funding difficulties in its early years, executives of UON in more recent times claimed OFP as successful in enhancing the wider reputation of the university:

> I think it's had incredible impact. It was always the poor relation [within the University], but the current Vice Chancellor proudly says Newcastle University is a leader in, what do they call it now? Access education? So they're proud of it. The students have gone on to make great contributions in medicine, law, education, etc there've been some excellent teachers in Open Foundation, and fantastic students. So I think it's had a beneficial impact. (Margaret Henry, Australian History lecturer)

Indeed, such was the prestige of the OFP that students came from as far away as Tamworth to access the course:

> Well I think it just impacts on the region in that people just know that there's opportunities to go to University. I was talking to someone from Tamworth recently and she said that she moved here for Uni, but she was amazed how many people from Newcastle went to Uni. And it was almost like they were expected to do it. There's a Uni in their town and so they just go on to Uni. So I think that it's having Open Foundation it just can help those ones who haven't gone straight from school. Because there's this [attitude] "Oh well, if I want to go to Uni I can, there's Open Foundation. There's all these pathways". (Deanna McCall, Counsellor)

The convenience of having a university in the region that catered to people's educational needs was viewed as a huge advantage. The above comment also indicates that because OFP was well known, that people could adjust their educational expectations and return to university as mature students if they chose, it gave them options.

In addition, the reputation of UON was promoted through the amount of research being produced and attendance by staff at national and overseas conferences.[5] These initiatives were beginning to establish the place of UON's enabling programs within national and international arenas from the mid-2000s.

Reputational claims made by UON include high levels of Indigenous Australians attending the university,[6] above average numbers of low socio-economic status (SES) students,[7] and competence in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.[8] For many of these people from disadvantaged groups, their higher educational journey began in OFP. As one lecturer commented:

> Success of non-traditional students I think is very much down to Open Foundation. The University has a very high proportion of low SES students. The University's proportion of low SES students is surprisingly not that much higher than of Open Foundation. I think the University's level is about 27% and we're about 33% or 34% which I found very surprising. It suggests that the non-traditional students who are coming into the University through Open Foundation are not largely, not only, certainly, low SES students. A lot of people with disabilities, I suspect. Sure. And people who've got chronic illnesses, emotional or mental disturbances that stopped them being in the workforce, rather than finishing school and going onto University. We get a lot of returning mothers. We get a lot of people who are being retrained. (Dr Barry Hodges, Philosophy lecturer and Program Convenor).

The issue of equity and access was of particular interest to the ceremonial head of the university while awareness of legal as well as moral responsibilities to disadvantaged

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[5] Recent conferences included National Association of Enabling Educators Australia (NAEEA); Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand (FABENZ); and Focus on Access and Continuing Education (FACE) a British initiative.

[6] https://www.newcastle.edu.au/about-uon/our-university/indigenous-collaboration reports that in 2017 there were over 1,000 enrolments constituting 3.5% of total enrolments. This is significantly higher than the national average of Indigenous tertiary enrolments.

[7] In the report on enrolments and completions, ELFSC at a glance, 2013 reported that 36.7% of students in enabling programs identified as coming from low socio economic status (SES) families.

[8] ELFSC at a glance, 2013 reported that 7.9% of enabling enrolments in 2013 had a disability. A comprehensive report on meeting the needs of these students is provided in UON's policy document: https://www.newcastle.edu.au/about-uon/governance-and-leadership/policy-library/document?RecordNumber=D09/1766P

students was a pressing consideration and one that also reflected on the prestige of UON. This former Chancellor observed:

> Well I think if we were looking at issues of equity and access, then I think the University of Newcastle does two things. One is that it more than fulfils its obligations as a regional institution that provides access and equity of access. But it also sets an example to the rest of the country as to what can be done and should be done. And I think it does a number of things at a variety of levels. But I think one of the most important things for me is that in terms of providing access, it also saves the nation a tremendous amount of waste. That here were really bright, intelligent people who, other than for this opportunity, would not have been able to express themselves to the benefit of the wider community because they simply didn't have the opportunity for an education … And I have question marks about the "normal" process anyhow. I think they are a better crop, in some sense, than those who go straight from school into University, because here are a group of people who've already graduated from life. They've done it and survived and they have tremendous life skills. And as someone who teaches University students, particularly the mature aged students are just so highly motivated. They know why they're there, they're not out tomcatting (laughs). They're there to do a job. And their standard is very high. (Professor Trevor Waring, former Chancellor)

The life experience, resilience, motivation and quality of the students were seen as assets the students could draw on to open an alternative pathway that had not previously been an option: "And it [OFP] produced by now, thousands of graduates who probably otherwise would not have got a start." (Professor Brian English, former Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic)

It was suggested that in the early days of the program, and perhaps the intention of its founder, Brian Smith, that OFP was motivated by philanthropy: "So, it was seen as something that was, well certainly in the early 80s, it was seen more as a philanthropic endeavour than as an academic endeavour". (Greg Preston, former lecturer in OFP and representative on Academic Senate) While early advocates such as Professor Laurie Short, [later to be] Associate Professor Bill Warren and others were interested in promoting the welfare of others through humanitarianism and the public spirit of establishing a program that might bring about social change, over time, the emphasis on promoting OFP changed to one that was much more academic in its intent. This shift was identified by Greg Preston as occurring in the late 70s or early 80s when the experimental and philanthropic approach of OFP as part of the UON's outreach was replaced by closer attention to its academic mission.

He indicated that OFP was now recognised within the University as a national leader in enabling education.[9]

As OFP evolved, and its reputation for producing quality graduates became better known, UON adapted its policies and rules to accommodate the non-matriculating students while trying to ensure a balance between conforming to academic practices and allowing sufficient flexibility for students.[10] One reason some students sought the program out was related to the fact that it was fee free, supported by government funding.

Another impact of this enabling program was its contribution to teaching skills and practices at UON. The enabling style of pedagogy, based on andragogic principles, impacted the students by empowering and inspiring them, as well as making courses understandable and relevant to their lives. It impacted UON by raising the bar of teaching practice as student evaluations consistently placed enabling courses ahead of others in the university based on criteria such as support, learning activities, satisfaction, relevance, feedback, challenge, teaching and course structure.[11]

The commitment which focuses on developing andragogy and sharing best practice, another impact, is exemplified in participation in and contributions to conferences. As discussed in Chapter 6, UON was the first university to host a national enabling conference in 2004. From that time, considerable attention has been paid to staff development and building expertise in enabling education. UON staff have built a formidable record of publications on enabling education and continue to contribute to that new and growing field of knowledge. Among the oral interview respondents, those who had been in lecturing or teaching positions were asked about their own philosophy of teaching which demonstrated the reasons why this area of teaching has impacted on students and on UON's reputation. Their responses indicate the strong enabling ethos that has developed in OFP over the past forty plus years aided by the opportunity for reflection provided by engagement in research about enabling teaching. An outline of their philosophies, pedagogy and practices that can be seen as constitutive of 'excellence' in the enabling programs at UON is provided in Appendix 9.

A number of interviewees were perplexed about answering the question about their philosophy of teaching because it is difficult to articulate. Responses included not only their vision of how learning occurs; but insights into the art of teaching and learning relating to adult learners. Over time there have been some very effective enabling educators at UON whose charismatic character is reflected in their philosophies of teaching. What one should

[9] This fact was confirmed in the *Report from the Review of the Open Foundation program*, 2006, 4 in their executive summary which stated it was "one of the leading and most well-recognised programs in Australia."
[10] One example of this was the extension of enrolment from one to two years in which students could complete the program.
[11] Material supplied to author as Internal Use only prepared by Strategy, Planning and Performance unit for Semester 1, 2017.

'do' was articulated in conjunction with advice on how one should 'be' as an effective educator. An analysis of the responses of 21 respondents who fell into the category of lecturer revealed three main areas: the values and attitudes that characterised their philosophies of teaching; statements about their classroom approaches; and their approach to students.

Values and attitudes included being genuine or "true to yourself" and creating authentic learning environments. This "way of being" is intrinsically linked to learning in that inauthentic practices may be considered unethical practices. The possibilities created in an authentic learning environment are considered desired outcomes in becoming a teacher,[12] and these lecturers had an awareness of that. The attitudes and values these experienced educators spoke of reflected ethical standards, empathy, consideration and kindness. The importance of demonstrating kindness cues has been shown to affirm social inclusion,[13] which is an important part of enabling education. In fact, kindness is considered a virtue that underpins ideals of teaching in institutions.[14] Students appreciate the breaking down of institutional barriers, constraints of the 'ivory tower' and normalizing their surroundings. Other attitudes and values respondents commented on were presenting education as "liberating" and part of lifelong learning, and contributing to the joy of learning identified by students in Chapter 10, as a significant feature of the learning environment. Valuing reflective attitudes to their teaching and being prepared to be flexible and mindful of students' needs was also discussed.

Classroom approaches identified as important included demystifying knowledge while at the same time setting high standards and goals, being tolerant and giving all students an equal voice, which implies social justice and equity as central concepts in their classrooms. Searching for ways to ensure students understood what they were learning and role-modelling best practice, being interactive and mixing up delivery, facilitating learning rather than imposing knowledge were used by these experienced teachers in their practice. In addition, using humour and having fun in the classroom were seen as valuable learning tools for establishing an atmosphere that was conducive to learning.[15] Humour has been seen as particularly useful in classes where students lack confidence and find the material difficult.[16] Making things simpler, providing non-threatening but challenging tasks, introducing sophisticated and academic vocabulary gradually were mentioned as important strategies, along with taking time to teach basic skills by scaffolding knowledge and working from the

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[12] Angus Brook, "The Potentiality of Authenticity in Becoming a Teacher." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41(1) (2009): 46-59.
[13] Mica Estrada., Alegra Eroy-Reveles and John Matsui, "The Influence of Affirming Kindness and Community on Broadening Participation in STEM Career Pathways." *Social Issues & Policy Review* 12(1) (2018): 258-297.
[14] Stephen Rowland, "Kindness." *London Review of Education* 7(3) (2009): 207-210.
[15]Linda L Ivy, "Using Humor in the Classroom." *Education Digest* 79(2) (2013): 54-57.
[16] Neelam Kher., Susan Molstad and Roberta Donahue, "Using humor in the college classroom to enhance teaching effectiveness in 'dread courses." *College Student Journal* 33(3) (1999): 400-407.

"known to the unknown". The idea that students should be taught how to learn rather than simply providing them with information figured prominently in their philosophies, as did introducing innovative and contemporary modes through which to engage students, and teaching skills that are transferrable.

The third area these lecturers referred to was how to approach students. Again, empathy was considered important as well as having sensitivity to the emotional commitment students make to their studies. Taking a positive and caring approach were also mentioned. The idea that there are checks and balances and that on the one hand making students feel comfortable was important, with the proviso "But not too much" as both ensuring professional distance and creating challenges was deemed part of the respectful relationship academics should have with their students. All the tips they gave would be a useful checklist for incoming and inexperienced staff.

The kind of passion required to teach into the enabling courses was often coupled with the sense that what these lecturers were doing was a socially responsible activity:

> I have a special place in my esteem for teaching in Open Foundation, because there was a sense about that, that you were doing something that was socially useful, and something that put you in touch with adult people, and doing a bit more than just recovering untapped resources. (Associate Professor Ralph Robinson, former lecturer and Director)

The idea that enabling education provided a nurturing and safe learning environment for students was a theme that emerged from the oral history interviews. A Counsellor for OFP students reported:

> Well I think a very nurturing response from the academic staff, that's always the feedback that the students give me on just how supported they feel. The feedback they get is comprehensive, it's encouraging. That others have faith in them when they might be doubting themselves. And it's that kind of attitudinal response to their learning, and assuming they have the capability. It's just about tailoring it, yeah, and there's things they need to learn and that they are capable of that learning. And just that really safe learning environment, safe and supportive. And I think that's what they love and that's what I think has made it such a positive program is the safety and the security. And yet, they're challenged, you know, and they're educated, and they're informed of what will be required of them. But it's done in such a paced way and a gentle way that it's not too threatening or overwhelming or scary, you know. It's that lovely, just pacing it well and getting them up to the mark so they are ready for undergraduate [studies]. (Chris Campbell, Counsellor)

The loyalty and commitment of staff to the program was also highly valued by its current Director:

> So it's the commitment of people. I very rarely have had a staff member from our Enabling Programs coming to me and saying "I want this for myself." It tends to be "Can we get this for the students?" And I think talking to people who come from other areas of the University, I think they are surprised at the amazing commitment. Yes, we are all being paid to do it, but the extra work that is put in is because they believe in it … So that for me has been the greatest pleasure of being involved. And the people who have worked in the program over the years have just been amazing people. And I think it's because of the culture. I'm a great believer in culture. And I think Brian Smith, John Collins, all those people, set up a culture that I have to feed into. And all of us who have come have just fed into it. I think it just is one thing that I hope we never change I have to say I was a little bit, not concerned, but you say well if we have more permanent staff, will that change the ethos? And it hasn't. You know the ethos is still there. People will go the extra mile for the student. And that comes across in student feedback, and that's genuine … So I think that interaction between staff and the students is something I have been amazed about. (Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Director)

The staff themselves recognised this commitment in their own approach, but also in their observations of their colleagues' teaching that was seen as "value-adding" to their paid duties:

> I guess one of the issues I would think about is … that we tend to put an awful lot into our teaching, and do a lot of pastoral care, and a lot of extra work, give students a lot of feedback. So I think the "value adding" that we do is very important, and it's not just academic … it's the whole person … But I think the casual workforce that we had has made an enormous contribution, I think, to the students that we've dealt with, and to the community, and to the University. Because I think most of us have gone above and beyond well and truly over all these years. And I mean, we still have huge numbers of casual staff and they're carrying a lot of the load of the teaching. (Dr Susan West, Australian History lecturer)

The heavily casualised labour force in OFP was discussed in Chapter 6. As student numbers grew, more casual staff were employed to accommodate the teaching needs. In 2010 a number of existing staff were interviewed for full time or fractional appointments to their existing positions. While this provided some security for those staff, there remained heavy reliance on casual staff to fill the gaps. For some lecturers, as was alluded to above, this value-adding was in spite of the exigencies of casual employment:

> And a lot of that has been the commitment of the people working there. And that's not just the lecturers, it's also the people in the office. It's something that gets hold of you. Um, it's a very rewarding experience, being able to change lives. But it isn't always easy with the red tape kind of thing. The sort of feeling that, OK, you're down there at the bottom, and you're being told what to do from up top and nothing much is going back up. Well they don't want much to go back up. But then, I'm a cynic. It's sort of, you know, instructions down, information up. And what happens is all a great mystery at times. And some of that, of course, is the effect of being isolated from the community because you're only working part time casual … One of the things I valued personally, though, was that it was academic work, it had that orientation, it wasn't just sort of remedial stuff. But it was aspirational. I found that valuable, and also a case of you had that within the restrictions of casual work. You had a fair bit of autonomy in what you chose to do and how you chose to go about it. (Dr Ruth Lunney, English Literature lecturer)

Enabling educators were conscious of juggling many responsibilities, to the students, to the Centre and to the University and their loyalty to all three sometimes took priority over their own career ambitions. Because of their dedication, the student-centred andragogical approach of the enabling educators was beginning to have an effect on the teaching and learning culture at UON.[17] One former convenor of OFP said:

> There is a slowly growing recognition, I think, that Open Foundation … because of the academic end, know a lot about teaching and learning for non-traditional, particularly low SES students and that the University needs to get a whole lot better at that at the Undergraduate level. I think there's a slowly increasing awareness of that and I think we have had some impact and I think that is going to increase, slowly. (Dr Barry Hodges)

Some concluding comments on the impacts of OFP on the University of Newcastle

The impacts of OFP on UON have been multiple. It has brought students and revenue to the university, it has demonstrated the benefits of implementing an equity agenda, it has raised the profile and reputation of UON. While the character of OFP changed from a philanthropic endeavour that promoted the welfare of others, this spirit continued as its focus became more academic. As leaders such as Professor Seamus Fagan lobbied to raise the profile of the program through increased staffing and developing a research profile, the program continued to grow and form an integral part of UON's operations. Opportunities were provided for staff to contribute their experience and research to the field of enabling

[17] In Student Feedback on Courses provided by UON for Semesters 1 and 2, 2017 on every measure including Satisfaction, Relevance, Feedback, Assessment, Challenge, Outcomes, Resources, Organisation, Structure, Teaching, Learning Activities and Support, English Language and Foundation Studies (in which OFP is situated) outperformed Undergraduate courses. For teaching in both semesters, the mean for ELFSC was 0.3 higher than for UON as a whole.

education in Australia and develop standards of best practice that have been recognised in teaching and learning awards.

