Healthcare students' experiences of writing at university: negotiating theory, practice and identity formation

Caroline Hawthorne

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Teaching

Department of Language and Linguistics

University of Essex

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With grateful thanks to my participants and to CHASE for funding my research.

ABSTRACT

Relating theory to practice is a key requirement of many Health and Social Care (HSC) programmes at university, Academic Reflective Writing (ARW) has become a common type of assessment within HSC disciplines (Bowman & Addyman, 2014b). This hybrid style of academic writing combines elements of third person reference to theory with more reflective first-person observations on professional practice–a genre that often presents challenges for student writers (Gimenez, 2008). This study focuses on six HSC students from different subjects, at varying stages of their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The project adopts a phenomenological approach analysing data collected from online survey, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and writing samples. It explores participating students' perceptions of the theory-practice relationship; the impact of intersecting personal professional and academic identities on writing and varying practices relating to first person and third person pronoun-use in hybrid-style essays. Findings point to underlying epistemological complexities in subjects that draw from both the sciences and more personal ways of knowing and the resulting uncertainties for students who are required to link theory and practice in their assessment. Results also reveal the important part played by a developing sense of professional identity and the way in which increased clinical knowledge and experience positively affects students' sense of academic voice. Finally, analysis of student writing demonstrates a considerable diversity of practice in the use of 'I' in hybrid assignments and supporting interview data indicates varying student attitudes towards shifting between first and third person forms. The paper concludes with a number of recommendations including the need for greater transparency in the way health-related disciplines frame

knowledge and for more opportunities to discuss the practical implications this would have for student writers on Health and Social Care courses.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The relatively recent academisation of vocational health care related subjects in higher education has created a number of challenges for student writers. Moving between the 'two life worlds'(Strauss & Mooney, 2011, p.546) of lecture-based theoretical instruction and real-life professional practice requires students to negotiate and reconcile two very different domains. This process of vocational academisation (McEwen & Trede, 2014), has led to a growing interest in the academic literacy status and needs of students engaged in these professionally oriented qualifications. Healthcare students are often mature and may experience a range of challenges associated with juggling the complex responsibilities of family life and work with academic study (Gopee & Deane, 2013; Lillis &Turner 2001; Taylor & House, 2010). According to Ivanič (1998) returning to education as a mature student can prompt feelings of deep uncertainty which may adversely affect individual self-esteem and confidence. She goes further to suggest that the unfamiliar conventions of academic writing may lead to a crisis of identity for many students and argues that writing can be perceived as a serious 'stumbling block' (p.6). Whitehead (2002) points to a lack of preparedness and support for the kinds of text types that students may encounter in HE institutions and observes how learners often experience a disconnect between writing in university and writing requirements at work. Similarly, Gimenez (2008) highlights the challenges facing student nurses and midwives as they are required to present work in a range of genres including care critiques and reflections on practice. He notes how the need to link theory and reflection on practice underpins many written tasks, often requiring students to adopt impersonal third person forms to discuss elements of practice. As well as the inherent linguistic challenges of this (Ryan, 2011), Gimenez (2008) and

Hyland (2002b) point to the possible impact this may have on the writer's sense of self.

As a mature student myself, I have been interested in academic writing–the mechanics of it, the impact of it and the challenges of it, for many years. However, the inspiration for this research was borne out of my professional role as an Academic Skills Tutor at a UK-based university where I have worked closely with undergraduate and postgraduate students supporting them in the development of their academic writing skills. This has highlighted the many challenges faced by students in different disciplines adjusting to a range of disciplinary-specific text types, referencing systems, lecturer expectations and ways of knowing. However, my attention has been particularly drawn to the challenges faced by Health and Social Care (HSC) students. Often mature and returning to university after a break, these students find themselves in the relatively rare position at university of having to study and undertake professional placements at the same time. They are assessed on both their practical and theoretical knowledge and often required (as noted above) to link their own experience of placements to theories learnt in the classroom.

