

**A Maverick in the Mind: Exploring the haunting spectre of tensions in 'maverick' educators fostering unconventional student-learner relationships and empowerment against existing tensions within educational frameworks.**

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**Abstract:**

Some educators are haunted by the spectre of a 'maverick in the mind'. Wilfully driven and shaped by life experiences they live in a constant tension, often at odds with the apparent constraints of the educational system. They fight perceived enemies in their quest to transform learners. This paper, part of ongoing PhD studies employs aspects of narrative inquiry and life history/life story methodologies to explore some encountered tensions and how they foster unconventional pedagogic practices and stranger mindful imaginings. Bourdieu's 'Habitus' and 'Capital' theories (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and Goffman's (1959) perspective on roles as acted out, provide theoretical underpinning.

**Overview:**

According to ongoing PhD research by one of the authors, some educators are passionately envisioned 'mavericks', being perceived in their role as wilfully intended and 'troublesome talent' (Germain 2007). These individuals identify themselves and are identified by colleagues. They can appear as misfits and practising at the margins. In the context of pedagogy driven by wilful intention and a desire for the creative transformation of learners' lives, UCA colleagues, Gabi Mind and Curtis Tappenden develop pedagogic strategies with tendencies to move against ongoing

trends of educational constraint in the sector. But qualitative research findings suggest that mavericks are haunted by their own ongoing spectres of 'tension'. Using aspects of narrative Inquiry to extract themes, and shaped by the triumphs and tribulations of their personal 'life histories and life stories' (Goodson et al), they reveal alter-egos and fantasies, animosities against imagined enemies and other apparent madnesses of the mind. Bourdieu's theories of 'Capital' and Habitus' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and the theatrical masquerading presented by Goffman (1959), underpin intentions to explain complexities. The result has led to their pedagogic journeys developing in subversive, playful, unconventional ways; at times dynamically steered away from lesson plans and curriculum intention in their team teaching roles.

Feeling empowered by ongoing explorations they continue to empower others within the institution and outside of it. Justice, ethics, personal and collective 'voices', ownership, and belief in the power to change society for the better, are key within everyday tasks of studio practice and shape learner-teacher relationships. The authors acknowledge the need to work with others; strengths honed within a diverse team. Tensions between stricter models/ frameworks and freer, even subversive methodologies, are considered essential if educational practitioners are to be loosed into further developing themselves and learners as future innovators and developers of craft.

Daily dialogues, keen attitudes to reflective and reflexive practice, and the need to share 'stories' with others are vital to learning with meaning and purpose.

**The session:**

This session intends to engage participants in the power of narrative to share disquieting, disturbing uncertainties confronting educators, and to discuss how those termed 'maverick' deal positively with their tensions to personally exploit their desired practices, dare to break held assumptions in the sector and innovate new ways of thinking and practice to transform learners' lives and develop their own. The originality of the paper lies in its attempts to explore the tensions of 'maverick' minds. The paper fits best the 'Uncanny' section of the conference by the nature of its destabilised subject matter and desire to unleash transformative power.

## **The paper**

The paper is set against a background of neoliberalism and its gently creeping control over academia. Those who oppose it show up more clearly in their resistance, and those who are wilfully intentioned are defined here as maverick educators. Their rich life histories and life stories can be explored with tools of narrative inquiry to discover how mavericks negotiate the ongoing tension in their stories in shared relationships with learners, to enable power and transformation regardless of the shifts in educational frameworks. The key theorists, Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman help to illuminate the discourse, supported by aspects of Anthony Giddens' structuration and Foucault's belief in internalised power.

### **1. Introduction**

In difficult times we have a story to tell. Across a changing higher education landscape constraints seem to increase their binding around sectors (including art and design) with tightly monitored working practices, budget-driven curricula, and lecturers' perception of having less freedom to take personal and moral authority over creative pedagogic function.

Our story is compulsive, emotional, gritty and challenging; driving out of a need to outwardly express in our role as teachers, aspects of our lives and journeys. Around some aspects tensions are increasing: where character traits do not conform to expectation; modes of behaviour become inappropriate in context; critical attitudes to the worlds of educators and the educated are at odds with current trends; and moral beliefs as outworked in studio practices are given a lower place of importance by the key values championed by institutions.