Impacts of Open Foundation on the Hunter and Central Coast Regions

As part of their oral history interviews, past and current staff of the University were asked what impact they thought OFP had on the regions in which the program was taught. Their reflections encompassed many of the aspects that were seen as impacts on the university itself, including economic factors, however, the emphasis was wider. Economic factors included returns to the regions, more candidates for professional employment, expansion of human capital and resources and educational opportunities for the regions. Impacts similar to those discussed above were: advancing a regional and national reputation; honouring and embracing the regions' equity agenda; as well as broader social impacts including enculturation of the regions, and contributing to personal, family and community enrichment.

It would be difficult to quantify the economic return to the regions without being able to interview all students who moved on to professional careers. As discussed in Chapter 9, not all students surveyed improved their economic situation, but for those who did, the flow-on effect to their families and service industries was no doubt significant. One former lecturer considered this effect:

> Well, it's certainly had an impact on hundreds and thousands of students' lives. When you think of the numbers of students that have gone through the Open Foundation course and each found their own pathway to what they've wanted to do. Whether they've just done it for pleasure or they've done it to actually attain work, it's actually been an opportunity for them to gain entry to University ... On a whole number of levels, it's been wonderful for the Hunter. Certainly economically, if you thought about it economically alone, it's probably brought so many people to the area. And then in turn those people have often got work in the area and then they spend their money in the area. So they work and live in the area. So if you were just thinking about it from purely economic grounds which are often an indicator for a lot of people, that alone, there has to be people here that have got much better incomes. (Dr Angela Cowan, Social Enquiry lecturer)

As discussed in Chapter 6, lecturers were aware that OFP brought some students to the region specifically to enrol in this tertiary preparation course. Anecdotal evidence suggests they came from places like Tamworth, Perth and Sydney. Being a university located in a region, students often had commitments that did not allow them the flexibility to move to other locations for study or work, so there were economic benefits of these people remaining in the regions. An investigation of the postcode of survey respondents revealed that 90% of this sample had remained in the regions after completing OFP.

The idea that their journey to a professional destination began in OFP and therefore served the region by allowing people the opportunity to fill higher level jobs in their home location was considered an appealing and useful aspect of this tertiary pathway:

> When they come here they are over twenty one, so they already have, usually, a family base here. They've come to this University because it's in their family region, their family home and this is where their connections are. They get their degree and they want to come back here. So … it improves the overall economy of the region because they are locals, retraining, and coming back with a higher level of skill and training and working in the community. So economically, it's of benefit to the local community. (Cathy Burgess, Science lecturer)

The opportunity for people to gain good economic return for their educational endeavours and providing for their families was commented on as a regional impact of OFP as well as the capacity for the 'ripple effect' discussed in Chapter 10 to influence others:

> On the regions, oh, I just think that opportunity for so many people to access education and to gain a good livelihood. I just think that the flow on effects for that, and then the examples that are set for younger people … some of them are back in education and teaching, you know, and at all different levels, and performing well in organizations. And now they're becoming experts in their fields. (Chris Campbell, Counsellor)

In the case of the Hunter region, the need to transition from an economy based on blue collar occupations to Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) jobs and white collar industry via retraining and education led to another important impact OFP had on the region. In the case of Newcastle, a number of respondents saw it as a steel town in transition. The former dominance of the steel industry, in decline since 1983 and ended in 1999 with the closure of the BHP steelworks, was being superseded by the need for tertiary educated professionals. In this regard, the impact of OFP in facilitating that transition was deemed:

> Probably immeasurable ... I had a kind of stereotypical view of Newcastle [as a steel town] … when I got here, the steelworks had announced they were closing down. And the Hunter had to undergo a transformation from having a majority of its employees male, male employment being dominant [in the region] with steel making and mining to something else, and the majority of its female employment probably being in nursing, teaching and retail. So the Hunter had to have an educated workforce and the opportunities were probably only going to be mainly for educated people. A lot of the traditional jobs, high paying traditional jobs anyway, were disappearing. So I suspect without necessarily quite planning it that way, the people

> have made that happen. They've decided to come to University in order to get a job, in order to move on. So I'd say the transformation of the Hunter which has happened over the last twenty years has been fed to a very large extent by education … And Open Foundation is central to that … So the people who were opposing it were just blinkered to just the growth of population, the changing nature of the workforce, the changing nature of education and just the basic social need for an educated population. And the Enabling Programs, to get back to them, they are this means of saying to all these people … who have got ambition but haven't got a UAI or whatever "Here's your chance". (Professor Brian English, former Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic)

Kember et al comment that "developed economies can only be competitive if they make the transition from an industrial or manufacturing focus towards knowledge-based activities."[18] UON was involved in assisting this transition with companies like BHP and would actively recruit students with this economic shift in mind. Workers who were made redundant were offered the opportunity to retrain and many who had trade qualifications but did not matriculate entered HE through OFP. The transition from coal dominance in the region that resulted in higher unemployment during the industry's decline was another feature commented upon by one respondent:

> I think that its [OFPs] long term benefit will be getting out to communities that have been disadvantaged that education is important and can transform their lives … I do think that because of the nature of employment especially in the Hunter that we will be around for a long time and we will be needed because of that. So we are making an impact, but it depends on how the resources boom is happening. (Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Director)

Former students had been observed undertaking a host of new professional appointments that meant they were entering the employment market, but at a higher level of responsibility than previously:

> I mean I was going somewhere yesterday and … someone said "Hello Jill". I didn't recognize him. This handsome young man, he's now manager of this [outlet]. They're [students] all over the place … So, out and about in the community doing better jobs than they would have done. (Dr Jill Bough, Program Convenor)

A number of respondents wished to emphasize that regional gains were not just economic, that the students themselves formed a valuable human resource to the regions:

[18] Kember., Lee and Li, "Cultivating a sense of belonging in part-time students," 327.

> When you think of the large number of people who've gone through the program, then clearly it's had a greater impact than the Hunter and Central Coast regions appreciate and we probably ought to be doing more to let them know that we're really developing a human resource that will benefit their communities. So one can't quantify it, but one can certainly speculate that it's quite immense. (Professor Trevor Waring, former Chancellor)

For the lecturers, education was seen as a right for all who wished to access it, not a privilege of the wealthy, so widening educational participation was viewed as an important initiative within the regions:

> The very fact that it's transformed people's lives in the sense that education's just not exclusively for those who are wealthy, that education's a possibility for whole groups of people, you know, for working class people, for those who are on minimum incomes, for refugees, everybody's got the right to have an education and an opportunity to learn. (Dr Angela Cowan, Social Enquiry lecturer)

The opening up of alternative pathways to tertiary study meant that people had what is referred to as a "second chance" to realise their dreams and potential:

> I'm sure it's had a big effect in terms of increasing the number of people, you know, giving them a second chance at education. And I think the knowledge that it's there, that it's available probably has an effect. You know, it might even mean some people leave school when they hate school, because they do know there's another way in. (Dr Susan West, Australian History lecturer)

As a means of further education, OFP was seen by respondents as a worthwhile experience that had positive effects on people's lives:

> I suppose I can only speak from my experience and from the people I came in contact with, but I'd say it's very positive. I don't know anybody who would say it wasn't worthwhile. (Mrs Helen Waring, former student)

Educational incentives such as OFP were considered particularly important for areas like the Central Coast, which had higher than average levels of socio-economic disadvantage:[19]

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[19] https://profile.id.com.au/central-coast-nsw/employment-status? Reports that almost 40% of the population over 15 years earned $500 or less, 41.8% of the population had no post school qualifications and only 14% held a Bachelor's degree or higher. http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary&region=102&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&geoconcept=REGION&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA&regionLGA=REGION&regionASGS=REGION The Central Coast has lower average total household income of $41,771 (compared to $44.950 Australia wide) and a higher unemployment rate at 6.9 while the Australian average is 5.6. Approximately

> I think that people realized that here on the Central Coast this program is very, very important. There are so many of our students whose families have never had anything to do with education, apart from, you know, compulsory years at school. Um, and they realized in fact, how good our students were and how important it was for them to come through into their [undergraduate] courses, into their faculties, and we grew. (Dr Jill Bough, former Central Coast Campus Program Convenor)

As has been discussed elsewhere, the fact that people could access an alternative pathway was seen to have become a normalised educational experience, a route they could take if and when they chose:

> Um, well, I think people are very much more inclined to see the University as part of their lives. When they were first coming out, the University was some weird, remote place that they'd never had any dream of going to, and now, of course, it is a much more integrated part of the community in both areas [Hunter and Central Coast], I would think. And it's something they would expect to be able to go to, or their children to go to. So I think that's a very important impact. (Dr Jean Talbot, English Literature lecturer)

Respondents considered that OFPs reputation as an alternative means of entering university was extensive:

> Well, I think it is very significant. I mean it is talked about in the region, you know people say "I did" or "I'm going to do the Open Foundation Program". People know of it .. the community I think, to a degree, knows of it. It's meant that the region has had a probably disproportionately large cohort of students come through the University that wouldn't otherwise have done so … So I think that it's had huge benefits in the region. I mean it must be in some way significant socially and economically. I don't know if any of that has ever been measured, but you know, it's influence is profound, I think, in the region … in terms of numbers I don't know what the total number of people that have done the Open Foundation … about 26,000 people, compare that with the current population of the region which is about half a million I think, something like that, it is a big proportion. And everybody who has done the program has family and friends who know they have done the program, so lots of people know about it. I would hazard a guess that maybe 25% of the population of the Hunter would know … about, or even know somebody who has

13.5% of the population was on tax benefit. In terms of education only 8.5% had tertiary qualifications and 1.7% had postgraduate qualifications.

> done the Open Foundation Program. You know, it really is very significant. Yes, great from that point of view. (Joe Whitehead, Earth Science lecturer)

Another respondent commented on the difficulty of quantifying the impacts, but observed that students who traditionally came from the Hunter Valley coalfields inland from Newcastle and were previously less likely to enrol were now appearing in her classes:

> We're seeing a few more people from the Hunter, as in Cessnock, Kurri, Maitland, coming into our programs.[20] Originally, and I'm originally from Cessnock myself, it was very rare to see someone from Cessnock coming into the program. (Mandy Bowden, Mathematics lecturer)

Respondents who had themselves been students in OFP often referred to their own experience when reflecting on the regional impacts:

> My opinion on that would be that it's given many people an opportunity to pursue their educational goals that they may not otherwise have ever pursued. I never thought I would go to University. And it was probably only nine months after I'd had my second son and I had a really lovely midwife deliver him, and I thought that's what I want to be. And I was in the car driving to the shops or something and I heard on the radio an ad about "Did you want to study? If you don't think you've got enough qualifications you may want to try Open Foundation". And so I rang the Uni, and that's how I found out about it and that's how I ended up coming to Uni. And I did it here at Ourimbah campus, started in 1998, and I've never really left the place because I was employed well before I finished my degree, and have been in support roles since that time … I promote it far and wide, you know, among friends and family and acquaintances. And people sometimes ask me "What made you go back to Uni at thirty, thirty one?" And I just say "Well I just heard about Open Foundation and thought, well, I'll give it a go". And I do, I spruik it everywhere anyone asks about it. And I would think that most Open Foundation students would do the same. The experience is wonderful. I think it's probably helped the Central Coast and Hunter reach a lot more students that would never have come to University. (Michelle Vincent, former student and Disability Officer)

Another regional impact was the increasing amount of research about enabling education that was emanating from those programs:

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[20] These locations were traditionally marked as 'working class' and the workforce was employed in blue collar industries such as mining. Geographical distance from the University and lack of direct transport made it difficult for large sectors of the population to engage with HE. In addition, local traditions of manual labour and working class pride created cultures in which a certain habitus developed that dissuaded people from furthering their education.

> I think there is now a greater recognition about how important this is, and I think setting up the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education [CEEHE][21] is an indication that they [UON] see it as important … two years ago we got an Associate Professor of Research … We realised that there are a number of things, our academic staff have got to produce research, but also for the sector, the sector needs a lot of research which is important, like what you're doing. This is how an enabling program makes a difference. (Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Director)

Respondents also focussed on issues related to improving equity in the regions and changing the traditional working class habitus to one better suited to contemporary society. They especially commented on a few main areas of equity: regional disadvantages characteristic to the Hunter and Central Coast; matters relating to overcoming class and low socio-economic disadvantage; issues relating to gender inequality; problems faced by refugees and finally, age barriers. Often these areas are intertwined and the focus on educational disadvantage and improving educational outcomes as a way of ameliorating these areas of inequality was highlighted. Underpinning respondents' observations was the idea that habitus could be changed through education and that institutionalised cultural capital would go some way toward bringing about that change. The interconnected nature of disadvantage and tailoring it to its regional context was expressed in the following way:

> I've often wondered whether we'd be better with a smaller program. But then, the need is there. If we don't exist where else would they [students] have gone? So I think … without enabling programs in the Hunter and Central Coast areas there would be a lot more disadvantage. And it's not just economic, it's cultural disadvantage. It's family disadvantage and things like that. So I think our impact is greater than we even know … Ah, I think it's significant in its core beliefs, that enabling education is something that represents this area. Traditionally both Central Coast and the Hunter have had low engagement in tertiary education. So I think it's part of, as people have started to use the term, it might be overused, the DNA of the University, that we have to cater for our locality. And in our locality there is less engagement in tertiary education,[22] so I think we serve a very important purpose in that. (Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Director)

Another former Director also saw the importance of a regional focus in his response to what impact OFP had had on the regions:

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[21] CEEHEE was established at UON in 2013

[22] http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary&region=111&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&geoconcept=REGION&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_NRP9_LGA&regionLGA=REGION&regionASGS=REGION reported that 11.7% of the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie region had a Bachelor's degree and 2.8% had postgraduate qualifications based on 2011 census data.