Having spoken with many HSC students over the years, I have become interested in the way they cope with the practical and academic demands of such courses but more particularly in the way they reconcile real-life professional experience with theoretical knowledge and the implications that this may have for their sense of writer identity. They have often expressed feelings of conflict about the mismatch between theory and practice and the subsequent dilemmas this poses for their writing. I also sense their confusion about combining formal and more informal ways of writing in assignments and a frustration on occasions that they are not able to

write more personally and openly about the complex and deeply human issues they encounter on a daily basis.

Whilst exploring issues of student writer identity, I have encountered many critical theories concerning the privileging of certain types of knowledge at university and the dominance of particular academic writing styles and genres. This has caused me to reflect on my own role as an Academic Skills Tutor and the part I may have unwittingly been playing in reinforcing and perpetuating dominant academic practices at university. As a teacher of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), I find myself at the centre of a controversial debate about the impact this kind of provision has on writer identity and development. Much criticism has been levelled at EAP within the context of Higher Education because of its role in generating income by teaching transferable skills rather than exploring deeper issues about writing practices at university (Molinari, 2022). Consequently, my own identity as an EAP professional is often conflicted because whilst I want students to become academic insiders, I am aware I could inadvertently be helping to reinforce the very conventions responsible for marginalising them. I take some comfort from English (2011) who similarly seems to have wrestled with the ethical implications of this issue from both her perspective as an academic literacy developer and as a lecturer. Although acutely aware of the power of dominant practices, she describes how as a lecturer she has more ‘skin in the game’ (p.58) and wants her students to achieve the best results they can. Le Ha (2009) echoes this dilemma of wanting to challenge the powerful norms surrounding academic conventions, without disadvantaging students in the process.

As well as seeking to better understand the unique challenges faced by HSC students when writing about theory and practice, I am eager to explore more ethical

ways of supporting student writers that allow them to make fully informed decisions about the way they represent themselves in their texts. This research uses three interrelated papers to explore issues surrounding theory, practice, professional and academic identity faced by healthcare student writers as they move between their lives in the classroom and the real world of professional practice. The first paper explores students' perceptions of the connection between theory and practice and how this might affect their characterisations of the relationship in their writing. It also examines the challenges of linking literature to practice and of reconciling different aspects of writer identity in assignments. Paper two examines the impact on writer voice of having to negotiate intersecting aspects of professional and academic identities as students move between the classroom and work placements. The final paper explores the complex epistemological positions of newer disciplines and hybrid subjects in particular which draw on theoretical and practical ways of knowing. It reviews linguistic features of identity in the disciplines and analyses use of 'I' and other third person alternative nouns (e.g. the author) in samples of participants' writing to better understand the challenges of linking theory to practice. The three papers are prefaced by a review of literature and a summary of methodological approaches adopted in individual papers, followed by an overall discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The following review of literature sets the three papers in the context of broader debates and theoretical frameworks that have a bearing on this research. The areas covered include theories relating to academic literacies; identity/voice and agency; the role of the reader in shaping academic voice; the impact of epistemological assumptions on writer identity; the relationship between theory and practice in the field of healthcare and finally reflective writing practices in HSC programmes.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic literacies versus English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

As early as the 1980's some commentators had begun to express their concerns about academic writing. Fairclough, (1989) drew attention to the dominant, even oppressive nature of academic discourse which forced student writers to yield to the powerful norms and values of the academy. Similarly, Bartholomae (1986) observed how difficult it was to push against academic conventions and how 'every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university' (p.134). In her influential work on writer identity, Ivanič (1998) was also exploring issues of writer identity referring to language as a 'site of struggle' (p.117) and to the 'powerful shaping social forces'(p.32) within the academy, highlighting the connection between unequal power and the construction of identity. Born out of these increasing tensions about the nature of academic writing was the Academic Literacies movement. In their seminal 1998 research Lea and Street reframed the debates about the deterioration in standards of student writing at university by shifting the focus from problems with the writing and/or students to a broader institutional view of writing which acknowledged the complexities and contested nature of writing practices.