### **2. Neoliberalism**

The Neoliberal directives are pushing down from government level, through echelons of power firmly located within the domains of politics. Neoliberalism outworks itself thorough controlling language where there are no terms for negotiation. For example, Quality Assurance must be considered according to set criteria; employees regarded as individuals with responsibility account for their performance, often evidenced by inflexible means and 'Key Performance Indicators (KPI); assessments become outcome-based and published league tables determine learning success. Diversity

and flexible alternative methods for evidencing creative production play no part in the accountable system. Neo-liberalism drives control by audit, powered at different levels. Smith and Hodgkinson (2005) recognise these as power relations at micro level (faculty), meso level (the university and professional association), and macro level (Government). None can thus escape being part of the framework.

Transformations in academic life have been implemented to 'define and assess academic productivity and efficiency as well as the reputation of individuals, disciplines and institutions' (Sparkes, 2013: 443). Such assessment can be more easily evaluated in quantitative terms and has led to the emergence of 'new academic identities; responses to managerialism; and issues of morale.' (ibid)

Many 'academic' staff in the art and design sector have not progressed through traditional academic routes. They learnt on the job as craftspeople and showed an aptitude and desire to want to pass on the skills that had been shown to them and that they had developed and mastered in their trade.

With this background we argue that the history of art schools, many which have merged to form larger institutes or be absorbed into the new league of post-1992 universities, has made it much harder for the culture of artistic practitioner educators, their structures and practices, to adapt to new models. At best it will have tightened academic rigour and dealt with inefficiencies, but at what price creativity and learning? Ball (2003) warns of breeding new teacher subjects and social identity; changes in 'subjective existence and our relation to one another', a struggle over the 'teacher's soul' (2003: 217). Fiercer critics have labelled it a 'somatic crisis' associated with 'de-professionalisation; proletarianisation, dismantling of academic disciplines and department-based academic units; the growing size and authority of management in determining priorities in research and teaching; the quantification and evaluation of academic work and increased dependence on quantitative measures.' (Burrows, 2012; Bode and Dale, 2012).

Resistance to such changes causes tensions and challenges individual and collective core beliefs in the nature of art and design, its meaning and purposes, and its dissemination. This paper will define 'mavericks' as not simply being those who do things a bit differently or engage in resistant behaviour, however, it is interesting to note how increase in neoliberal control is challenging educators' sensibilities, and by ignoring new directives in their contexts they are appearing as more 'deviant' (Becker 1963) in behaviour.

### 3. Maverick definitions

To discuss a 'maverick in the mind', mavericks must first be defined. Curtis Tappenden was termed 'maverick' by a fellow colleague and began researching the term for a definition. Accordingly, Curtis identified Gabi Mind, a fellow lecturer as a maverick type, and both agree with this definition to describe themselves in the context of this research paper. In a journal entry Curtis is keen to point out that *'...we have never used that term openly for who we are or what we do. Like genius or eccentric it is hard to define...and may be interpreted in many ways according to experience and context.'* (Tappenden, 2011)

Dictionary definitions are in no way definitive. Collins dictionary states:

Maverick

Noun

1. *Independent person: an independent thinker who refuses to conform to the accepted views on a subject.*
2. *Unbranded animal: an unbranded animal, especially a calf that has become separated from its mother and herd. By convention, it can become the property of whoever finds it and brands it.*

[The above definition possibly after Samuel Augustus Maverick (1803-1870), American cattleman who left the calves in his herd unbranded. From the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. (2009)]

Definition 1. A maverick might ethically or morally challenge 'accepted views', which are suggested as the norm here. The independent thinker is the one who is willing to think outside of the norm and in being different becomes non-conformist. (Evidence of our non-conformity will be presented through our narratives to help support this definition).