> One of the reasons I think the Open Foundation has been such an important thing is that this whole area, if you look at any of the statistics, back forty years or so, this area has been way behind Australian averages in school attendance, people leave school earlier, way behind in an economic status, most of the important social indicators said this. We needed to do something here that would make a difference to the population and, that's why I think the founding of the Open Foundation was such an important thing. And this whole region was educationally deprived and it needed a new impetus, not just a welfare answer, it needed someone to do something about it, not just social support … I wrote, while I was Director of the unit, a response to the Federal Government. They were holding an enquiry at the time into teaching of courses like the Open Foundation, and I wrote a quite lengthy document which constructed the argument for such a course in terms of the social and economic deprivation in this area, but also arguing that it shouldn't be removed from the University and put in TAFE [Technical and Further Education] because what a course like the Open Foundation did was not only to act, as it were, as a substitute for matriculation, but it actually induced people into the University. They were there, on campus with all the other students, they could use the library, they could join in the social life of the University, and so as well as equipping them with lecturing material to get into tertiary studies, socially it made them members of the University by the time they could get in and enrol. And I thought this was a much better thing than doing something like the Distance course as a sort of makeup of the Leaving Certificate and in a different sort of institution where they didn't have those advantages. (Associate Professor Ralph Robinson, former lecturer and Director)

In terms of class, another respondent who commented on the changes he had seen since moving to the area. He felt that the increase in educated citizens had had an impact on raising the class position of many Novocastrians:

> When I first came to Newcastle in 1987, BHP [steelworks] was still here. Downsizing was still here. It was a working class town. It was a seriously working class town. It had a culture of domestic violence ... Some of it, I think, is a change in the way Newcastle in particular, and Lake Macquarie and the Hunter generally sees itself, particularly Lake Macquarie and Newcastle.
>
> **Would you say gentrified?**
>
> Middle class-ified (laughs). The fact that the biggest employer is now the Hunter New England Health Service and the University, I don't know what proportion of local employment that is, but it's pretty damn big. Industry is far smaller. A lot of the people who came out of those industries, used to work in those industries, I suspect have gone through Open Foundation. And they have learned you don't just necessarily go down to the Pub after a lecture, you can also go and have a coffee after a lecture … And given all that, I am sure we have had an impact, because we

> put those people there and more of them are non-traditional students coming from low SES backgrounds, or working backgrounds who are changing into more middle class kinds of occupations. (Dr Barry Hodges, Philosophy lecturer and Program Convenor)

The fact that both the Hunter and Central Coast regions were characterised by higher than average levels of students from low socio-economic backgrounds was a particular feature of both UON and its OFP.

The Central Coast region, as mentioned previously, was especially known for the proportion of low SES residents who might benefit from higher education:

> The Central Coast has a significantly higher level of low SES students too in that region. The growth in the program is extraordinary, both campuses … The growth at the Ourimbah campus is exponential. And those students end up being the mainstays … of the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Teaching Programs and Bachelor of Nursing Programs and so on, particularly on the Ourimbah campus. There's large numbers of our students that make up a bigger proportion of the students in those degrees than they proportionately might up here [Callaghan] because of the numbers. So a big effect on that, on those regions. (Di Rigney, Registrar)

One way in which low SES was acknowledged was through the allocation of scholarships on both campuses for students from disadvantaged backgrounds transitioning into undergraduate programs.

While many respondents commented on class, some saw the OFP as a means of achieving gender equity, particularly in the Central Coast region:

> One other thing that does come to mind, and this has happened on quite a few occasions, is that there has been a number of women who have been looking for this additional something in their lives, some meaningful purpose in their lives, and they're in class, but their husbands don't approve and are not providing the support at home to back this up. And in some cases that's been by refusing to look after children and just making life difficult at home. So that person's studies are either interrupted, or maybe do not work out for the best. And you know, in some of those cases the people have left the course. In other cases they've persisted and gone on, so I just thought I'd mention that as another little personal complication that I have observed. (Terry Mather, Mathematics lecturer)

Another former Program Convenor mentioned the value of the program for single mothers:

> Many of them, as we all know, are single mothers, coping with all sorts of troubles and problems. And they just would not have travelled to Newcastle. I mean, they just wouldn't have come. So all those hundreds that have been through here, I would say, whether they went on to further education, whether they got a better job or not, I would say has had an amazing impact because they will now know the value of education as they are bringing up their children and will probably, you know, help them, and tell them that even if they didn't do well at the HSC [Higher School Certificate], you know, there is always, they will know there are other pathways and other opportunities. So again, it is something you can't measure, but I would say it has been tremendous. (Dr Jill Bough, Program Convenor)

In terms of achieving equity goals, it was also noted that OFP had also had some impact on refugees in the region:

> I do know that there is certainly one guy who is a big advocate, who works for Northern Settlement Services. He's from Sierra Leone … He's a student here at University doing a Masters as well. And I know that he has recommended this program to refugee boys. There are problems in the community in Newcastle with refugees, with African refugees because of the culture and a lot of different reasons I don't really want to go into. But I think that Open Foundation has provided that community with a structured pathway which they wouldn't have had otherwise because of their disrupted education, because of language issues, the fact that it's a free program and the fact that it's a pathway to University. So a lot of the students and people in that community, I'm generalizing now, but they have aspirations to higher education, to do jobs that are not menial labouring sort of jobs, which is where they tend to sit because they haven't had access to education. So it's just a really great pathway for those people. (Evonne Irwin, ESL Advisor)

Addressing access and equity for mature age students was another issue raised by respondents. Former lecturer Terry Ryan observed that at the Central Coast campus the majority of students in his undergraduate courses were mature age, that he felt was quite extraordinary and led him to conclude that: "clearly the program had had a big impact down there." All these respondents saw OFP as a vehicle to achieve equity in a broad range of areas of disadvantage and expressed their willingness to tackle these issues with education as a tool.

In terms of broader social impacts and serving regional communities, it was suggested that there were multiple impacts of OFP on the regions that were often interconnected. Some related to the effects upon students which, while at one level were individual, such as providing hope for people's futures or a sense of belonging, also translated to communities

as the flow-on effects of OFP were widely felt. One long-time former lecturer, Program Convenor and Deputy Director commented:

> I think the impact is enormous, you know, I really do. I think that there's an impact on individuals, and a "ripple effect" on to their families, friends and associates. There's an economic benefit to the region that would be worth studying. There's an impact on the University and the student body, and an impact on us the staff teaching and administering the program as well. You know I feel that I'm a better person for the experiences that I've had in being engaged with Open Foundation both as a teacher and as an administrator. (Dr Keryl Kavanagh, lecturer and Deputy Director)

Some concluding comments about local and regional impacts

Impacts of OFP have been shown by to be far reaching. What has been shown throughout this thesis to be a benefit at the level of the individual student has had flow-on effects for the university and the region. When people gain a higher level of education, a wider set of professional skills and institutional cultural capital, the regions also benefit. In at least 45% of cases students had, at the time of survey, improved their financial status making the region an economic beneficiary. Many more respondents expected to improve their economic situation in the future. These same skills and quality students, while providing embodied cultural capital for the individual, also benefitted the regions by raising its academic capital.

Lives had been enriched by offering the opportunity or 'second chance' to return to study and this resulted in self-growth, a habitus that was comfortable in their new domain, and the building of social and professional networks within the regions. Regional impacts were understood as including a higher number of professionals who remained in the region to work and contribute to the lives of others in the region. An investigation by postcode of survey respondents indicated that 90% had remained in the Hunter and Central Coast regions. These people could therefore be regarded as a human resource or capital, as they spread out into a diverse range of occupations and improved the educational quality of the regions. The broader social impacts included, as one respondent put it, "leavening the cultural input" of the regions as well as providing community input and participation and drawing attention to the important role UON plays in its regions.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been twofold: to reflect on the history of OFP by giving voice through oral history evidence to some of the key personalities involved in UON's Open Foundation Program; and to explore some of the impacts of OFP on students, staff, the University and the regions in which it is taught. This conclusion presents the major findings of research into these two areas and argues that the OFP functions as a vehicle for drawing out and enabling untapped talent in the areas it serves.

A written history of OFP has previously only covered the first few years of the program. This thesis has covered a forty year span from 1974 in order to trace some of the key developments. Oral history methodology has contributed insights to OFP that may have been lost as time passes and as people forget or are no longer with us. My own positioning as author of this thesis, former student and long-time lecturer in OFP, meant that I had an awareness of the role interview respondents played and their contribution to, and observations of, the history and impacts of OFP. The interviews collected are valuable records of the program and were often punctuated with laughter as staff recalled amusing anecdotes or, for those who knew the founder of the program, Brian Smith, a recount in Brian's accent of something he might have said. The interviews were also reflective, thoughtful and demonstrated a deep knowledge of OFP.

Respondents to the student survey also contributed valuable insights into the student experience of OFP. In many instances people included additional comments in the margins or on the back of the survey to provide a fuller account. I recall opening one survey and an envelope full of brightly coloured confetti of all different shapes dispersed across my office desk. This student, like many others, left little notes on the survey form to indicate how grateful they were for the opportunity OFP afforded them. In fact, on the very first day the surveys could possibly have been returned in the post, a huge bundle was delivered. One of my supervisors commented it was as if these people were "busting to tell their stories". The survey response rate was high, 42% of the register of willing participants, particularly given the comprehensive nature of questions that covered their experiences before, during, and after completing OFP. The richness of the data, and the often candid accounts provided, have left a wealth of material that encourages many more publications.

The theoretical framework for this thesis, as discussed in Chapter 2, utilizes Bourdieu's interconnected concepts of field, cultural capital and habitus because, as Bourdieu explained, they are crucial to understanding social practice. His work on social reproduction through education has provided an understanding of why people from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to be disadvantaged. However, Bourdieu left spaces in his theory that permit the conceptualisation of how things might be different, how social structures can change and people's lives can be transformed through education, and this lies at the heart of this research. Establishing an awareness of the power dynamics of particular fields, such as enabling education, as well as their history is important in understanding how they

operate and how the OFP has been shaped by these factors. As Ramsay's[1] contribution to scholarship in the field of enabling education shows, while there was a push toward creating equitable futures in Australian tertiary education, nevertheless, the field remained marginalised, and as some oral history respondents commented, had lesser status than equivalent academic positions in other parts of the university.

Director Seamus Fagan proposed the inspired idea for a national body of enabling educators, and a growing number of advocates of enabling education, including OFP staff, began to focus their attention on establishing an association to lobby for this field and to promote research on this important and growing area. Harrison and Waller expressed the equity aims for this field as having far reaching consequences for the nation as a whole:

> The overarching aim of widening participation is to make the university population more representative of the population as a whole, and one strand of this is to encourage participation from the lower socio-economic groups.[2]

The aim of changing attitudes and raising educational ambitions was led, in no small part, by OFP at Newcastle.

In assessing the impact of the program on individual students, Bourdieu's theory was useful. His conceptualisation of cultural capital was used in this thesis to explain how in both its institutionalized form, as qualifications, and its embodied form, as internalized skills and confidence, OFP students were able to use this new currency. Their responses to the questionnaire show that OFP provided a bridge from earlier phases of their lives, to new futures. Some told of their new occupations, but for many, the important shift was a conceptual change, a change of habitus, where even short periods of enrolment made a positive impact on self-identity. Claussen and Osborne argue that one of the challenges of education "is to increase a student's stock of the dominant cultural capital, regardless of the nature of any prior capital they may, or may not, have acquired".[3] The data produced for this thesis confirms this proposition. Bourdieu's concept of habitus was also a useful theoretical tool, because it explained how people's dispositions could change. A new, transformative habitus, contributed to people feeling more comfortable in the academic environment. This enabled them to contribute to society as a 'fish in water' where their disposition and tastes complemented their talents, expressed by respondents as the capacity to lead more fulfilling lives.

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[1] Eleanor Ramsay, "Blurring the boundaries and re-thinking the categories: Implications of enabling education for the mainstream post-compulsory sector." *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 44(3), November (2004): 273-305.

[2] Neil Harrison and Richard Waller "We blame the parents! A response to 'Cultural capital as an explanation of variation in participation in higher education' by John Noble and Peter Davies (British Journal of Sociology of Education 30(5)." *British Journal of Sociology of Education 31(4) (2010): 478.*

[3] Claussen and Osborne, "Bourdieu's Notion of Cultural Capital and Its Implications for the Science Curriculum," 59.

This thesis has shown how and why such an enabling program was established at the University of Newcastle in the early 1970s. In detailing a broad history of OFP across more than four decades, oral history respondents indicated the intention was to better link the UON and its community. This goal became the driving force behind the Short Committee's decision to establish a Department of Community Programmes in 1973. One of the Programme's briefs was to conduct professional development courses that included some run in conjunction with the Trade Union Training Authority. This collaboration demonstrates a desire to cater to working class people in the community. The person charged with setting up a mature entry tertiary preparation program was Dr Brian Smith, the first permanent director of Community Programmes. Based on research he had done in Britain on the Open University and a study tour of several European countries' adult education programs, Dr Smith had several criteria he wished to institute in what he named Open Foundation. These included being as flexible as possible in entry requirements. Only Australian citizenship and an age requirement, originally 25 years but reduced to 20 years over the course of time, were instituted.

While there was some opposition to OFP and allowing non-traditional students to enter the 'ivory tower', the early years of OFP were also characterised by camaraderie among the staff and a flexible and experimental curriculum that included a core subject originally entitled Humanity and Society, but soon became "Political Man", an innovative attempt to expose students to Dr Smith's vision of a liberal education. This subject was long talked about and fondly remembered by both staff and students, but was discontinued due to difficulties of all enrolees being able to meet the time schedule. As other subjects were added, Smith gave staff a great deal of latitude to try new ideas. Some staff recalled this teaching as the most rewarding of their entire career. As the program grew and funding became available to include a greater range of subjects, more choice and an orientation towards meeting vocational needs has become apparent.