The Academic Literacies movement encompassed earlier Study Skills and Academic Socialisation paradigms, but successfully moved the narrative on, refocussing the attention 'at the level of epistemology and identities' (Lea & Street, 1998, p.59). In other words, the way in which knowledge is created and framed in different contexts and the effects on writer identity of the power dynamic between writers, readers and

wider institutions became an area of interest. For example, attention was shifted to the identity struggles that students may experience when switching from one writing genre to another or when required to use impersonal third-person styles of writing. Lea and Street observed how student writers were often aware of the difficulties of satisfying diverse lecturer and disciplinary requirements and noted one student's comment that 'everybody seems to want something different' (1998, p.164). Recognising and understanding these varying disciplinary demands is not without its own challenges as Fitzpatrick and Costley (2017) suggest how the 'messiness' (p.116) of disciplinary practices hinders the development of clear and effective academic writing support strategies. Hyland (2002b) refers to the 'strong pressure' (p.1094) exerted by 'dominant' (p.1092) discourse communities to adopt particular identities. Other research emphasises the degree of culture shock that may be experienced by students entering university, especially for those from minority groups and diverse socio-economic backgrounds (Beasley & Pearson, 1999; Krause & Coates, 2008).

Attitudes to knowledge and knowledge making have also been identified as potential challenges to student writers. Ivanič, (1998) suggests that the privileging of certain ways of knowing and being at university make it difficult, particularly for mature students, to integrate themselves in the academic community. More recent commentators such as Molinari (2022) argue that academic writing is still 'troubled' (p.131) because it continues to privilege largely written formats which appear not to represent diverse student literacies. Despite recent interest in more inclusive multimodal approaches to academic writing designed to address such criticisms (e.g., Andrews, 2010; Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; English, 2015; Kiriakos &Tienari, 2018; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007; Winter, 2003), Molinari (2022, p.148) argues that

academic discourse communities are still less receptive to ‘multilingual, multimodal, dyslexic, autistic, artistic, social, cultural and physical repertoires’ and suggests that deeper systemic changes are needed to address continuing inequalities in the field of academic writing. She also draws attention to the part played by EAP or English for Academic Purposes courses in reinforcing more standardised approaches to writing tuition. Such courses have seen considerable growth in universities since the 1980s and the expansion in numbers of international students (Alexander et al. 2008). Most universities offer this kind of writing or language support, but Molinari questions its role, suggesting that such support programmes may be reinforcing more reductive, skills-based approaches to writing rather than encouraging students to explore broader institutional factors affecting writing practices. She suggests that EAP courses create a tension between more progressive practices and a narrower focus on the linguistic features of writing. Ding and Bruce (2017) also question the role of EAP courses suggesting that they are susceptible to ‘commodification and McDonaldisation’ (p.42) in the highly pressurised business-model environment of universities.

The impact of dominant academic practices can, according to some research, be seen in student attitudes towards risk taking and the projection of identity in their own writing. Pare (2019) is unsurprised by this as he observes the difficulties for experienced writers in establishing identity and therefore recognises why novice writers may find this challenging. Similarly, Thurlow, Morton and Choia (2019, p.47) observe how socio-politico-cultural factors have a restraining influence on student writers’ sense of agency (especially those returning to study) making them more ‘risk-averse’ and wanting to ‘play[ing] it safe’ (p.53). These feelings of writing-identity anxiety have also been observed by Cameron (2012, p.253) who believes

that most students are anxious to conform to whatever is defined as ‘correct usage’ in order to achieve the optimum outcome. In his work exploring L2 writer experiences (but arguably relevant also to L1 writers) Hyland (2002b, p.1107) also found a reluctance to project voice amongst his students which he attributes to a range of factors including ‘recommendations from style manuals, uncertainties about disciplinary conventions, culturally shaped epistemologies, culture specific views of authority, conflicting teacher advice, or personal preferences’ and reader-writer power dynamics.