Definition 2. is the original meaning of the word maverick as it was used by cowboys and named after its inventor. It exercises the notion of non-conformity beyond actions. Unbranded suggests the calf is without family and not belonging. With no bond made with the mother it may have been rejected by the herd or removed by a human owner. Needing to 'own' and be 'owned', to have 'belonging' runs through all species. Branding could be interpreted as a set of rules and principles, providing identity and acceptance. Without an established bond no patterns of behaviour are

passed on in the species, which could affect ongoing behaviour. The maverick animal might never truly fit even though it belongs to the species. This could be a useful definition if adoption and being branded (or not being branded) helps mavericks to negotiate roles and positions of power.

In our educational contexts to fit is to be able to function within the working contexts and be accepted. There are some who are refused; rejected as being 'other', akin to the unbranded calf. When a teacher chooses not to follow rules or is not accepted because they do 'other'-wise, (the reasons for non-cooperation can be varied, complex and partially rooted in personal histories), there is a good chance they may be considered as behaving deviantly or as a 'maverick'. Definition is tricky though. Who does not dig their heels in from time to time, or even quietly refuse to do as they are told because they cannot accept a particular directive? Are they to be called maverick? A business definition helps to differentiate between non-compliance and 'maverickness' by providing a business model which can be located in academia.

#### **A business definition.**

Business training consultant, Judith Germain, works with what she calls mavericks in business and defines them as

*'Being wilfully independent...easily bored and need to be given constant challenges to ensure that they are as productive and engaged as they could be. They tend to come up with innovative solutions and their way of working didn't fit established corporate norms. The Maverick is unafraid to question authority, buck trends or do what is 'expected' and understands that they are a square peg in a round hole. They have realized that they are under utilized, bored of their roles and that they often act inappropriately in the circumstances that they find themselves in.'* (Germain, 2007)

Such individuals are according to her explanation in the literature, 'Troublesome Talent'. She identifies them as 'hugely talented, creative individuals. They are extremely passionate about their work, and are very comfortable challenging the established norms.'

As a mentor she recognizes that *'Troublesome Talent are generally oblivious to the effect they have on others...and need to be led in a different way to the rest of the workforce...are often misunderstood by the managers that manage them. This can lead their passion to turn destructive.'*

(Germain, 2007: 8)

Her work has found that mavericks in business often enjoy the flexibility and autonomy that they are offered when they first join a company; they shine and deliver outstandingly. Eventually they are required to conform to systems or corporate structures, and requested to willingly follow company rules.

Mavericks can become confused as to why they are now being asked to work differently and they react. The reaction is hard to harness, and they are commonly isolated from others to avoid becoming disruptive.

Germain suggests companies are responsible for aligning mavericks' 'needs and desires to the organisation's objectives'. The key to success lies in flexible leadership styles and an understanding of human nature. When both parties are realigned and the maverick has a clear path to follow, performance can return to former outstanding levels.

Complex and inflexible rules and policies often stifle them. A process of realignment addresses issues of tension and balances power dynamics between mavericks and those in authority.

Germain's theories are useful to academic research and located in the art and design higher educational context have enabled further theorising.

#### **4. A maverick in the mind.**

It may be the fortunate nature of creative education, and the understanding and acceptance of creative temperaments by colleagues that have allowed us (Gabi Mind and Curtis Tappenden) to actively research this subject. We are both sessional members of staff with joint service amounting to more than thirty years in our institution. There is enjoyable freedom attached to the title 'sessional' lecturer, which also shares many equal terms with 'actual' members of staff in the Further Education where we are based. Freedom of part-time teaching allows the establishment and continual development of industry-based working portfolios: Gabi Mind has huge and valuable experience in the fashion industry, Curtis Tappenden is a national newspaper artist, performer, author and illustrator. In respect of Germain's definition, neither is oblivious nor insensitive to the effect they have on others. In a specific conversation with Germain, she sub-defined our type as 'socialised mavericks', those who exercise diplomacy, enjoy levels of team-working and are willing to compromise. Such behaviours, however, do cause tensions in the maverick mind. Resistance and intended acts of defiance against some curricular expectations occur in the

imagination. These are earthed in the planning and classroom activities where risks get taken and pedagogic acts are shared in teacher-learner activities. Strategies for delivery can vary. Team teaching can be upset by differences in learning intentions not shared by all tutors and struggles in outworking classroom intensions.