Part of Dr Brian Smith's initiative during the early years of OFP was to run a residential school that provided access to both inspirational academic lectures and to a social occasion in which students had unlimited access to lecturers outside the constraints of the institution. These events, held at Morpeth Conference Centre, were stimulating and fun, and also enabled lecturers to get to know their students better. As a learning environment these weekends were an opportunity for students to participate in a variety of lectures in disciplines in which they were not necessarily enrolled, but which contributed to their overall education. As an andragogical tool, such events provided an alternative space in which to practice the art of education. Although discontinued, it gives pause to think about the effects of the learning environment and how things can be different. Students were also invited during the early years of the program to public lectures organised by the Community Programmes Department that exposed them to famous speakers with national and international reputations, truly memorable occasions.

Reflecting on over forty years of OFP and taking an historical approach, detailed in Chapters 5 and 6, was deemed important by the current Director who stated: "We need time to

reflect. We need time to look back. I think we need to recognise heroes, people who have made a huge difference to our programs and to peoples' lives." Another academic present from the program's initiation remarked that given its beginning in 1974 as a pilot program, an historical analysis of education during the 1970s, discussed in Chapter 5, is relevant to understanding the OFP story given the political context of the time. This era created openings and optimism in society and a fruitful period in which OFP could begin to develop. Education was valued as a right rather than a privilege. In addition, the community focus of the university at that time when, according to John Hill: "9% of the University's revenue had to be devoted to community projects of one sort or another" was prioritised over making money or saving money.

As the university's attitude to OFP changed from philanthropy to a tighter academic focus, more and more students were attracted to the possibilities OFP could offer. While the student sample collected for this research was predominantly female and does not reflect the gender balance over the years, which in 2013 was around 43% males,[4] roughly twice as many as my group of respondents, it nevertheless provides many insights into the student perspective. Their reasons for enrolling, analysed in Chapter 7, demonstrate that many needs were being fulfilled but that overwhelmingly, issues relating to self-identity were being tested and nurtured and vocational aspirations, while still a consideration, were not mentioned as frequently.

As OFP became established within UON and its benefits recognised for drawing student numbers and government funding, more attention was paid to meeting the academic support needs of this wide range of students. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and those who needed additional learning support, such as early school leavers, gained more attention. As well as stories of students generally, this thesis provides insights into how OFP students from some of these categories experienced entry into HE via OFP and their experience of the program and destinations after completing their studies. Their stories demonstrate the case for universities being aware of the importance of providing additional cultural capital to assist these students to succeed. Smit refers to uncritical use of the "disadvantage" discourse and argues that when students are framed as "lacking" or "inadequate" in some way, this masks the fact that they also have human potentials that can be realised at both personal and professional levels.[5] This is shown in Chapter 8 where the stories of students who found greater satisfaction in their lives and in some cases moved into a variety of professional careers were told. Smit argues that there needs to be thoughtful consideration of the readiness of higher education institutions to "respond to the diverse student body, and cultivate the will to learn in all our students"[6] because a deficit mindset perpetuates stereotypes and alienates those who have a willingness to engage with the educational enterprise. As the Director of a Disabled

[4] *ELFSC at a Glance*, 2013 reports just under 57% females were enrolled across all enabling programs in that year.
[5] Smit, "Towards a clearer understanding of student disadvantage in higher education", 369-380.
[6] Smit, "Towards a clearer understanding of student disadvantage in higher education," 378.

Students' Program commented: "It's not a deficit in talent; it's a deficit in ability to represent that talent."[7]

Promoting successful and inclusive education is not only a social responsibility, but "can now be found in the policies and plans of universities"[8] such as UON. In Australia, universities are subject to State and Federal equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation. Under such policies, both students and staff have rights and responsibilities to ensure equity of students with disabilities. It might be presumed that the habitus of universities has had to change to accommodate new laws and change the discourse from deficit to equality. The data collected for this research shows that consideration of the needs of these students is worth the effort.

As a means of promoting educational opportunities among students from low socio-economic backgrounds, this thesis has produced evidence both in the student survey data and in the oral histories, that widening access serves many purposes. It provides a learning environment in which lecturers were welcoming and accepting of inexperienced mature age students, it acts as an exemplar of what is possible to students' families, friends and peers and verifies that university is not out of their reach. People from any background could "have a go" and have a right to do so.

Chapter 9 provides details and commentary on the destinations of students upon completing OFP, it includes career outcomes, and the way that many OFP students embraced a lifelong learning approach where one in six of them proceeded to postgraduate study. Chapter 10 examined other impacts of OFP on students. As a personal experience, OFP added value. It showed students they were capable. In this sense, the embodied cultural capital derived from OFP could sometimes be regarded as more significant than the institutional cultural capital they gained, as self-growth was reported as making students' lives more meaningful. In learning to play the academic game, these students' habitus had also changed to accommodate this new experience.

Impacts of OFP on the University of Newcastle and its regions are discussed in Chapter 11. Staff who taught in OFP expressed their pride in contributing to the joy of learning experienced by their students and reported the satisfaction they derived from teaching in the program. When staff reflected on the impact OFP had on students their comments often turned to reflecting on what they, as teachers, brought to the students. Their philosophies of teaching provide insights into best practice in tertiary teaching. The impact of OFP on UON was also observed to raise its profile and goodwill in the community, where presenting a genuinely caring face to the public as a "people's" university, was a sign UON was there to serve all their needs, not just those of students who entered by traditional means. OFP was

[7] A Vollman,"Building Support Systems for Students with Disabilities", *INSIGHT into Diversity*, 86(3) (2016), 14.
[8] Chenoweth in Clapton, J. *A Transformatory Ethic of Inclusion. Rupturing concepts of disability and inclusion,* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2009), xiii.

also seen as enhancing UON's reputation as a national leader in enabling education, despite the fact that it had meagre beginnings and little acknowledgement from undergraduate programs where it was very much the 'poor relation' according to one lecturer and supported by many others in this thesis. Raising the research profile within OFP has also had an impact on enabling scholarship, culminating in the establishment of a new Centre for Excellence and Equity in Higher Education at UON, an important initiative in the HE sector.

Finally, the regional impact could be explained in terms of the combination of positive change in people's lives also having positive effects on regions. OFP was said to have a presence in the community. The numbers of people who had benefitted from or been aware of the opportunities OFP offered was vast. OFP provided human capital to the regions in the form of a better educated population and professional expertise that brought with it life experience. The extraordinary number of students going on to postgraduate studies as indicated in this research may be some indication of the attitude to lifelong learning and a desire to contribute to society as more informed and productive citizens.

While this thesis provides valuable insights into this program, there is still much research to be done. Space precluded, for example, a biography of Dr Brian Smith whose determination and visionary ideas provided such impetus to OFP. Further qualitative studies of people who have transitioned into disciplines such as medicine, engineering and law will make useful contributions to our understanding of OFP outcomes and to the idea that people from disadvantaged backgrounds can and do succeed in these disciplines. Recognition that learning is not just a cognitive pursuit but is also an embodied experience, is one area this thesis has raised as worthy of more research. More quantitative and longitudinal studies of educational outcomes using more sophisticated statistical analysis would be welcome as well as deeper insights into andragogy are yet to be undertaken.

There were strengths and limitations in this current study. The strengths were its comprehensive and multi-faceted approach, the use of student and staff voices to bring forth insights into the history of OFP that would otherwise have been lost and its multiple impacts as well as the comprehensive literature consulted to position the research findings both theoretically and within its educational field. Its limitations were the size of the student survey and the fact that 350 responses were not generalizable to the whole group. The reliance on self-report also has strengths and weaknesses. It has been identified by Williamson[9] as highly subjective due to discussion of feelings, experiences and emotions. She argues that the relationship between self-report and performance is problematic and should be treated with care. In the case of the student data, the respondents comprised a self-selected sample of former students who agreed to participate in research and were included on the PEPPR register. This willingness may have skewed the data to positive self-reports. In the interview data, the potential bias of long term staff may have led to a

[9] Ann Williamson, "Using self-report measures in neurobehavioural toxicity: Can they be trusted? *The 9th International Symposium on Neurobehavioural Methods and Effects in Occupational and Environmental Health, Neurotoxicology,* 28(2) (2007).

predisposition to find positive views on a program they had been closely associated with. In addition, the general nature of the questions which asked broadly about impacts and life change and was never intended to be a review of the program, may nevertheless be perceived as a tendency to report particular types of memory that might be seen as biased. The counter argument to this possibility is that despite all respondents being asked the same set of questions, the interviews were unstructured and the respondent was free to take the direction they chose. They were also provided the opportunity to amend their interview transcripts.

Another area that may be regarded as a limitation relates to the nature of "insider" research. The fact that the author had spent over 20 years lecturing in the program, was a factor critiqued in the Methodology chapter. It might be presumed that this could result in a loss of objectivity, compromise the researcher's or the respondent's role or place the researcher in an uncomfortable position. This was not the case, and interviews were often punctuated with laughter as respondents remembered amusing anecdotes and contributed important information about OFP. Although the issue of reliance on memory was critiqued in the methodology, it is nevertheless regarded as a significant means of eliciting information, especially within the oral history tradition. Further, the capacity of a single thesis to elaborate everything one would want to say about Open Foundation is necessarily limited.

Finally, the legacy of Dr Brian Smith's Open Foundation lives on, in students' stories and in the memories of the staff involved in the program. The irony is not lost that Dr Smith's interest in memory, published in his book of that name[10] deals with how the context of memory expands over time. This thesis found that, in the lives and memories of its students and its staff, after over forty years of operation, the Open Foundation has expanded far beyond Smith's original creation. The program illustrates how enabling education within the higher education setting can unleash hitherto untapped talent in adults, becoming a vehicle for profound personal, cultural, economic and societal transformation.

[10] Brian Smith, *Memory*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1966, 212.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Source, definition and significance of extracts relating to cultural capital from Pierre Bourdieu's primary sources

Source	"Definition"	Significance
Bourdieu, P and Passeron, J-C. *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, 1964). (in Prieur and Savage 2011: 568)	p.17 Students receive help from parents and are familiar with highbrow culture. They "derive from their background of origin habits, skills, and attitudes which serve them directly in their scholastic tasks… but they also inherit from it knowledge and know-how, tastes, and a 'good taste', whose scholastic profitability is no less certain for being indirect".	Transmission from family Influence of highbrow culture Inherited tastes Profitability
Bourdieu, Pierre. "The School as a Conservative Force." In *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education,* ed. J. Eggleston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974). (in Sullivan 2001: 894).	p. 32 "Education is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to the social gift treated as a natural one".	Link to educational reproduction
Bourdieu, Pierre and Passeron, Jean-Claude. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, 2nd ed Trans Richard Nice (London: Sage Publications, 1977a, 1990).*	p.30 "cultural capital ie. The cultural goods transmitted by the different family pedagogic actions, whose value qua cultural capital varies with the distance between the cultural arbitrary imposed by the dominant pedagogic action and the cultural arbitrary inculcated by the family pedagogic action within the different groups or classes". p. 47 cultural and social reproduction enable "possessors of the prerequisite cultural capital to continue to monopolize that capital".	Transmission from family Link to power

	p.71 Notes wanted to analyse action of inculcating communication as “primary principle underlying the inequalities in the academic attainment of children from the different social classes”.	Linguistic inequality
	p.73 “Students who reach higher education have necessarily undergone more stringent selection, precisely in terms of the criterion of linguistic competence”.	Linguistic inequality
	“Language is not simply an instrument of communication: it also provides, together with a richer or poorer vocabulary, a more or less, complex system of categories, so that the capacity to decipher and manipulate complex structures, whether logical or aesthetic, depends partly on the complexity of the language transmitted by the family. It follows logically that the educational mortality rate can only increase as one moves towards the classes most distant from scholarly language…”	
	p.74 Cultural capital is “identifiable by the father’s occupation”.	Identifier
	p.76 “If the proportion of working-class students entering university were significantly increased, those students’ degree of relative selection would, as it declined, less and less offset the educational hardships related to the unequal social-class distribution of linguistic and cultural capital. So we would see the reappearance of the direct correlation between academic performance and social-class background which, in higher education, is fully observed only in those areas least directly controlled by the school system…”	Educational inequality
	p.87 sees cultural capital and class ethos as convertible and can be cashed into a “relay of factors, different in structure for each category considered (social class or sex)… It is the system of factors, acting as a system, which exerts	Convertible to economic capital

	the indivisible action of a structural causality on behaviour and attitudes and hence on success and elimination, so that it would be absurd to try to isolate the influence of any one factor, or, a fortiori, to credit it with a uniform, univocal influence at the different moments of the process or in the different structures of factors”.	Systemic and structural factors and influences
	p.99 “An educational system based on a traditional type of pedagogy can fulfil its function of inculcation only so long as it addresses itself to students equipped with the linguistic and cultural capital – and the capacity to invest it profitably…”	Linguistic competence Investment
	p. 128 argues the education system rarely gives working class students “A practical and informal mastery of language and culture that can be acquired only in the domain-class family”.	Class reproduction
	p.210 refers to “legitimacy of exclusion” by education system.	Social exclusion legitimated
	Refers to perpetuation of cultural capital as “The unnatural idea of culture by birth presupposes and produces blindness to the functions of the educational institution which ensures the profitability of cultural capital and legitimates its transmission by dissimulating the fact that it performs this function. Thus, in a society in which the obtaining of social privileges depends more and more closely on possession of academic credentials, the School does not only have the function of ensuring discreet succession to a bourgeois estate which can no longer be transmitted directly and openly. This privileged instrument of the bourgeois sociodicy which confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged manages the more easily to convince the disinherited that they owe their scholastic and social destiny to their	Nurture not nature Education reproduces and transmits Institutionalized cultural capital Class reproduction

	lack of gifts or merits, because in matters of culture absolute dispossession excludes awareness of being dispossessed". ****	Promotes meritocracy Social exclusion
Bourdieu, Pierre. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." In *Power and Ideology in Education.* J. Karabel and A. H. Halsey eds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977b). (In Zimdars et al 2009: 650; Sullivan 2001: 894)	p.82 sees cultural capital as "a broad array of linguistic competencies, manners, preferences, and orientations" which he sees as "subtle modalities in the relationship to culture and language". (In Reay 2004: 74) p. 494 "By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture".	Linguistic and cultural competence Transmission from family
Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice, trans* Richard Nice (Cambridge: The university of Cambridge Press, 1977c).	p.89 Cultural capital sets up "divisions and hierarchies". It is a "classifying system". p.184 Academic degrees (and qualifications) are institutionalized mechanisms guaranteeing distribution of titles. Part of relations of dominations.	Social exclusion and inclusion Classifying techniques Institutionalized as titles or qualifications
Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, trans Richard Nice (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984).*	p.12 Notes educational capital not as strong in areas not influenced by teaching. p.53 "Schooling provides the linguistic tools and the references which enable aesthetic experience to be expressed and to be constituted by being expressed". p.70 "The embodied cultural capital of the previous generations functions as a sort of advance (both a head-start and a credit) which… enables the newcomer to start acquiring the basic elements of the legitimate culture… in the most unconscious and impalpable way – and to dispense with the labour of deculturation, correction and retraining that is needed to undo the effects of inappropriate learning".	Influence of education Linguistic competence Embodiment and inheritance