Despite the many constraining factors at play, commentators in the field of writer identity remain optimistic about the extent to which student writers can make their voices heard. Hyland (2010, p.162) argues that ‘individual agency is not eliminated’ and Ivanič (1998) believes that individuals are involved in the construction of their identities (if not always consciously). Ivanič and Camps (2001, p.7) characterise their participants as both ‘subject to, and active agents of...types of positioning’- suggesting that student writers can choose to ‘conform to or to resist’ (p.7) pressures of the academy. Ivanič (1998) talks about one of her students (Rachel) whose identity is revealed through her positioning as a feminist and her use of humour. However, on some occasions Rachel seems to suggest that she is having to create a new identity at odds with her authentic self, noting how ‘sometimes it’s like the working-class person trying to speak posh’ (p.156). Some parts of her work she feels that she owns more than others and in her own words she feels as if she is ‘playing a game’ (p.157). Ivanič also refers to the agency of writers in choosing to include the voices of others and how to use them (p.216) something that is also echoed by Hutchings (2014). There does seem to be consensus that student writers can and do have a voice – indeed Hyland (2008 p.6) argues that ‘writing can’t not

have voice'. However, many of the same theorists suggest, students need help from their teacher to identify the 'space' (Cameron, 2012, p.256) where identities can be shaped.

Identity, voice and agency

Although recent decades have seen the publication of numerous studies on the subject of identity or voice in academic writing, it remains a steadfastly ambiguous and disputed concept (Hyland & Sancho Guinda, 2012). The variety of research in this field points to the breadth and complexity of writer identity as a concept. Areas of interest include the notion of self-representation (e.g., Ivanič, 1998); linguistic features of writer identity (e.g., Hyland, 2002a, 2002b, Matsuda, 2015); identity issues for particular student groups, such as L2 students (Hyland, 2002b) and PhD students (e.g., Morton & Storch, 2019; Pare, 2019); the impact of institutional power and discourse communities on writer identity (e.g., Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Molinari, 2022); the role of genres in shaping identity (e.g., English, 2011; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007); changes to identity across time (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010); identity in the disciplines (Hyland, 2001b) and the role of the reader in creating writer voice (Hyland & Sancho Guinda, 2012; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Morton and Storch, 2019;). Summing up what we mean by voice is therefore as Tardy (2012, p.34) suggests 'no simple feat'. However, there are at least some areas of convergence in the theoretical characterisations of voice with many studies emphasizing the overlapping influences of both social and personal factors in the shaping of voice (e.g., Bond, 2020; Tardy, 2012;) and the dialogic nature of interaction between the writer, the text and the reader (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981; Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Canagarajah, 2015; Sancho Guinda & Hyland, 2012; Tardy, 2012;

Silver, 2012). This research touches upon many of these different aspects of writer identity and the following sections explore them in more detail.

The notion that academic writing is (and should be) impersonal has for some time been challenged in the literature (Cameron, 2012; Fulbrook, 2003; Hyland, 2001b). Despite often conflicting advice from writing guides, institutions and subject lecturers, students are less likely to be asked to 'leave their personalities at the door'(Hyland, 2002a, p.351) and increasingly urged to find and articulate their own voice as writers (Hyland, 2002b). In her seminal 1998 work, focusing on the experiences of a group of mature students, Ivanič asserted that academic writing is in fact an 'act of identity' (p.32). Working from a perspective of discourse, she argues that our lives and experiences impact on the way we express ourselves. She provides a useful framework for making sense of identity in writing that incorporates four aspects : autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author, and possibilities for self-hood (p. 23). While Autobiographical self refers to the writer's background, or 'roots' (p.24), discoursal self relates to the impression created by the writer through written features (also known as voice) often with the reader in mind. Self as author, on the other hand, concerns the writer's assertion of their 'position, opinions and beliefs' (Ivanič,1998, p. 26) and finally possibilities of selfhood are 'socially available options' (Matsuda, 2015, p.145) or environmental variables that can both 'enable' and 'constrain' (Ivanič, 1998, p.32) writers over time. Ivanič observes how some writers may be more aware of some of the four aspects than others but suggests that this framework helps us to unpick some of the complexities of writer identity. Interwoven into her framework is also the Bakhtinian (1981) notion that all discourse contains the voices of others emphasising the writer's role in managing or choregraphing other voices alongside their own (p.216).