Sometimes these differences are explicit, at other times they are implicitly embedded. The negotiations can be made in the moment.

The imaginings play a very important role in the wilful teacher's conceptions being brought from a set of beliefs into practice. At times these appear unconventional where Gabi's story reveals important grounding for her professional actions.

### **5. Discovering the maverick mind - Gabi Mind as storyteller**

For this paper, Gabi Mind was asked to write her story as it relates to her part in the larger PhD research sample and will tell that story in the presentation. As such she presents as live datum. She was initially chosen with 6 other interviewees to be part of the research degree programme. Some of the sample self-identified themselves as 'mavericks' according to my definition, and expressed a wish to tell their story in open interview when asked. Participants were known to me (Tappenden, (T)) from recommendation, searching the internet, and Gabi is a teacher colleague. Reference to Buber's 'a priori of relation' (1937: 46), has been important where I became aware of mutual affirmation of shared thinking and cause in the course of the research. Buber defines the understanding of shared value within a tacit knowing- a mutual understanding recognised by those who carry that value; what he terms 'Thou'. So, 'the inborn 'thou' is realised in the lived relations with that which meets it.' (Rotenstreich, 2010). In writing own stories and hearing the stories of others, where it is

*'reciprocal, connective and life affirming [...] Buber views what it is to be relational: that we gain a sense of our own identity and authenticity through relationships.'*

(Martin, 2007: 52).

I (T) believe that we confirm our maverick identification according to the early definitions in this paper and these can vilify our cause. Gabi is wilfully motivated and willing to take risks where to not do so is to work against her beliefs. In her maverick mind she knows as she professes, that it can be 'easier to seek forgiveness than permission,' (Mind, 2014). The result is acting as she sees fit regardless of edict or higher authority. At times practices have been known to counter what is considered as usual teaching convention, creating tension where a decision is made and

outworked with an individual or learner group. Retold, these practices add to her story and can affect the potential behaviour of those who listen, where they might be affirmed in current institutional behaviour or modify it for the future.

Approach and findings are based upon our own ontological position; a belief that mavericks inhabit their own different, subjective experiential worlds and tell their stories from them. As far as is possible we hope that they are positioned free of constraint and seen through a narrative lens which focuses upon intimate and specifically interpreted viewpoints. In Gabi's case, sharing her story enables her to read herself within the maverick context, a sort of stepping back from oneself as a means of reflection, what Ritchie and Wilson (2000) call "decentring"; it allows one to step outside the busyness and make of it all some meaning'. (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000: 23).

Reflection and part analysis against her data might expose beliefs and their importance to the educational context and raise questions as her lifeworld is revealed. As a personal narrative it is a vehicle of affirmation and change, and what Langer (1997: 4) describes as 'an implicit awareness of more than one perspective'. The potential danger is a skewing of perception where our own interpretation is hugely subjective and coming out of professed maverick self-identities. Our part in this perception is what potentially makes the study interesting to those outside of our experience, and suggests that reflexivity is a positive and affirming aspect of qualitative, narrative research. It can change classroom practices.

## **6. Bourdieu and Goffman illuminate the maverick mind.**

To help explain the tensions haunting maverick thinking, key theorists Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman are considered. This section outlines key aspects of their theoretical tools as they relate to tensions of maverick educators and the fostering of unconventional student-learner relationships and practices in the art and design sector. This theoretical illumination has enabled coding of data in the full PhD research project.

Our characters suggest part nature and part experience. Bourdieu's complex work cannot be done justice in a small paper and presentation, but maverick identities can be interrogated by integrating part-theories of *Habitus*, *Capital* and *Field* where they are relevant. Offering short pointer explanations will help later analysis in this paper.

### *Habitus*

Power is located in agency and structure, being symbolically and culturally created through the interplay with them. The guide for our behaviour and thinking results from how we have been socialised- our background and experiences. Habitus is society deposited, revealed in dispositions and propensities to think, act and feel in determinant ways which then guide them (Wacquant 2005: 316, cited in Navarro 2006: 16). Habitus is transferrable, a product of neither free-will nor structures but an interplay of both and as such is reproduced unconsciously. Our upbringing and shaping of experiences have, we believe, affected the context which we now find ourselves in, and subsequently motivates our wilful teaching practices. Our stories carry evidence of our habitus and it is continually transferred. Importantly, habitus conditions our perception of dispositions, connecting what is social to the subjective self, (Bourdieu 1984: 170).