In Reay (1998)	p.114 what distinguishes the major classes derives from the volume of capital "understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital". Those who are best provided with CC down to those most deprived. p.142 "One of the most valuable sorts of information constituting inherited cultural capital is practical or theoretical knowledge of the fluctuations of the market in academic qualifications, the sense of investment which enables one to get the best return on inherited cultural capital in the scholastic market or on scholastic capital in the labour market, for example, by knowing the right moment to pull out of devalued disciplines and careers and to switch into those with a future, rather than clinging to the scholastic values which secured the highest profits in an earlier state of the market". p.261 sees teachers of HE as "cultural producers".	Resources and powers Inheritance Qualifications Investment Teachers as cultural producers
Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education,* ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986): 241-258. (in Reay 2004: 74-5).	p.243 Cultural capital "is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized into forms of educational qualifications". "Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, ie., in the form of long lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee".	Conversion Institutionalized as qualifications Exists in 3 forms: Embodied Objectified Institutionalized

	This explanation “made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success ie. The specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions”.	Basis of educational inequality Profit
	“But the yield from scholastic investment takes account only of monetary investments and profits, or those directly convertible into money”.	Yield on investment
	p. 244 “They fail to take systematic account of the structure of the differential chances of profit “.	Differential profit
	“They let slip the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment, namely, the domestic transmission of cultural capital”.	Educational investment by families
	Comments on “the contribution the educational system makes to the reproduction of the social structure by sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital… the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family”.	
	p.245 “Cultural capital can be acquired, to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, in the absence of any deliberate inculcation, and therefore quite unconsciously. It always remains marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition [which] help to determine its distinctive value”.	Unconscious acquisition of cultural capital Family acquisition determines value
	It can “combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, ie., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence”.	Link to symbolic capital

(in Werfhorst 2010: 159-60) (in Claussen and Osborne 2013: 59).	p.246 "the transmission of cultural capital is no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital, and it therefore receives disproportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies as the direct, visible forms of transmission to be more strongly censored and controlled". **Bourdieu (1986:46)** Cultural capital determines "at any given moment what it is possible for any individual to achieve". "The varied forms of capital are similar in that each "takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being."	Lack of recognition of antecedents Hereditary transmission Determines achievement Capital takes time to accumulate Capacity to produce profit Reproductive capacity
Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice,* trans Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).	p.57 refers to two types of capital: objectified and incorporated. p.64 Habitus "is the precondition for appropriate economic behaviour is the product of particular economic condition, the one defined by possession of the economic and cultural capital required in order to seize the 'potential opportunities' theoretically available to all". p. 124 "Just as economic wealth cannot function as capital except in relation to an economic field, so cultural competence in all its forms is not constituted as cultural capital until it is inserted into the objective relations set up between the system of economic production and the system producing the producers (which is itself constituted by the relationship between the educational system and the family). p. 125 "Capital is given the conditions of its full realization only with the appearance of an educational system, which awards qualifications durably consecrating the position occupied in	2 types of capital: Objectified and incorporated Seizing opportunities Cultural field Institutionalized cultural capital

	the structure of the distribution of cultural".	
Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power,* trans Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).	p.14-15 Editor's Introduction: "The terms used by Bourdieu to describe fields and their properties – market, capital, profit etc – are terms borrowed from the language of economics, but they are adapted for the analysis of fields which are not economic in the narrow sense". B. did not intend them only as economic transactions ie. economic reductionism. "It is important to see that his position is more complicated and more sophisticated than the charge of economic reductionism would suggest". Notes economics and arts are distinctive fields characterized by distinctive properties. p.24 credentials or qualifications "become a mechanism for creating and sustaining inequalities, in such a way that the recourse to overt force is unnecessary". p.25. It provides a justification for the established order. p.230 Comments on field of forces or "objective power relations imposed on all those who enter this field.."	Economic metaphor Credentials and qualifications Justification of dominant order Power relations
Bourdieu, Pierre and Wacquant, L. *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). (In Bennett and Silva 2011) (in Kloot 2009: 471)	p.99 Capital and field are "tightly interconnected." p.101 "capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field."	Interconnected concepts

APPENDIX 2

Source and definition of habitus in Pierre Bourdieu's primary sources

Education creates a "cultured habitus"	1967: 344
"is the universalizing meditation which causes an individual agent's practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less 'sensible' and reasonable"	1977: 79
"a system of lasting, transportable dispositions which, integrating past experiences and actions, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions"	1977b: 82-3 in Gaddis 2013: 3
Cultural capital flows from habitus	1977: 94
behaviour governed by "what is reasonable to expect"	1977: 226
Rooted in family history and early schooling	1977 in Horvat & Davis 2011: 144
Class embodiment such as gesture, elevated posture, slow glances typical of middle class	1984 in Reay 1995
Eating, speaking and gesturing	1984 in Reay 2004
Body is a "memory jogger… of complexes of gestures, postures and words – simple interjections of favourite clichés – which only have to be slipped into, like a theatrical costume, to awaken, by the evocative power of bodily nemesis, a universe of ready-made feelings and experiences"	1984: 474 in Wetherell 2012
Boundaries are set by habitus	1984: 475
"an attempt to overcome the latent determinism of structuralist theory" and central to a theory of action	1985a:
"a method for simultaneously analysing "the experience of social agents and… the objective structures which make this experience possible"	1988: 782
"meaning-made-body"	1990a: 43

Products of opportunities and constraints framing earlier life experiences which are "durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions"	1990a: 54
"a system of dispositions common to all products of the same conditionings"	1990a: 59
"expressed through durable ways of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking"	1990a: 70
"as the feel for the game is the social game embodied and turned into a second nature."	1990b: 63
"predisposes individuals toward certain ways of behaving. It is the basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for regularity of modes of practice"	1990b: 77
"A tendency to behave in ways that are expected of 'people like us' but no rules or principles dictate behaviour"	1990b: 77
"excludes certain practices which are unfamiliar to cultural groupings to which the individual belongs"	1990b: 77
"Individuals contain within themselves their past and present position in the social structure at all times and in all places, in the forms of dispositions which are so many marks of social position"	1990b: 82
"a wide repertoire of possible actions, simultaneously enabling the individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action"	1990b: 107
"as the product of social conditionings, and thus of history… is endlessly transformed, either in a direction that reinforces it, when embodied structures of expectation encounter structures of objective chances in harmony with these expectations, or in a direction that transforms it and, for instance, raises or lowers the level of expectations and aspirations" Can be built on contradictions, tensions even on instability	1990b: 116
"Just as no two individual histories are identical so no two individual habituses are identical"	1990c: 46 in Reay 2004

“the internalisation of the probabilities of access to goods, services and powers”	1992: 60
“Social reality exists… twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted.”	1992: 127
“is not static, not categorically immutable; its properties can evolve by degree in response to changing experiences and circumstances”	1992: 133
“The habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences… the habitus transformed by the action of the school, itself diversified, is in turn at the basis of all subsequent experiences… and so on, from restructuring to restructuring”. “Current circumstances are not just there to be acted upon, but are internalized and become yet another layer to add to those from earlier socialisations”.	1992: 134
Demonstrates “the ways in which individuals continually make and remake structure through their activities”	1992: 140
“The structure of people’s worlds is already predefined by broader racial, gender and class relations.”	1992: 144
“with the notion of habitus you can refer to something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit, while differing from it in one important respect. The habitus as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history, and that it belongs to a generic mode of thought… it is like property, a capital. And indeed the habitus is a capital, but one which, because it is embodied, appears innate.”	1993b: 86 in Nash 1999
“is a socialised body. A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world”	1998a: 81 in Reay 2004
Habitus moving to a new field can result in multiple identities	1999b: 511 in Reay 2004

Divided or cleft habitus	1999, 2000
“is a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions.”	2000: 82-3
“is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (eg., of language, economy, etc) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions”.	2000: 85
“the learned set of preferences or dispositions by which a person orients to the social world. It is a system of durable, transposable, cognitive ‘schemata’ or structures of perception, conception and action”	2002: 27 in Edgerton & Roberts 2014: 195
Is also subject to change through “socioanalysis… a sort of self-work that involves processes of ‘awareness and pedagogic effort”	2002: 29
“includes the permanent capacity for invention”	2004: 63

APPENDIX 3

Interview question schedule and student survey questionnaire

SEMI-STRUCTURED RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Below is a list of questions which will guide our discussion about the Open Foundation Program (OFP).

If you were a student in the Open Foundation Program:
What are your memories of OFP?
Of these, what was your most vivid memory?
What did you learn from OFP?
How did it assist you in your future endeavours?
What changes were made to your life as a result of enrolling in OFP?
What impact would you say OFP has had on you?
Would you regard OFP as a transformative experience?
What impact do you think it may have had on the Hunter and Central Coast regions?

If you were an administrator in the Open Foundation Program:
How did you become involved with OFP?
What are your recollections of the origins of OFP?
How significant was this program to UoN?
Why did the name of the program change over time?
What are your most vivid memories of administering OFP?
What are your memories of the impact of OFP on students?
Do you remember any specific stories of student journeys or conversations you have had with people about the program?
What observations can you make about the impact OFP had on students?
What impact do you think this program has had on the Hunter and Central Coast regions?
Is there anything else you can think of that might inform a history of the program: staff, events, funding issues, location of offerings?

If you taught in the Open Foundation Program:
What are your most vivid memories of teaching in OFP?
What knowledge do you have about the history of this program?
How did you become involved with OFP?
Did these students differ from other students you have taught?
What is your philosophy of teaching?
Did you need to employ particular learning techniques or strategies to teach this cohort?
How did you find the experience of casual/employment in OFP?
What observations can you make about the impact OFP had on the students you taught?
Do you recall any stories about student destinations?
What impact do you think this program has had on the Hunter and Central Coast regions?

If you were a counsellor or disability support officer:
Without disclosing anything confidential, what memories do you have of OFP students?
What do you know about the impact OFP has had on students?
What impact do you think OFP has had on the Hunter and Central Coast regions?
Did you find these students compare to undergraduates?
If different, how were they different?
What kinds of disabilities and problems did they have/encounter?

How did they attempt to succeed?
Could you comment on the resilience of these students?
How were they assisted within the program?
Do you have any other observations or memories about this cohort?

I very much look forward to our talk. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call me.

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee Approval no: H-2011-0015

STUDENT SURVEY

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

The researchers are very grateful for your assistance in helping us to understand the nature of the impacts of the Open Foundation Program (OFP).

Instructions: Please answer as many of the questions below as you are able. No question is compulsory.

Personal Details

Name	
Address	
Email	
Phone	

Sex (tick): M_____F_____ Country of birth: _____

Do you identify as Indigenous? (tick): Yes___ No___

Did you have a disability during OF? (tick) Yes___ No___

Were you enrolled in (tick box):

Part time (Callaghan)	Intensive (Callaghan)	Distance OF
Part time (Ourimbah)	Intensive (Ourimbah)	

Before

What was your age at time of enrolment in Open Foundation Program (OFP):_____

What year did you enrol?_____

What was your level of education reached prior to OFP entry?
_____

How did you hear about OFP?
_____

Why did you enrol (for example, did it coincide with a stage of life such as marriage, divorce, job loss, children starting school or leaving home)?
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

During

What subjects did you take in your OFP?

1.	2.

In what year did you complete OFP? _____

Briefly describe your overall experience of the OFP.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Did you make enduring friendships in/from the OFP? Yes___ No___

After

Did completing this program change your life in any way? Is so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Did you pursue a university degree(s) as a result? Yes___ No___

Which degree?

_____

In what year did you graduate from University of Newcastle or other university?_____

What career path(s) did you undertake?

_____

How did this pathway affect your economic situation? Improve___ Not improve___ No change___

Did your social or familial relationships change? Yes___ No___
If so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What other changes did OFP bring to your life?

_____

_____

_____

Would you be interested in discussing your experiences with the researcher?
Yes_____No_____

Do you wish to be informed of future publications relating to this research? Yes___No___

Thank you for participating in this survey.

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee Approval no: H-2011-0015

APPENDIX 4

Life changes of Distance students

Number	Sex	Age at entry	Degree entered	Career	Life change?
022	M	41	B. Science	Unable to commit to study. Remained in current occupation	"The learning experience gave me the desire to learn more and did change my direction in giving me more confidence. Awareness that study can enhance your life and gives you more self-confidence"
025	F	26	B. General Studies/B. Teaching	Primary teacher	"Completing the program gave me the confidence to complete further study"
033	F	52	Diploma Remedial Massage (TAFE)	Remedial massage therapist	"I became more confident that I could take up studies and enjoy it all; not feeling like I was too old to cope. In fact, surprising myself at how good a student I was and how well I did"
037	M	24	B. Commerce	Financial adviser	"Instilled skills in me to take study full time. Confidence to know that I could undertake study again"
058	F	35	B. Teaching	Primary teacher	"Started a teaching degree. Confidence to know you can still achieve a degree as a mature student"
062	F	44	No degree	No career	"Completing this program changed my life by teaching me new skills and learning how to use them

					in everyday life. It also gave me the opportunity to expand my limitations of past education through the subjects I undertook. It gave me the experience to help my children"
063	M	70	No degree but states "I am advised I am still eligible to enrol"	Retired	"The program stimulated my interest in the NSW Education system and enabled me to participate in High School life as a volunteer, eg. Plan-it Youth Mentor at [a number of Hunter] High Schools. Also mentoring students from refugee backgrounds at Callaghan College. Pleasant [changes] but not egotistic, self-satisfaction"
066	F	33	B. Nursing	Registered nurse – Emergency Department	"I changed careers! From an international flight attendant to a registered nurse in a busy ED. Crazy but I have never felt so valued and appreciated. I love my job and the skills I have learnt. No regrets!"
068	F	48	No degree	No career	"I feel satisfied with my life today"
078	F	26	Cert 1V Training and Assessment (TAFE)	Workplace educator	See Early School leaver section
086	F	38	B. Arts (Hons) PhD	Casual Academic	"Yes remarkably. I have been a teacher in OFP and taught First Year Australian History… Been to some great conferences and met some amazing people. Being taught to think

					analytically enhances my general outlook on the world around me”
152	F	32	B. Social Science	Community Welfare and TAFE teaching	“Yes. We were encouraged to enrol in Uni. The people I studied with were going onto Bathurst and I was told this was the preferred Uni if I wanted to work in DOCs. I was accepted to 3 Unis including Bathurst and began my studies … Although I didn’t go into DOCs I now teach for TAFE in the Health and Community section and I love my work. I developed a love of learning which I continue to follow”
153	F	29	B. Teaching (Primary)	Self employed	“Yes. I developed writing and office skills which I now use every day as my husband and I are now self-employed business owners. I approach extended learning, business and trade courses with confidence and achieve success, as well as progressing well through my degree units. Being able to identify and evaluate self-improvement, set and achieve goals, seek and use resources and information”
184	F	21	B. General Studies (Science)	Still studying	“I was able to apply knowledge I acquired from OFP to my daily duties in Health care. This enriched my overall experiences.