To explore the concept of identity creation and in particular the role of discourse in shaping voice, Ivanič (1998) analysed eight writing extracts from her students in terms of their use of clauses, verbs, nouns, tenses, mood and lexis. Like Ivanič, other studies (e.g. Matsuda, 2015; Stock & Eik-Nes, 2016) have focused on the diverse linguistic features of voice such as hedging, boosting, attitude markers, directives and questions to mention but a few. However, a key characteristic of voice that features prominently in the literature is that of first-person pronouns specifically and self-mention more generally (Cameron, 2012; Hyland, 2001a ,2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2008; Hyland & Jiang, 2017; Molinari, 2022; Morton & Storch,2019; Thurlow et al. 2019;Tang & John, 1999). Like Ivanič (1998), Hyland (2002b) regards academic writing as an 'act of identity' (p.1092) and one where the writer is negotiating disciplinary constraints and establishing a voice or identity of their own (Hyland, 2008). Exploring personal pronoun usage in eight different disciplines, Hyland (2001b) observed how first-person 'I' usage was higher in softer sciences (e.g. Philosophy and Sociology) but the need to demonstrate originality and to establish a position meant that 'I' and other types of self-mention were also visible in the harder sciences.

In a more recent study, Hyland and Jiang (2017) examined the trend towards the use of more informal language in academic papers over the past 50 years. Although personal pronoun usage was only one of the markers of informality measured, it did account for 45% of the overall increase in informal language. This demonstrates changes in disciplinary practices, particularly in the hard sciences and chimes with notions of fluidity of practice (Becher & Trowler, 2001) within disciplinary discourses. Across his extensive research in this area, Hyland has also considered issues of

identity for more experienced (Hyland, 2010) and less experienced writers (Hyland, 2002b). Drawing on data from 64 Hong Kong students Hyland (2002b) observes how nervous students were about using first-person pronouns because it felt too risky in terms of declaring a particular stance or opinion. Instead, they preferred to 'downplay' (p.1104) their position and to adopt a strategy of 'author invisibility' (p.1104) because it was safer. Such concerns about less experienced writers are often expressed by Hyland (2001b, 2002b, 2010) and he observes that a lack of experience can in fact lead to an 'acute sense of dislocation and uncertainty' (2002b, p.1093). This concern is echoed by other commentators – Pare (2019) notes how voice is difficult for experienced writers to achieve and by implication much more of a challenge for those less experienced. The part played by 'time' and experience in the development of identity have also been explored in the literature. For example, Burgess and Ivanič (2010) point to the changing nature of identity over time and suggest that it is unhelpful to refer to identity without also including some kind of timeframe. They agree with Lemke (2000) that writing may be written in a relatively short timeframe, but the perception of the writing and the writer may change over time. The reasons for writer caution (which will be explored later in more detail) have been variously attributed to potentially misleading style guides (Cameron, 2012; Hyland, 2002b; Morton & Storch, 2019) as well as to broader political, social and cultural issues that may act to constrain writer identity (Hyland, 2002b; Thurlow et al., 2019).

The part played by personal pronoun use in academic writing has received much attention from other commentators. Like Hyland, Tang and John (1999) see first person pronoun use as the 'most visible manifestation' (p.23) of writer identity and they devised a framework to categorise the different functions of 'I' ranging from 'I as

representative' to 'I as opinion holder' (p.29). Similarly, and more recently, Morton and Storch (2019) in their study into attitudes to student voice amongst PhD supervisors noted how one supervisor saw it as the 'ultimate way of showing themselves' (p.20). They establish a link between choice of pronouns and disciplinary practices and observed how voice develops alongside disciplinary knowledge and an awareness of reader expectations. For Molinari (2022) the use of 'I' has strong epistemological connotations because it can, for example, if used in relation to ethnographic research, signal the researcher's attitude to their own research, reminding us that the data are not 'out there' (p.124), in other words, it is the researcher who chooses what to include or to leave out.

Conventions surrounding pronoun use in health care related academic writing have also received some attention. For example, the practice of switching between first and third person in hybrid-style assignments that incorporate elements of theory and experience is a common requirement in many health and social care related subjects (Bowman & Addyman, 2014b). Ivanič (1998) points to issues of identity involved in switching between theoretical and experiential writing and Gimenez (2008) highlights the negative impact on students of using third person to discuss their own practice. Thurlow et al. (2019, p.54) refer to the use of 'I' as a 'hot button' topic which academic staff may find challenging to discuss except in superficial linguistic terms. Cameron (2012) emphasises the tension in academic writing between having to assert yourself and exhibit suitable deference to others at the same time. She laments the 'proscription of I' (p. 250) arguing from a feminist perspective that it is 'insufferably elitist' (p.50) and that this approach makes students anxious to conform. While she accepts the constraints imposed by disciplinary practices, she also believes it is possible for writers to 'negotiate their own positions' (p. 256) and, like