### *Capital*

Capital is that which is displayed and embodied through our life histories and experiences. As such it relates directly to habitus. Bourdieu considered it to be a currency which could be accumulated and transferred as a means of controlling power relations. For example, 'cultural capital', converts into power where taste distinguishes members of certain classes, as determined by classes, and becomes effective in establishing hierarchies and domination. Habitus with capital can change acceptable boundaries and redefine power relations. As maverick practitioners in art and design, cultural definition, its teaching and expression, can change our relationships with our learners and alter the power dynamic, transfer of power in the classroom and expressions inside it, legitimising different practices. Where social order becomes inscribed in education, management, value systems, there is an accepted classification; a set of hierarchies leading to a 'sense of one's place' (Bourdieu, 1986: 141). The maverick mind can and does dare to challenge these orders, but the balance of power can also be played with, resisting power and domination in one field, whilst being complicit in another.

### *Field*

Such differentials can be explained through what he termed fields. Capital and habitus can be expressed differently depending on the context (field). So we might have been socialised to behave differently in different contexts of power, such as public or private- macro institutional or micro.

In starting to consider the personal perceptions and behavioural patterns of the maverick, codes emerge from which themes can be derived. They potentially form the rationale of the larger study. Conceptualising around known experiences and identified patterns of behaviour against these early definitions has already cultivated new learning. The parameters of the research question led to problematising and expanding upon initial thoughts. Mavericks are complex characters with many simultaneously layered dynamics forming a complex structure of person, seemingly being performed through their behaviour. From this starting point there were clues to search the literature for matches in the work of key theorists.

*Goffman: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.*

Goffman (1959), suggests as part of its theory that our behaviours change where our identities are as actors who need to save face in various situations. His theory considers the actors dramaturgical profile as it affects self; the perception of self to an audience and the audience's response to perceived behaviours. Perception is key for both actor and audience, and acting metaphors are considered in detail where they help to explain thinking, behaviour and roles in enacted in various contexts. Goffman troubles the identities of teachers where authenticity might be questioned. Are mavericks merely acting in a certain way to establish themselves, only to offer another character when it suits to change or maintain the power relation, or are they genuine in their wilful behaviours; the product of acceptable, multiple identities? Asking these questions can trigger the whisperings of 'phoney' inside the maverick mind, which we seek to justify in ourselves and then feel compelled to reveal to colleagues. It is a haunting spectre which creates tensions but might when combined with Bourdieu's theories, explain adoption of alter-egos and metaphors. In a later section of this paper, Gabi Mind's story is told metaphorically, and a persona adopted for coping with the tensions. The persona is a fantasy- an actor lurking inside the imagination which it can be argued offers permission and justification for wilful behaviours.

### **7. Narrative paradigm: Tools to explore the maverick mind.**

Teachers may be required to be honest and expose their own vulnerabilities, take pedagogical risks in the learning environment, enter dialogue and debate with learners at many complex levels and be willing to negotiate in the knowledge that successful outcomes are not assured. Researching it is diverse and messy requiring a set of tools to help to construct a framework where interpretations can be made and meaning found.

The narrative, constructive approach allows space to consider this (McCormack, 2004; Sarbin, 1986), and there is also a chance for the narrative to help to define *'being true to oneself'*, Taylor, (1991: 15). Mavericks need to recognise their identities through personal power and power to influence within their own worlds. They need to be read as being true; they need to believe this in the stories which are told and written. Stories can offer revelation and a space to consider what is being said. Educational narrative researcher, Ivor Goodson suggests that *'The 'life story....and 'autobiographical document' are important 'because they keep the myth of the autonomous, free individual alive.'* (Goodson 1995: 2)

It is a charge which soundly reinforces Casey (1992) who suggests that teachers' own reticence to research through autobiography and the telling of life stories has dumbed down their voice in educational literature and left them open to be manipulated as objects of convenience within political change:

*'By systematically failing to record the voices of ordinary teachers, the literature on educators' careers silences them. Even while investigating an issue where decision making is paramount, researchers speculate on teachers' motivations and survey them with a set of forced-choice options....what emerges is a view in which they are reduced to objects which can be manipulated for particular ends. Politically, the results are policies constructed around institutionally convenient systems of rewards and punishments, rather than in congruence with teachers' desires to create significance in their lives.'*

(Casey 1992: 188)

In the full PhD research the seven in-depth interviewees' stories have been coded using thematic analysis. In desiring to retain the richness of the stories and tell them from within the participants' subjective narrative enables maverick exploration and focus on the tensions which haunt minds. Only a small part of Gabi's story is offered here as an example of analysis. It exposes a small number of key research themes. 1) that backgrounds and experiences affect attitudes to teaching and relationships with learners; (2) that mavericks have 'other worlds' which unleash fantasies, imagined enemies and madnnesses in the mind; (3) They hold core educational beliefs and values; (4) they form and negotiate attitudes to the frameworks and systems.

### **Gabi's story**

*Don't wanna listen to suits*

*Don't wanna be a suit*

*Don't wanna wear a suit*

*That was my head noise at 16*

*I couldn't see past the suit to let anyone enlighten me.*

*This was part of the reason why I decided at 16 to*

*Escape a slow and painful death at the hands of the sarlacc my pet name for my headteacher. For anyone not familiar with star wars the sarlacc was Jabba the huts pet (slide) you may remember it's preferred method of killing was to be digested over 1000 years. My sarlacc lived in a stuffy grammar school where freedom of expression was not encouraged. So I left at 16 with a hand full of lame O levels and chose not to die being slowly digested over 1000 years*

*In the words of Ewan Macgregor's character in train spotting, I chose LIFE or a version of it. Which was Art College.*

*At Art college for the first time in my education my ideas were valued and listened to .we were taught there wasn't a right way or a wrong way to do anything just that if you did it the same way all the time you would always get the same result and sometimes that a good thing, but quite often its not.*

*We were taught to challenge that.*

*We were taught to question our tutors, call there bluff. Tell them "no, I have found a better way". I was lucky; the beauty of Art College is that the students are taught by people from industry practising artists, natural mavericks*

*After 4 years of discovering ways to conjure up original and exciting ideas from a group of individualist teachers at Medway college of art.*

*I started my own business. it took me all over the world and got me chucked out of a few countries. I think I owe the IRS quite a few dollars perhaps that's why they don't want me back*

*Life moves on and life as a fashion buyer, designer and illustrator wasn't easy with 4 kids.*

*I wanted to do something else, looking for answers I went back to visit a lecturer at my old college, to get some advice. he wasn't at his desk but on his desk was a piece of paper that said*

*"Stephen would you be interested some teaching at the College for the distributive trades. Call me if you are. Clive"*

*I thought teaching, how hard can that be.*

*I took that piece of paper and I rang Clive. Needless to say*

Steven never picked up that message and he never got the gig  
I did. So sorry Steven where ever you are.  
that's how my journey in the world of teaching began  
I stood in the lecture theatre on my first day.  
(I must remind you I had totally bullshitted my way into the job)  
50 students staring at me pens poised waiting for me to say something profound.  
In a split second I had to decide do one of three things  
Feign a heart attack  
Die on my arse  
Or start talking  
Again I chose LIFE.  
I told them to put their pens down  
I asked them what they were hoping to learn that afternoon  
They looked at me like I was Jabber the hut (and I was slimmer then) then they  
mumbled something about the history of fashion .My response, as is so often the  
case, just blurted out  
Well we can't learn that in here, we need to go to the V and A museum and see the  
bloody costumes in the flesh. I organised a trip for the following week, thanks to the  
funding from a man in a suit. The students and I spent the rest of the afternoon  
discussing what we already new about costume and the history of it. Some students  
had no knowledge, I had a bit and others had lots. But we shared what we had and  
we all came away that afternoon a little bit wiser and not a pen or piece of paper was  
touched.  
I have taught for many years with out a teaching qualification. Not much writing lots  
of doing. Discussions, performance, role-play, a range of creative ways to make the  
facts stick.  
How do you get 40 disaffected 16 year olds to feel passionate about cubism? I Make  
them fight it out in a seminar, justifying why their art movement is better than the  
impressionists or the romantics or the surrealists. The prize, a Mars Bar. After a while  
I find they hunger for more than just the mars bar they hunger for knowledge.