					Stimulated my want to learn”
211	F	37	B. Arts	Still studying	“Allowed me to continue Uni studies and confirmed my ability to learn and retain new things. It increased self-motivation and pride. [Provided] friendships and knowledge which I will now follow through with further study”
238	M	32	No degree	Remained in same job	“Made no difference to my career but gave me the confidence that I could achieve more qualifications if needed. A continuing interest in Linguistics and Sociology”
244	F	50	No degree	No career	“Didn’t finish.” “Not at all” re change to life
270	F	20	B. Business	Still studying	“Yes, I got into Uni”
306	F	32	B. Health Science (Health Information Management)	Health information management	“Yes. It was a very positive experience. I enrolled in a degree through a different Uni. Completing OFP was a great step for me, I went on and got a better job, further study. The Bridging courses were also excellent, I learnt study skills… Confidence, money, using my spare time to activate my brain and learn study skills. But it took a lot of time away from spending playtime with my son, which hurt”
308	F	20	BA/B. Teaching	Special Education Teacher	“Yes, I developed my self-esteem, made great plans to continue study etc.

					[Gave me] a sense of curiosity”
333	F	29	No degree	No career	“Met my husband during studies”
343	M	31	B. Physiotherapy	Still studying	“For sure… I realised that not only could I study but I actually really enjoyed learning new things, in particular, learning new things about the body which I previously had no idea was happening in my body… amazing!!! I feel like I have a future…”

APPENDIX 5

Changes to social or familial relationships as a result of completing OFP

1	Difficult to say - my marriage suffered and still does due to my Uni load.
2	My family had to adjust to my study commitments.
5	Not so much because of Uni but because of what I wasn't doing whilst I was at Uni, but yes, I guess
7	I have been able to support my children and have a stable life/work
9	Some friends and family felt threatened by my change in social status
13	Dynamics changed between my partner and I, became more financially independent, less reliant on him in many ways
14	In a way as I have learnt to be a little selfish with my time when I have papers due
15	Socially I made friends in Social Work and have maintained those friendships
16	I am the first person in my family to complete a university degree, my Mum has since graduated with the same degree and my younger sister is now a first year student in Social Work.
17	I made new friends and became more confident socially.
18	I made a new network of friends and acquaintances, learned communication skills I hadn't previously had.
19	Made new friends, family proud of my achievement and attending university.
21	No social life and very restricted family life
23	University allowed me to meet my partner but no changes in my other family relationships
27	More content, able to have more informed conversation and feel better about myself which led to a richer experience at university
28	Better
31	My husband decided that he would have a go at OF - he did and he completed a Bachelor of Education
35	Sought out new social relationships that had intellectual value.

36	I made lifelong friends and it helped me understand people within my own family in more depth.
37	More time spent at Uni probably culled some friends due to lack of time, however, new friends made along the way.
40	Although I met new friends who are going through what I am, my other friends are supportive but I don't see them as much.
41	I got a full time job after my degree so I became financially independent and bought a house.
42	Divorced! Feel much better about myself. Have a fabulous new partner. Great friends.
43	My group of friends changed as I was becoming more knowledgeable, especially within my family unit. I feel they still think of me as someone who has a learning disability and should be living off the pension not pursuing further education.
44	Socially my circle of friends increased due to uni degree.
48	My partner and I separated in my Honours year. He felt we no longer had anything in common and was intimidated by my study. I am currently a PhD candidate at Uni of Melbourne.
49	Went onto TAFE, made more friendships.
50	Perhaps my personal belief in my own ability increased and gave me the confidence to question social relationships (in a good way).
52	Choosing to study meant that I was/am not as available as I once was. It was difficult to learn to say no to invites and requests. I was afraid of offending people, that it somehow felt wrong to choose my pursuits over theirs. Only close relationships have remained. Casual acquaintances have dwindled.
54	Quite a lot busier, a little less time for the children and socialising.
55	I have missed many family events and kid sport and times with friends during university semester.
57	We had two more children while I was studying. This was an extremely intense period of my life, but I think it strengthened us long term (I hope...)
58	Job changed; improved going to professional environment while still studying.
60	More confident!

61	Completing the OFP and beginning subsequent university studies has provided me with more confidence and belief in myself which in turn has affected my relations with people. I am more confident and feel I can engage with a more diverse range of people.
63	Enlarged my contact/interaction with people in sectors in which I would not usually have been involved.
64	I am more confident in all parts of my life.
65	Socially I mixed more with peers at university. My husband was very supportive of my studies and proud of my achievements. I did lose touch with some friends. I came from a working class family and was the first person to acieve a degree. Most relatives had TAFE qualifications. Other people had degrees in my husband's family. My husband had a higher educational qualification than me when we first met. He encouraged me to study at university. My father thought I started university study because I was unhappy in my marriage (not the case). My father could not understand my motivation to study. My mother was more encouraging but thought it would not lead to paid work. My parents and brother were not interested in talking about any area of my studies. Recently, my brother was surprised to learn that I had studied psychology or could write an academic paper. I asked what he thought I was doing at university. He said he thought my studies had not included writing in an academic style. I was astounded.
66	I have formed a closer bond to my son (most importantly!) as I now have more time to devote to him.
67	My husband died when I was completing 2nd year. Having more confidence in my self- image allows me to communicate on a more intelligent frame.
69	I am making friends with the people I study with and have limited time during semester for socialising.
70	Family had to become a bit more independent. It meant I now had something beyond the family that everyone had to consider. Social change - assignments etc affect weekends - sometimes busy or need to study
71	Being new to Newcastle I didn't know anyone and now have some lifelong friendships with women I met whilst completing my studies. Also, I was better placed to support my daughter in her studies.
72	Better social capital. More equal relationship with partner
76	My children also went on to attain degrees.

78	es, all relationships have changed in a positive manner. My family think me more capable and not just a survivor. My personal network of friends has changed to more academic and artistic types of people.
79	I took my rose coloured glasses off and was more forthright with people.
81	Respect, admiration
82	I divorced my husband, now live with my best friend and her children while she completes her Uni degree
84	A new confidence in myself
85	My social relationships changed completely - I began working with professionals in their field and found myself working with refugees and migrants from all over the world
86	My partner has been a wonderful support. My children oscillate between being bored and being proud to tell their friends I am doing a Doctorate.
89	Less time for social life during semester. Family needed to take on more domestic life to allow me more time to study. They don't really understand what is required.
90	New friends, expanded horizon
91	I inspired the rest of my family.
92	New friends made at University 2001 are still close friends and with five others. I became the main breadwinner, this can be a negative effect on marriage.
95	No longer just a wife or mother - I became a Uni student with a life independent of husband and kids.
97	Tertiary study has helped me deal with depression and has had a positive effect on these relationships.
101	Complicated. As a woman it has given me independence.
102	My children learned to understand I'm not their slave, have definitive interests of my own and pursue those interests.
103	Self-improvement and enjoyment generated positiveness.
105	I have a much broader range of friends. Initially my school friends dropped off/family issues - I was suddenly too smart etc
106	Allowed an avenue of making friends

107	Found interacting with other students enjoyable and beneficial. Family proved to be, surprisingly, supportive and encouraging.
109	My husband left family home midway through Open Foundation. Socially I now have a wide range of friends - a lot through Uni.
112	Meeting new people
113	Relationship with husband, who previously told me what to think, changed. He was certainly challenged/shocked when I started thinking for myself and expressing differing opinions!
115	I made new friends, about 6 people I am very close to as a result and we all have teaching jobs.
116	It changed the course of my life, so it's difficult to think what it would have been otherwise.
117	New friends
118	As I attained good marks, went on to study further. I gained more equality in my relationship with my partner which almost caused us to separate, but ended up making relationship stronger.
122	Less contact [socially] due to workload.
125	I found socially I gained respect with the attainment of my degree.
126	Have made friendships with people of much greater intellect than would have without Uni.
127	In a really positive way and having more self-esteem increasing better relationships with people around me.
130	Confirmed to my partner that we needed to allow for both of us to return to further study. It shaped our future plans.
131	My then husband violently objected to my University studies. I could not cope with the abuse so I did not pursue my studies in the OHS course.
133	There were many ups and downs. I experienced disapproval and praise. My sons became more independent and husband learned to cope with my evolution.
134	Life-long friendships were formed and I was given the opportunity to interact with a very diverse range of people.

135	I am able to converse with intelligent/educated people. My husband now regards me differently, with more respect, I think.
137	*No response*
138	To a degree there were expectations to get some sort of tertiary education.
139	I'm now taken more seriously by others! Because I learnt how to articulate my vocabulary whilst communicating.
140	Obviously I made a new set of friends within my degree.
141	My family needed to adjust to my changing roles as mother, wife and student.
143	There are a few more pressures on myself, and the kids to do things, but family are very supportive.
144	I left my old life behind!! and succeeded. Tripled my income and more = Career.
145	I seek people who have more insight and clarity in thinking and energetic contributions. The marriage has had to cope with this change as my husband doesn't have and isn't interested in higher education.
146	I went overseas during Xmas break at Uni 2007 and met a girl whom I later married. We have been together happily (most of the time) ever since.
147	Wider circle of friends
148	My social relationships grew.
149	Became friends and associated with others in field of Botanical Art
150	My daughter and brother were particularly pleased with my efforts which made me feel really good.
152	Met some great friends. My Mum was very proud - only one in the family with a degree. Relationship with teen daughters was difficult but I think they are happy for me now.
154	My husband proved what a wonderful support he is.
155	As discussed above - my completing this course inspired my children to undertake higher education to secure their future, which of course is most important to me.
156	I didn't have a lot of time for social relationships, this was understood, fortunately.

162	University taught me a new way of thinking, not always accepted by some friends and family.
163	Able to guide and teach my children
169	It had made my family life more difficult - during semester I have to study most nights and weekends, but all my family have rallied around and I think I'm setting a good example to my children.
170	I think that I was good role model for my children - two have completed degrees at Newcastle. One is in the RAAF as a trainer.
171	Still maintained existing friendships plus new, but did not go out as much - more at home entertaining.
174	I made friends with older students that I would not have met otherwise.
176	A couple of years after OFP my marriage broke up and I was able to complete my undergrad degree. My new work life has added to my social relationships.
177	I was now able to move in circles of influence I had not previously been able to. I affected them (the children), and they affected me. I also moved to Canberra to teach in the private system.
179	Having a family makes it difficult to study. My relationship with my husband isn't as good. It is hard to find time for everything.
180	I had less money than what I had in the past and this affected my social life, but this turned out to be a positive thing and I've enjoyed the social interactions of University.
181	Moved out of home, significant changes in family structure long term (year and partners).
186	I had less time for the unimportant things and valued my time with my children more.
188	I met my girlfriend (together 2 years) at University and friends who I interacted with prior to university I have lost contact with. They have been replaced with Uni friends.
189	With the new confidence I had in my own abilities I have a more respectful relationship with my spouse and other friends.
190	Family life improved with economic improvement and have met many wonderful people during my new profession.

193	Increased social relationships
194	Friends and family have had trouble with me going to Uni. (Not my husband or children, but others). I'm not sure if they understand what I am doing or they are frightened by it.
196	Wider circle of friends from different countries.
198	Empathy, tolerance, prudence & fortitude, temperance.
200	Time with my husband was in short supply, and he found that my studying "all the time" was a big adjustment.
202	Have a different circle of friends.
204	Able to support my children to enrol into University. My children also use me as a role model.
205	Not sure if OFP was responsible but!
210	I had to move in with parents so I could afford to study full time. Hard to do as an independent adult in late 30s.
211	Family had to become more organized and more proactive, so I could allocate study time.
212	I met some of my closest friends while doing my degree.
214	Divorced and confident to follow whatever path I chose. All friends changed. I had to leave my old life behind to start again.
216	Feel more valuable asset to family, community and a role model to others.
217	Treated differently by friends/colleagues. Much more respect. Considered to be "smart" and a professional, which surprises me.
218	My husband was incredibly supportive.
219	I lost a lot of relationships, but only as a positive outcome. I made new friends and developed healthier relationships.
221	Made lots of friends.
225	Is there a way of saying I feel more complete without sounding like a total wanker?
228	More conversation, more widely read to argue for and against opinions on subjects.

229	I made a lot of new friends with similar interests and education.
233	Once the degree was finished and I gained employment we had a more stable income and relationship.
234	Different groups than before in terms of social, family changed.
235	I believe I have achieved a higher level of independence in my home life and my relationship with my husband.
236	Improved relationships, more friendships
239	I have more social relationships thanks to OFP. Being a single parent means I don't get to go out much, but I have met a variety of people through OFP.
240	Improved.
242	I was incredibly more confident and not scared of being out the front of an audience or of making an idiot of myself.
247	I feel I have become more confident and as such this has changed my relationship with others.
248	No changes to familial relations but yes to social relationships.
250	The stress was palpable, time is a factor also as I have a family, it is hard.
252	The "wider family" were very impressed. I think attending as a mature-age student influenced my 2 children to attend University and succeed! Knowing what I had achieved made me happier.
254	Some positive, mostly, but some were negative.
255	Financial stress; but broader social network.
256	Better relationship with family and new friends.
257	New friends, better paying career.
259	My social circle changed, wanting to be around more educated people.
260	I was home more for the children and able to study with them.
262	Gained more respect from family and friends, gave me more confidence in myself.
264	I felt I was qualified to have an opinion, asserted myself more.
266	More confidence, and family were proud of my achievements.

268	Found new lifelong friends
271	Outgrown my husband! Became a mentor for my children.
272	Husband has to do more with the kids and housework to support my study! Mild adjustment to this! Some new friends from Uni.
273	Social relationships progressed in a professional and social manner.
274	It was hard work managing a family and study so everyone was affected.
277	New social circle.
280	Gravitated to more like-minded people as my mind expanded and I began to develop my own opinions.
281	I was able to cope with life experiences
284	Independent from husband/family.
287	Strained relationship with husband and adjustments had to be made within ourselves and household. I wasn't there as much for kids but they ended up studying with me. Some friends disappeared but others remained.
288	Broader and more diverse relationships and social groups.
289	Studying at University gave me confidence and allowed me to become independent and autonomous.
291	Long term relationship
292	I have become a lot more independent and self sufficient
295	It gave my children an insight into studying and the joy it can bring.
299	I am selective with my time now as it is limited. Not all my family has been supportive of my study which has upset me. However most family and friends have been great.
300	Began to drive my husband to better himself - he's now going to attend Open Foundation in 2013.
301	Being able to participate in discussions with family and feeling more confident.
302	Met new friends - remarried.
303	More independence financially and personally.