Hyland, she urges teachers to support student writers in their development and understanding of voice. Cameron's exasperation about proscriptive attitudes to the use of 'I' is echoed by Fulbrook (2003) who urges academics within the field of critical care nursing to embrace the use of 'I' and by implication the value of personal knowledge and learning that practitioners bring to their subject.

Writers' decisions to adopt linguistic and rhetorical features such as personal pronouns are often influenced by perceived expectations of their readers. A number of studies point to the role of the reader in shaping or influencing writer identity. For example, Ivanič (1998) notes how some students may try to second guess what their reader is looking for and experiment with different discoursal identities to see which ones might produce the best results. She also hints at the impact on the person of switching between identities when she records the thoughts of one mature student who says, 'It's like a working-class person trying to speak posh…one minute with the dinner jacket on and the next with the cleaning outfit' (p.155). The notion of 'playing a game' or being in some way 'phoney' crops up frequently amongst Ivanič's participants and raises questions about the extent to which students feel obliged to change themselves in order to be successful at university. Ivanič uncovered a tension in some of her participants between the person they thought the reader wanted to see and the real them. This hints at a possible threat to or dislocation of identity, however Ushioda (2011b, p.205) casts a positive light on switching identities by framing them as 'transportable'. In other words, the ability to change allows students to exercise autonomy in deciding how they wish to engage with and represent different aspects of themselves. Far from being a negative consequence, Ushioda sees this as a way of helping individual's identities to evolve and move towards much desired 'future possible selves' (p.20).

The relationship between identity and agency is complex and interrelated. Agency is often characterised as inextricably or symbiotically linked to notions of personal and social identity (Bond, 2020; Holland et al*,* 1998; Hutchings, 2014; Oyserman et al.,2012). Although research into agency and academic writing, specifically, is limited, there is considerable literature relating to notions of agency in learning, in particular second language students. Despite the contested nature of agency, certain commonalities emerge from the literature. For example, the notion that human action is impacted by the social and cultural environment around individuals appears frequently (e.g. Ahearn, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Mercer, 2012; Miller, 2016) even if the precise nature of those contextual influences may vary. Ahearn (2002) maintains that 'agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (p.29) and links her own definition to Bourdieu's 1977 seminal work on Habitus. In doing so, she moves away from the common association of agency with 'free will' and situates action within the context of affordances, in other words the potentially enabling and/or constraining factors in the environment. Larsen-Freeman (2019) further unpacks these contextual influences by identifying them as '…social, spatial, material, cultural, temporal, relational and structural' (p.62) adding that individual attitudes and responses to affordances also influence notions of agency. Similarly, Holland et al. (1998) refer to the elaborate social network that exists around us and suggest that this constitutes a 'space of authoring' (p.210), in other words, a place where factors inside and outside of the individual interact in subtle ways to initiate or hinder action.

The idea of agency is frequently associated with learners, but the precise nature of constraining or enabling elements impacting students is less well understood. Miller

(2016) suggests that students are often characterised as highly agentive but notes how contextual advantages may go unacknowledged. She concedes that all language learners can make choices but stresses the impact that particular contextual factors may have. Mercer (2012) argues that the right kind of environment is only part of being a successful student and emphasises the importance of the student's own self-belief or mindset. She notes the unpredictable way in which these factors (e.g. mindset, affordances, and resources) may combine and react and therefore characterises agency as a 'complex dynamic system' (p.43). She suggests that a multitude of factors including metacognitive knowledge, motivation and even the weather can affect an individual's sense of agency, and concludes that learner agency can be situated contextually, interpersonally, temporally, and intrapersonally (p.46). Like Mercer, Gao and Jun Zhang (2011a) also identify metacognitive knowledge as a key ingredient in successful language learning and argue that metacognition and agency should in fact be seen as complementary (p.38). Some of Miller's (2012) participants reported enabling factors(e.g. resources) and constraining factors (e.g. childcare and work), but all characterised themselves as agentive. In fact, some, went to considerable lengths to make the most of their contexts by deploying a kind of 'tactical agency' (p.460).