4 years ago I was finally press ganged by a woman in a suit into studying for a  
formal teaching qualification. My fear was that I would teach differently once I had  
been shown the correct way to teach. It did have a benefit, but not one I was  
expecting.

On my first day I sat in a lecture theatre being talk at by a man in a suit, I was  
terrified not knowing which bits of the lecture were important or what I should write

*down. When I got my first assignment back I hadn't done very well in fact I had done very badly, apparently I hadn't used enough pedagogic language. On the way home from college for the first time in many years I cried. The experience I had had was fear, the fear that some children have everyday at school the fear of failure and not feeling supported. I hadn't put my hand up once to say I don't understand .so why would a child? I had to make a decision did I admit defeat pack up teaching or did I carry on, learn how to use the correct teaching terminology and stick it to the suits I chose LIFE*

*I have got the bits of paper to say I am a proper teacher now but I still fly by the seat of my pants most of the time, I don't always get it right but I am not scared if I don't get it right. The suit is always there with pedagogic language and a health and safety risk assessment. But as long as I have bums on seats and students willing to trust me, I will keep that bad cop away. To keep that trust I have to constantly prove to my students and myself, I am just like them. We need the bad cops to make it all keep ticking over nicely thank you but I am a good cop. And so are you so I hope you let your students see enough of themselves in you, to enable you enlighten them.*

**Maverick mindreading. Identity, agency, reflexivity and power.  
A short narrative analysis.**

The story reveals a teacher's awareness of construction and structuring in life. What is clear from early experiences- learning days of school and 'artschool' is that Mind considers 'learning on the job' as a way forward, as a means to transform lives. This is fundamental for transferring vital skills to learners and requires a very 'hands-on' and practical approach in the classroom, seemingly chaotic at times as they veer into their own perceptions of what it means to make sense of life- nourished by the desire to learn through constant curiosity and creative inquiry. Having shared her experiences, practically demonstrated them and urged students to have a go too, she reveals in a deeper phase of the learning process what needs to be done in order to survive and get on.

Fumbling into and out of situations, making mistakes, but learning. It is considered from a theatrical perspective (presentation of witty story performed by an 'actor'); and tasks are made more colourful by the imaginations that both possess. This concurs with Goffman's theories. She creates an unreal perception in the head where perhaps Gabi can save face, find protection and seek justification through her narration. She talks of 'head noise', and to survive is to view the act of survival as

something of an adventure; a transformative experience, which can lead to the individual thriving in her circumstance.

In the adventure, real-life figures are transposed into stories inhabited by monstrous enemies such as the 'suit' and the 'Saarlac' (Mind). It is all a bit of a game constructed in the head and lived out as a means to escape the dreariness; an expression of the coping mechanism. Mind considers her release from the clutches of monotony as choosing 'LIFE' – a phrase taken directly from **John Hodge's** poem in the film, **Trainspotting**. Here LIFE is considered as choices to improve self and quality of life, but which ultimately end up improving very little. LIFE is a hero- the force to counteract suit and Saarlac. It is the fight of tension playing out in her thinking as she negotiates daily tensions. Gabi hooks into this phrase on a rather more positive note; 'I chose LIFE' serves as her reversal or antithesis of the despair of non-achievement and is viewed as a ticket into freedom from certain oppressions on a route to fulfilment and opportunity. This tracks her habitus and its movement into new fields where emotional and cultural capital are traded as gains in her learning from past ills and out of a desire and passion for the arts. A change in experience and status occurs. This is essential if a model is to be established to enable her learners to do the same.

Interestingly, the contemporary sociologist, Anthony Giddens, in his structuration theory (1984), refers to the ability of an 'agent', in this case it could be the teacher, to be able to consciously alter our (his and others) place in the social structure through a self-knowing interaction which he calls 'reflexivity'. What is known and shared in the classroom could be considered as important because 'social knowledge, as self-knowledge is potentially emancipatory'.