304	The goal to obtain a degree succeeded, but it did not lead to work as I had hoped and left me with a large HECS debt which I still haven't started to pay off. With continual (job) rejection I slipped into a far worse depressive state.
305	I have developed social relationships with other University students and alumni.
306	Suddenly I [had to take time for study].
307	In the sense that I had to work to deadlines, meaning days were organised around school.
308	Some relationships were enhanced ie. family pride etc. However, making life changing plans made my partner feel a little worried.
309	Some people found it difficult to understand why I felt the need to do it, others were incredibly supportive.
310	Money was not an issue. I felt more fulfilled.
312	I have a new partner. The relationship is more stable.
313	Due to shift work my husband took a greater role in the care of our children.
314	I felt more confident in my abilities and ensured my daughter was stronger, more striving for knowledge - it didn't work so well with my son.
315	Expanded my friendship base
317	I became inspired and am told it is contagious!
318	Breakdown of marriage half way through the degree.
320	Family, siblings motivated to seek further education
322	My partner also studied B. Teach/B. Arts as a result.
324	I gained more friendships with different, more like minded people.
328	Felt I could contribute to conversations more, felt like I wasn't such a failure.
329	I have met many new people so my social circle has widened.
332	I became the first person in my family to finish University
333	Met my husband during studies
336	Built new friendships and contacts.

338	While studying in OF and first year of the degree I've separated from my husband. Studying has become my priority, this lead to many opportunities - work at Uni, volunteer at hospital. As a result I've gained confidence, which resulted in new friendships.
339	Made lots of new friends who are now completing the Law degree too!
343	I loved my previous winter lifestyle, it was amazing, however, the reality was, come end of winter you were usually broke/looking for work to keep the lifestyle going... Now I feel like I have a future, I think more about the future than I ever have, and I believe I am healthier and happier than ever. As a result, my family relationships have never been better.
345	I have inspired my daughter to pursue University study, however, my relationship broke down as my partner felt my priorities had changed (ie. study came 1st).
346	Different political views to family, social life wider. Met people I would not have met otherwise who became work colleagues.
349	University enabled me to make life-long friends with independent thinking, socially aware, educated and interesting people who have definitely become friends for life. I changed my social network completely. I also currently have a lot of teacher friends who have completed the same degree as me but at other universities. I guess it is because we have similar interests.

**Missing numbers indicate no response to this question*

APPENDIX 6

Changes to family relationships as a result of studying OFP

Self	Partner/marriage	Children	Immediate family	Wider family
Helped me understand people in family in more depth (36)	Suffered (1)	Now able to support my children & have stable life (7)	Had to make adjustments (2)	Felt threatened by change in social status (9)
I feel much better about myself (42)	Dynamics changed between; became more financially independent and less reliant on partner (13)	Less time for the children (54)	Resented what I wasn't doing (5)	Missed many family events (55)
Intense period of life, strengthened us long term (I hope…) (57)	Met partner (23)	Missed kid sport (55)	Learnt to be a little selfish with my time (14)	Family issues, I was suddenly "too smart" (105)
I became more confident (60)	Husband decided to do OF and completed B. Ed (31)	Had 2 more children while studying so made it intense period (57)	First in family to complete Uni ; Mum since graduated and younger sister now studying Social Work (16)	New way of thinking not always accepted by family (162)
More confident in all parts of my life (64)	I became more financially independent (41)	Closer bond to my son as I now have more time to devote to him (66)	Restricted family life (21)	The wider family was very impressed (252)
New confidence in myself (84)	Divorced! Have new partner (42)	Children also went on to attain degrees (76)	"Better" (28)	
Self-improvement and enjoyment generated positiveness (103)	Separated in Honours year. He felt we no longer had anything in common and was intimidated by my studies. Now PhD candidate at Melbourne Uni (48)	Children oscillate between being bored and being proud to tell their friends I am doing a Doctorate (86)	Change in family unit as I became more knowledgeable. Feels they think of her as someone with a learning disability and should live off pension(43)	
There are a few more pressures	Husband supportive of studies and proud	Children learned to	Relations improved after	

on myself to do things (143)	of achievements. Encouraged study (65)	understand I am not their slave (102)	going into professional environment (58)	
I left my old life behind!! And succeeded. Tripled my income and more = career (144)	Husband died when completing 2nd year (67)	My sons became more independent (133)	First in family to achieve degree (65)	
Knowing what I had achieved made me happier (252)	More equal relationship with partner (72)	There are a few more pressures on the children to do things (143)	Father thought I started study as unhappy in marriage (not the case). He could not understand my motivation to study. Mother was more encouraging but thought it would not lead to paid work. Parents and brother not interested in talking about my studies. (65)	
Studying at University gave me confidence and allowed me to become independent and autonomous (289)	Divorced my husband (82)	My daughter was particularly pleased with my efforts which made me feel really good (150)	Family had to become a bit more independent . It meant I now had something beyond the family that everyone had to consider (70)	
I have become a lot more independent and self-sufficient (292)	Partner a wonderful support (86)	Relationship with teen daughters was difficult but I think they are happy for me now (152)	Positive. Family think me more capable and not just a survivor (78)	
I am selective with my time now as it is limited (299)	I became the main breadwinner. This can be a negative effect on marriage (92)	Inspired my children to undertake higher education to	Respect. Admiration (81)	

		secure their future, which of course is most important to me (155)		
I felt more confident in my abilities (314)	Husband left family midway through OF (109)	Able to guide and teach my children (163)	Family need to take on more domestic life to allow me time to study. They don't really understand what is required (89)	
Now I feel like I have a future. I think more about the future than I ever have, and I believe I am healthier and happier than ever (343)	Relationship with husband who previously told me what to think changed. He was certainly challenged, shocked when I started thinking for myself and expressing differing opinions! (113)	I think I am setting a good example for my children (169)	I inspired the rest of my family (91)	
	Gained more equality in my relationship with my partner which almost caused us to separate, but ended up making the relationship stronger (118)	I think I was a good role model for my children. Two have completed degrees at Newcastle (170)	No longer just a wife or mother – I became a uni student with a life independent of husband and kids (95)	
	Confirmed to my partner that we needed to allow for both of us to return to further study. It shaped our future plans (130)	I affected them (children) and they affected me (177)	Helped me deal with depression and has had a positive effect on these relationships (97)	
	My then husband violently objected to uni studies. I could not cope with the abuse… (131)	I had less time for the unimportant things and valued my time with my children more (186)	Complicated. As a woman it gave me independence (101)	
	I experienced disapproval and praise. My husband	Able to support my children to enrol in Uni. My	Family proved to be, surprisingly,	

	learned to cope with my evolution (133)	children also use me as a role model (204)	supportive and encouraging (107)	
	My husband now regards me differently, with more respect, I think (135)	I think attending as a mature-age student influenced my two children to attend university and succeed! (252)	Changed the course of my life (116)	
	The marriage has had to cope with this change as my husband doesn't have and isn't interested in higher education (145)	I was home more for the children and able to study with them (260)	To a degree there were expectations to get some sort of tertiary education (138)	
	I met a girl overseas and later married. We have been together happily (most of the time) ever since (146)	Became a mentor for my children (271)	The family need to adjust to my changing roles as mother, wife and student (141)	
	Husband proved what a wonderful support he is (154)	I wasn't there as much for the kids but they ended up studying with me (287)	Family are very supportive (143)	
	A couple of years after OF my marriage broke up and I was able to complete my undergrad degree (176)	It gave my children insight into studying and the joy it can bring (295)	My brother was particularly pleased with my efforts which made me feel really good (150)	
	My relationship with my husband isn't as good. It is hard to find time for everything (179)	I had to work to deadlines, meaning days were organised around school (307)	My mum was very proud, only one in the family with a degree (152)	
	Moved out of home, significant changes in family structure long term (year and partners) (181)	I ensured my daughter was stronger – more striving for knowledge – it didn't work so well with my son (314)	Made my family life more difficult, but family has rallied round (169)	

	I met my girlfriend (188)	I have inspired my daughter to pursue university study (345)	Having a family makes it difficult (179)	
	With the new confidence I had in my own abilities I have a more respectful relationship with my spouse (189)	I was better placed to support my daughter in her studies (71)	Family life improved (190)	
	Time with my husband was in short supply and he found that my studying "all the time" was a big adjustment (200)		Family have trouble with me going to Uni (not my husband or children, but others). I'm not sure if they understand what I am doing or they are frightened by it (194)	
	Divorced and confident to follow whatever path I chose (214)		I had to move in with parents so I could afford to study full time. Hard to do as an independent adult in late 30s (210)	
	My husband was incredibly supportive (218)		Family had to become more organized and more proactive, so I could allocate study time (211)	
	Once the degree was finished and I gained employment we had a more stable income and relationship (233)		Feel I am a more valuable asset to my family (216)	
	I believe I have achieved a higher level of independence in my home life and my relationship with my husband (235)		Family changed (234)	

	Outgrown my husband! (271)		Improved (240)	
	Husband has to do more with the kids and housework to support my study! Mild adjustment to this! (272)		The stress was palpable, time is a factor also as I have a family, it is hard (250)	
	Independent from husband and family (284)		Better relationship with my family (256)	
	Strained relationship with husband and adjustments had to be made within ourselves and household (287)		Gained more respect from family, this gave me more confidence in myself (262)	
	Long term relationship (291)		Family were proud of my achievements (266)	
	Began to drive my husband to better himself. He's now going to attend OF in 2013 (300)		It was hard work managing a family and study so everyone was affected (274)	
	Remarried (302)		Not all my family has been supportive of my study which has upset me. However most family has been great (299)	
	More independence financially and personally (303)		Now able to participate in discussions with family and feeling more confident (301)	
	Making life changing plans made my partner feel a little worried (308)		Suddenly I had to take time for study (306)	
	I have a new partner. The relationship is more stable (312)		Some relationships were enhanced ie, family pride etc (308)	

	Due to shift work my husband took a greater role in the care of our children (313)		Family, siblings motivated to seek further education (320)	
	Breakdown of marriage hallway through the degree (318)		I became the first person in my family to finish university (332)	
	My partner also studied B. Teach/ B. Arts as a result (322)		My family relationships have never been better (343)	
	Met my husband during studies (333)		Different political views to family (246)	
	Separated from my husband. Studying has become my priority (338)			
	My relationship broke down as my partner felt my priorities had changed (ie. Study came first) (345)			

APPENDIX 7

Changes to social relationships in consequence of pursuing a path to higher education

Made new friends	Friendship changes	Greater social competence	Less social interaction
Made friends in Social Work and I have maintained those friendships (15)	Some friends threatened by my change in social status (9)	Became more confident socially (17)	No social life (21)
Made new friends (17)	More time spent at uni probably culled some friends due to lack of time (37)	Learned communication skills I previously hadn't had (18)	Choosing to study meant that I was/am not as available as I once was. It was difficult to say no to invites and requests. I was afraid of offending people, that it somehow felt wrong to choose my pursuits over theirs. Only close relationships have remained. Casual acquaintances have dwindled. (52)
Made a new network of friends and acquaintances (18)	My other friends are supportive but I don't see them as much (40)	Able to have more informed conversation and feel better about myself which led to a richer experience at university (27)	Less time for socialising (54)
Made new friends (19)	University taught me a new way of thinking, not always accepted by some friends (162)	Better (28)	I have missed times with friends during university semester (55)
I made lifelong friends (36)	Lost contact with friends I had prior to Uni (188)	Sought out new social relationships that had intellectual value (35)	I did lose touch with some friends (65)
New friends made along the way (37)	Friends had trouble with me going to Uni. I'm not sure if they understand or know what I am doing or they are frightened by it (194)	Perhaps my personal belief in my own ability increased and gave me confidence to question social relationships (in a good way) (50)	I have limited time during semester for socialising (69)

Met new friends who are going through what I am (40)	All friends changed. I had to leave my old life behind to start again (214)	More confident! (60)	Social change – assignments etc affect weekends – sometimes busy or need to study (70)
Great friends (42)	Treated differently by friends and colleagues. Much more respect. Considered to be "smart" and a professional which surprises me (217)	Completing OFP and beginning subsequent university studies has provided me with more confidence and belief in myself which in turn has affected my relations with people. I am more confident and feel I can engage with a more diverse range of people. (61)	Less time for social life during semester (89)
My group of friends changed as I was becoming more knowledgeable (43)	I lost a lot of relationships, but only as a positive outcome (219)	Enlarged my contact/ interaction with people in sectors in which I would not usually have been involved (63)	Initially my school friends dropped off (105)
Socially my circle of friends increased due to uni (44)	Gained more respect from friends, this gave me more confidence in myself (262)	I am more confident in all parts of my life (64)	Less contact socially due to workload (122)
Went to TAFE and made more friendships (49)	Some friends disappeared but others remained (287)	Socially I mixed more with peers at university (65)	I didn't have a lot of time for social relationships, this was understood, fortunately (156)
I am making friends with the people I study with (69)	Most friends have been great (299)	Having more confidence in my self-image allows me to communicate on a more intelligent frame (67)	Did not go out as much – more at home entertaining (171)
Being new to Newcastle I didn't know anyone and now have lifelong friendships with women I met whilst completing my studies (71)	Some people found it difficult to understand why I felt the need to do it, others were incredibly supportive (309)	Better social capital (72)	
My personal network of friends has changed to more academic and artistic types of people (78)		I took my rose coloured glasses off and was more forthright with people (79)	
New friends, expanded horizon (90)		A new confidence in myself (84)	

New friends made at university are still close friends (92)		My social relationships changed completely – I began working with professionals in their field and found myself working with refugees and migrants from all over the world (85)	
I have a much broader range of friends (105)		As a woman, it gave me independence (101)	
Allowed an avenue of making friends (106)		Self-improvement and enjoyment [of study] created positiveness (103)	
Socially I now have a wide range of friends – a lot through Uni (109)		Found interacting with other students enjoyable and beneficial (107)	
I made new friends, about 6 people I am very close to as a result and we all have teaching jobs (115)		Meeting new people (112)	
New friends (117)		It changed the course of my life, so it's difficult to think what it would have been like otherwise (116)	
Have made friendships with people of a much greater intellect than I would have without Uni (126)		I found socially I gained respect with the attainment of my degree (125)	
Lifelong friendships were formed (134)		In a really positive way, and having more self-esteem increasing better relationships with people around me (127)	
Obviously I made a new set of friends within my degree (140)		I was given the opportunity to interact with a very diverse range of people (134)	
Wider circle of friends (147)		I am able to converse with intelligent/educated people (135)	I had less money than what I had in the past and this affected my social life, but this turned out to be a positive thing and I've enjoyed the social interactions of university (I180)