Research into agency within healthcare has tended to focus on the patient experience and improving autonomy for service users (e.g. Armstrong, 2014; Midtgaard, Stelter, Rorth & Adamsen, 2007; Ocloo, Goodrich, Tanaka, Birchall-Searle, Dawson & Farr, 2020) rather than on healthcare students themselves. However, research into agency and the experiences of language learners, provides insights into issues of agency and language amongst all students, including those studying healthcare-related subjects. Notions of agency in writing are often closely

linked with discussions about writer identity (Hutchings, 2014) and some researchers attribute to agency what others might associate with identity. For example, Ahearn (2001) argues that agency is 'grammatically encoded' (p.37) into language and can often be seen in the relationship between subject, agent and object. She refers to the cultural variations in the way that agency may be grammatically expressed and suggests that pronoun use is also a key indicator of writer agency. She investigates agency in language from three perspectives, namely 'linguistic structure'; 'socio-historical processes' and 'discourse' at surface level and at a broader level of 'discourse as a form of power to which we are all subordinated' (p.45). Ahearn also points to the significance of 'meta-agentive discourse' (p.42), in other words the way in which people talk about agency and the extent to which they do (or do not) accept responsibility for their own and other's actions. Miller (2012) analyses transcripts of interviews with participants (about language learning) to identify instances of agentive and non-agentive language use, focussing particular attention on participants' use of modal structures in expressing their own sense of agency. She observes how her interview participants use modal language structures, and personal pronouns, to express their sense of agency, for example: 'I know I have to practice more and more…' (p.463). Unlike the spoken language where this sense of personal agency may be more easily detected, in written discourse, especially academic writing, expressions of agency are, according to Hutchings (2014, p.5), 'not so visible'. In fact, Hutchings reports on students' experiences of losing their voice on entering university (compared with professional settings) and subsequent struggles with expressing identity and agency in writing. She suggests that agency is hard to pin down in academic writing because it relates to the way in which writers 'weav[e] together' (p.11) and engage with other voices.

Other commentators have linked genre choices or preferences to expressions of writer agency. Cameron (2012) acknowledges the constraints that academic conventions impose on student writers but suggests that they can exercise some agency through their choices of language. Similarly English (2011) observes how sense of agency increased amongst student writers when they were given some say in the particular genre of their writing. Through selecting non-conventional genres or 'regenring' (p.106) as English describes it, writers experienced a considerable 'shift in their sense of agency' (p.103). By adopting a genre that they were more comfortable with, she observed how student writers were able to gain greater ownership of their writing – in some cases, their sense of identity and agency moved from 'novices' to 'knowers' and even to 'experts'(p.106).

As the focus of this research concerns issues surrounding writer identity for healthcare students, it is important to recognise that decisions regarding representation of self may also be shaped by factors relating to professional identity formation. This section therefore briefly reviews the relevant literature in this area. While the concept of professional identity lacks clear definition, some recurring features relate to behavioural and ethical issues as well as the acquisition of key knowledge and values (Fitzgerald, 2020; Sarraf-Yazdi et al., 2021). These aspects of professional identity have also been noted by Ten Hoeve, Jansen and Roodbol (2014) in their review of factors that influence the development of nurse's self-concept and professional identity, but they also stress the importance of *caring* in professional identity formation. According to the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (2020) health care professionals form their professional identities in a number of different ways. They point to the development of identity over time and the impact on this process of education or training, and also of different interactions in a range of

contexts with colleagues, patients, mentors, supervisors and others in the workplace and wider society. They recommend that health care workers should be self-confident in their professional identities but at the same time remain open to changing environments and different ways of working.