For us, (M and T), the social capital and awareness of habitus as it interacts and reflects our positions and relationship with learners participants becomes dynamically enabling. As storytellers with history, present and a future we are willing to take pedagogic risks to attain for themselves and learners, some freedom. We choose this regardless of what is legitimate, but in being aware of what we are doing are nonetheless still troubled by tensions. Our stories allude to the uncertainties, tensions, constraints and contradictions of our lifeworlds in educational contexts- our histories and gained capital currencies; the necessity to perform on the educational stage as actors to present ourselves everyday to legitimise and mask maverick intentions.

Foucault, talking on knowledge and power considers this lineage, or as he put it, 'genealogy' (1979, 1980), that the *'history that bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of language.'* (1980: 114)

He argues from detailed analysis drawn from institutional life that the connectedness of knowledge to power is internalised within the individual and leads to a growing awareness of the body which could be both the source of controlled power and in its counter state, the resistance also. Recontextualising his findings into modern society Foucault declared that power, because of this internalisation has become essentially ubiquitous, *'...the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.'* (Foucault, 1980: 39)

Perhaps Gabi Mind would prefer to revise her recurring statement as 'I chose lives' according to Foucault's power internalisation or Giddens's reflexive approach. The relevance to Gabi Mind and Curtis Tappenden who share fellow professional interests lies in active pursuit of power and freedom free of hindering constraints. The teacher-learner relationship seeks to assist learners in making relevant life choices in relation to the development of their learning lives. That individual lives are now complex and layered with lifeworlds intersecting at many levels suggests that there is a significance to this type of teacher attitude and behaviour. Teacher identity and a recognition of the need to be reflexive is in itself empowering and transformative. It is also risky where no set outcomes can be predicted. There is a strong suggestion that authenticity as signified through certain modes of behaviour and presented image including that of the 'actor' (Goffman, 1959), can be linked to the maverick definition. It is not just a creative or subversive whim; there is an ongoing drive in both to pursue their vision, come what may.

Where both had stable, middle class upbringings and the privilege of a grammar school education, their own need for alteration of position in the complex structure of society could never compare with the genuine hardships of poverty experienced by some. That they are from comfortable backgrounds offers the facility and a good starting position to consider the notion of betterment. They both had the benefit of an open and engaging home setting, conversation in a family learning environment; stable and loving parenting within the nuclear family unit. The capital can be investing in their current field of teaching to offer value to learners where this may not fully exist.

There is a strong implication for Gabi that the rules and regulations, which formed part of the structuring of privilege, ceased to be fully acceptable. Mind and

Tappenden reveal a need for reflexivity, for 'ontological security', a term defined by Giddens of the trust placed in social structure (1984) depending on the sum of social factors at work, from which social transformation could occur. A restlessness of self in comfortable settings jarred against the need to explore identity in the wider, unsheltered world is a motivator. Exploring status and position, by questioning, and where necessary bucking the system and re-inventing themselves as they interrogate knowledge and power in the teaching context partially frees the maverick from the tensions which haunt.

It is essential that in current contexts the wilfully intended maverick recognises life histories and identities of self as authentic. The value and importance of authenticity cannot be underplayed in their agency- the building of relationships, dissemination of power, and transformation of learning lives. Stahl in Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003), is pessimistic

*'there is no longer space for originality...[ ]...the 'real' reduced to the play of surfaces, an infinite series of signifiers signifying more signifiers. Creative practices such as fashion, art and music become depthless manifestations of post-modern pastiche, where any potentially radical politics (identity, resistance or otherwise) is thus erased. If there is no originality, there is no authenticity.'*

Within 'Fields of cultural production and education (Bourdieu,1993), the maverick educator could be interpreted in Bourdieu as a subset. It is defined and considered in this paper in part-narrative which plays a vital role in negotiating the tension of *'the overarching field, of which these narrower fields are subsets...[and this ]... is the field of power.'*

(Bourdieu,1993)

It is a good reason to continue to define and defend.

## **ENDS**

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