Became friends and associated with others in field of Botanical Art (149)		I'm now taken more seriously by others! Because I learnt how to articulate my vocabulary whilst communicating (139)	
Met some great friends (152)		Tripled my income and more = career! (144)	
Still maintained existing friendships plus new (171)		I seek people who have more insight and clarity in thinking and energetic contributions (145)	
I made friends with older students that I would not have met otherwise (174)		My social relationships grew (148)	
Former friends replaced with Uni friends (188)		My new work life has added to my social relationships (176)	
Wider circle of friends from different countries (196)		I was now able to move in circles of influence I had not previously been able to (177)	
Have a different circle of friends (202)		I have met many wonderful people during my new profession (190)	
I met some of my closest friends while doing my degree (212)		Increased social relationships (193)	
I made new friends and developed healthier relationships (219)		Empathy, tolerance, prudence & fortitude, temperance (198)	
Made lots of friends (221)		Social changes but unsure if OFP was responsible (205)	
I made a lot of new friends with similar interests and education (229)		Feel a more valuable asset to community and a role model to others (216)	
More friendships (236)		Is there a way of saying I feel more complete without sounding like a total wanker? (225)	
New friends (256)		More conversation, more widely read to argue for and against opinions on subjects (228)	
New friends (257)		Different groups than before in terms of social [interaction] (234)	

Found new lifelong friends (268)		Improved relationships (236)	
Some new friends from Uni (272)		I have more social relationships thanks to OFP. Being a single parent means I don't get out much, but I have met a variety of people through OFP (239)	
Met new friends (302)		Improved (240)	
Expanded my friendship base (315)		I was incredibly more confident and not scared of being out the front of an audience or of making an idiot of myself (242)	
I gained more friendships with different, like-minded people (324)		I feel I have become more confident and as such this has changed my relationship with others (247)	
Built new friendships and contacts (336)		Yes, changes to social relationships (248)	
I've gained confidence, which resulted in new friendships (338)		Some positive, mostly, but some were negative (254)	
Made lots of new friends who are completing the Law degree too! (339)		Broader social network (255)	
University enabled me to make lifelong friends with independent thinking, socially aware, educated and interesting people who have definitely become friends for life (349)		My social circle changed, wanting to be around more educated people (259)	
		I felt I was more qualified to have an opinion, asserted myself more (264)	
		More confidence (266)	
		Social relationships progressed in a professional and social manner (273)	
		New social circle (277)	
		Gravitated to more like-minded people as my mind expanded and I	

		began to develop my own opinions (280)	
		I was able to cope with life experiences (281)	
		Broader and more diverse relationships and social groups (288)	
		The goal to obtain a degree succeeded, but it did not lead to work as I had hoped and left me with a large HECS debt which I still haven't started to pay off. With continual [job] rejection I slipped into a far worse depressive state (304)	
		I have developed social relationships with other university students and alumni (305)	
		I felt more fulfilled (310)	
		I became inspired and am told it is contagious! (317)	
		Felt I could contribute to conversations more, felt like I wasn't such a failure (328)	
		I have met many new people so my social circle has widened (329)	
		Met people I would not have met otherwise who became work colleagues (346)	
		I have changed my social network completely. I currently have a lot of teacher friends who have completed the same degree as me but at other universities. I guess it is because we have similar interests (349)	

APPENDIX 8

Experience of undertaking the Open Foundation Program

Positive Experiences	Number	Challenging Experiences	Number
Enjoyable	105	Challenging	31
Good introduction to Uni	78	Difficult	16
Supported	70	Hard work	10
Good teaching	61	Stressful	7
Loved learning	53	Coping with Disability	4
Instilled confidence	32	Overwhelming	4
		Steep learning curve	4
Skill building	26	Daunting	3
Encouraging	24	Not true preparation	3
Excellent	22	Exhausting	2
Made friendships	22	Isolation	2
Learnt a lot	22	Scary	2
Stimulating	22	Shock	2
Wonderful	22	Time constraints	2
Achievement	21	Busy	1
Positive	21	Classes cancelled	1
Rewarding	18	Competitive	1
Interesting	17	Confusing	1
Social interaction	17	Different	1
Peers & support	17	Disappointing	1
Fantastic	16	Discomfort	1
Self-validation	13	Eccentric lecturers	1
Inspiring	11	Fear of failure	1
Life changing	11	Frightening	1
Critical thinking	9	Hated mosquitoes	1
Great	9	Health problems	1
Exciting	8	Inconsistent course preparation	1
Equality	7	Inconsistent management	1
New knowledge	7	Intense	1
Amazing	6	Intimidating	1
Empowering	6	Lonely	1
Flexible	6	Negative	1
Fulfilling	6	Nervous	1
Relevant	6	Out of control	1
Fun	5	Poor attendance	1
Good resources	5	Poor teaching	1
Satisfaction	5	Poor technology	1
Easy	4	Poor time management	1
Informative	4	Required better skills	1
Self-discovery	4	Self-doubt	1
Very good	4		
Well-paced	4		
Brilliant (or Bloody brilliant)	4		
Enlightening	4		

Successful	4		
Comfortable	3		
Engaging	3		
Helpful	3		
Taught persistence	3		
Taught Uni culture	3		
Awesome	2		
Changed future	2		
Content relevant	2		
Friendly	2		
Incredible	2		
Motivating	2		
Self esteem	2		
Well organised	2		
Worthwhile	2		
Advantage	1		
Changed bad memories	1		
Compatible subjects	1		
Comprehensive courses	1		
Confirmed interests	1		
Convenient	1		
Discovered talent	1		
Efficient delivery	1		
Enriching	1		
Fascinating	1		
Fond memories	1		
Forbidden knowledge	1		
Forgiving	1		
Gateway to new world	1		
Goals met	1		
Good field trip	1		
Good place	1		
Hopeful	1		
Humour	1		
Intellectual home	1		
Come home to where I should be	1		
Manageable workload	1		
Mentoring	1		
New direction	1		
Opened opportunities	1		
Productive	1		
Respect	1		
Pitched at right level	1		
Learnt self-discipline	1		
Loved smell of books	1		
Gave subject taste	1		
Subjects compatible	1		
Thrilling	1		
Ascertained impact of study on life	1		

APPENDIX 9

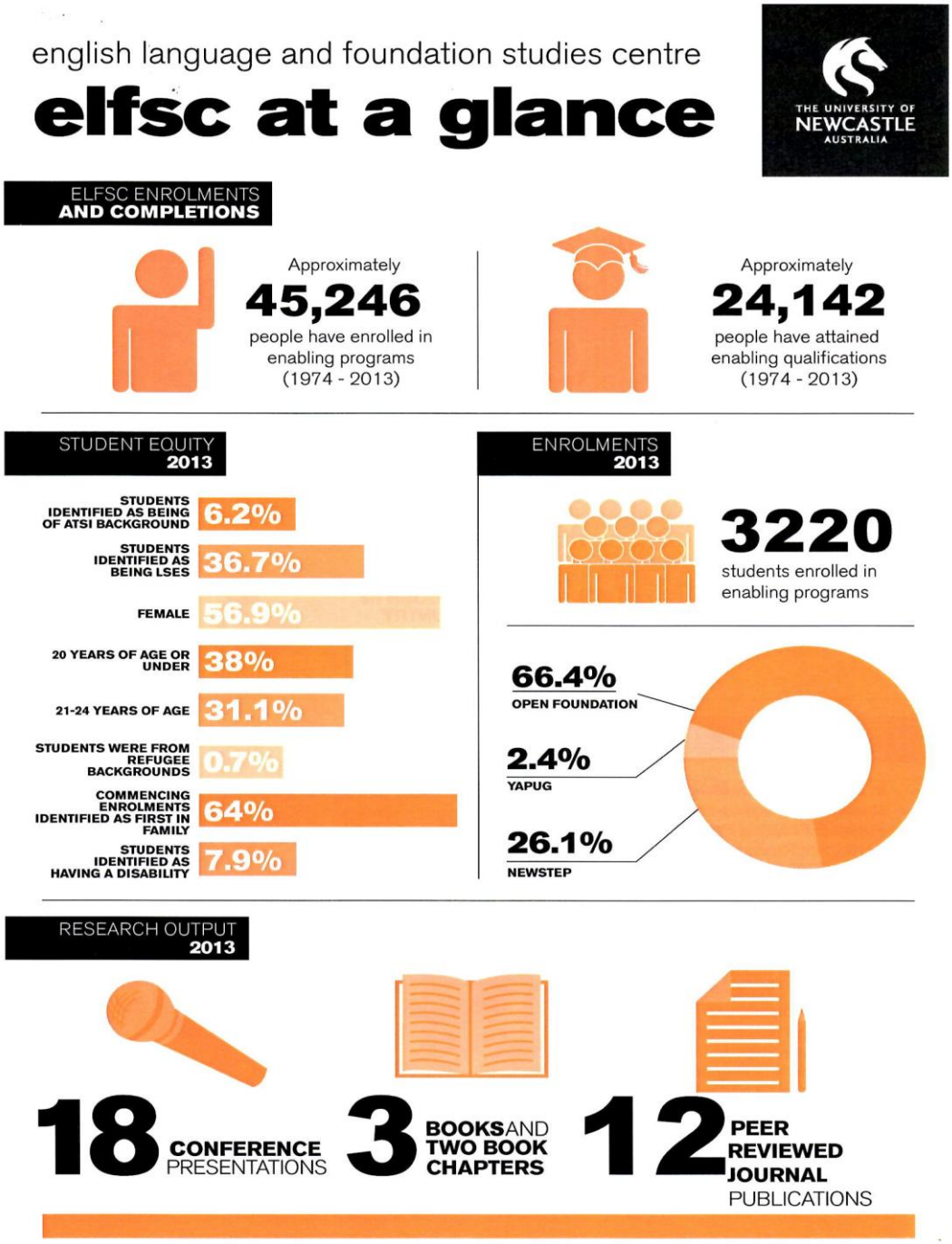
Excellent teaching in the Enabling context as expressed by OFP lecturers

Attitudes & Values	Classroom Approaches	Approach to Students
Be true to yourself	Be able to stand up and deliver discipline content	Have empathy with student ambitions
Be open-minded	Be as interactive as possible	Have sensitivity to students' emotional commitment
Have an enabling ethos	Teachers as tools and facilitators of learning	Always try to be positive. Negativity does not work!
Be flexible	Be a grassroots teacher, explain things	Be a good role model
Be a reflective practitioner	Keep asking yourself 'How else can I teach it?' for those who don't get it	Remind yourself Uni is a strange lifestyle and environment for our students
Work on the basis that education is liberating	Have clear and specific goals and aims	Work with students
Reconcile traditional and progressive education	Teach students how to learn	Make students comfortable but not too much!
Encourage a lifelong learning philosophy	Train students in educational capital	Start where students are starting from
Recognize the students are on a journey	Classes to be fun but preparation for hard work	Demonstrate commitment to students and to the course
It's not what they get out of it but what they learn along the way	Open knowledge up but funnel down as well	Guide and mentor students rather than instruct
Convince students it doesn't matter what their background is, they can still learn	Work from the known to the unknown	Guide students don't control them
Set high standards and goals	Provide practical examples and translate them to theory	Respect, reassure and encourage students
Demystify your subject	Use humour	Teach students to think about their thinking
Give everyone an equal voice	Provide non-threatening but challenging tasks	Make relaxed and happy students
Enhance tolerance and understanding of society	Create independent learners	Never override student contributions
	Teach love of learning as well as skills	Provide space for student voices, and listening to them
	Teach problem solving and to be reflective	Check that students understand

	Teach values and critique of them	Connect with students
	Recognise education is therapy	Recognise that one size does not fit all!
	Show passion and enthusiasm for your topic	Place students in a quasi-teaching situation where they teach others
	Play devil's advocate & encourage debate	Take students as they are
	Avoid academic language	Help students see the value in what we do
	Use contemporary modes to engage eg. Song lyrics rather than poetry	Help students discover themselves and see into the 'life of things'
	Facilitate learning with different experiences & opportunities	Help students get past that inner voice that tells them they can't do it
	Take time to teach basic skills	Help students see study takes time and effort
	Provide opportunities for growth and development	Give students strategies, like colour coding or baking analogies
	Scaffold knowledge and tasks	Tell students success is possible
	Teach from the bottom up	Look after your students and show an interest in them
	Teach skills that are transferrable	Get to know your students a bit and that someone cares about them
	Introduce new ideas and more sophisticated vocabulary gradually	Encourage discussions, student views are important
	Introduce a variety of ways of understanding material	Try not to offend students (but you can send politicians up)
	Make things simpler	Entertain students, but not with jokes
	Mix up your teaching delivery	
	The old fashioned chalk and talk still works	

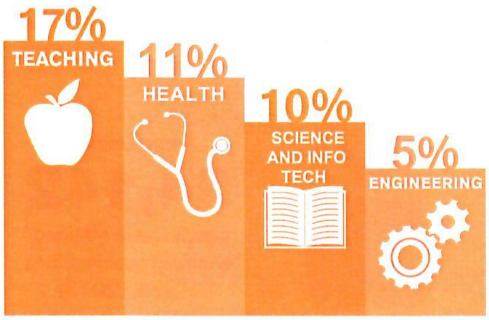
APPENDIX 10

Elfsc at a glance. Statistics for 2013



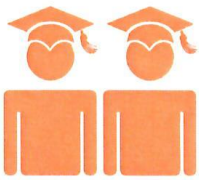
PATHWAY TO UNDERGRADUATE **STUDY 2013**

Top 4 disciplines enabling students enrol:



71.9% of enabling students who completed the program undertook undergraduate study within **1 year of completion**

ENABLING FURTHER **STUDY**



88 **PRIOR ENABLING STUDENTS** enrolled in post graduate studies in 2013

50 Since 2010, **ENABLING STUDENTS** have gone on to undertake higher degree research qualifications with the University of Newcastle

STAFF **2013**

The ELFSC has a high level of diversity with at least

40 **STAFF BEING BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY**

A number of staff are fluent in another language as well as English.

13 **ELFSC** academic staff have PhD's

PEPPR REGISTER **2013**

In 2013, 1173 prior enabling students had registered with the Potential Enabling Program Participant Research Register. The PEPPR Register is the result of collaboration between the Educational Research Institute Newcastle, the English Language and Foundation Studies Centre, the Research Institute for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing and the Equity and Diversity Unit at the University of Newcastle.
The Register helps to facilitate research on enabling education by listing names and details of former enabling students who are interested in being invited to participate in future projects.