Given the scope of the academy's definition it is perhaps unsurprising that the process of acquiring a professional identity may present considerable challenges to those working in healthcare. Ten Hoeve et al. (2014) found that the public image of professional identity within nursing, for example, was often 'diverse and incongruous' (p.295) owing to insufficient public discourse and a lack of visibility of those engaged in this kind of work. Cornett, Palermo and Ash (2022) in their scoping review of research relating to professional identity formation amongst health professionals found that individuals often experienced tensions between their sense of personal and professional identity. In addition, 44 studies reported the impact of power hierarchies on professional identity development. Their review revealed a complex and interrelated picture of professional identity constructs with factors such as learning and qualifications; lived experience of professional identity; feelings of belonging within organisations; sense of self and relationships and broader workplace and societal factors having a bearing on identity.

MacIntosh (2003) also highlights some of the challenges of acquiring professional identity. In her study of 21 nurses with varying degrees of experience ranging from three to 34 years she identifies three stages of professional identity formation. The first stage, 'assuming adequacy' is heavily task focussed with practitioners familiarising themselves with new skills and having little time to reflect on practice. The second stage (realizing practice) is characterised by practitioners becoming

more aware of ‘discrepancies [and] dissonance’ (p.732) prompting deeper critical reflection and a need for further training and support from colleagues and supervisors. The final stage of the process (developing a reputation) involves consolidation of professional identity through repeated patterns of good practice and on-going development. Like Ten Hoeve et al. (2014) MacIntosh also identifies particular contextual factors such as ‘perceived status and supportiveness’ (p. 738) as having an effect on individuals’ sense of identity. In other words, perceptions of professional identity were often closely linked to how others regarded them and to the nature of interactions with colleagues.

In addition to the many factors already considered that may contribute to professional identity formation, some research has focussed on the part played by academic writing. Although some studies (e.g. Mitchell, 2018; Whitehead, 2002) found that undergraduate students often query the relevance of academic writing to their professional practice, other literature claims a more positive connection between writing and professional development, especially amongst higher-level students. For example, Mitchell, Blanchard and Roberts (2020) argue that professional identity formation amongst nurses is aided by sharply focused writing activities on topics that nurses can relate to their clinical experience. The challenges of writing for healthcare students at university have received considerable attention in the literature (e.g., Goppe & Dean, 2013; Whitehead, 2002) and issues of voice and personal identity have also been explored (e.g. Gimenez, 2008; Ivanič, 1998). However, the impact of intersecting personal and professional identities on academic writing is less well represented in the literature. Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe (2016) suggest that an intersectional identity perspective ‘attunes us to multiple identity dimensions’ and helps us to understand ways in which individuals can work

agentively to construct their own identities. Brown (2022) stresses the fluid nature of identities which are often created within complex power structures in the workplace and advocates for ongoing discussion to better understand the ways in which different identity perspectives may overlap. As healthcare students find themselves simultaneously in the worlds of academia and the workplace, it is important to understand how the intersection of different identities may be impacting on their experiences of writing at university. Whilst issues surrounding writer identity and self-representation have received a great deal of attention in recent years, the relationship between the reader and the writer is less well understood and the next section considers the possible role of the reader in writer identity formation.

The role of the reader

Areas of interest relating to the reader include their role in different text types or genres; the writer's perception of them; rhetorical strategies for engaging them; cultural variations in attitudes towards them; the power relationship between audiences and writers, and finally the ways in which the reader may contribute to shaping the writer's voice.

The role of the reader in different text types has been explored by Hyland (2001a) who focuses attention on three specific genres: academic journals; textbooks and student reports. He observes how writers of academic journals are involved in 'careful interpersonal negotiations' (2001a, p.550) with their readers, balancing their own arguments against possible reader objections, and viewing their audience as a 'community of equals' (2002c, p.219). Although Hyland acknowledges typical readers of journals as academics and students, he shies away from characterising them as any kind of 'concrete reality' (p.551) and suggests that readers are

constructed by their writers, based on assumptions about reader reactions and the nature of academic writing at the level of the discipline (Hyland, 2001a). This subtle interpersonal relationship between academic journal writers and readers, is contrasted by the rather more straightforward relationship, as Hyland characterises it, between the writers and readers of textbooks (2002c). Here, he argues that the power balance is less equal, with the textbook writer establishing a clear teacher-student relationship with their readers. He observes how this more instructional mode of writing features specific linguistic structures (e.g., directives) which firmly establish the authority of the writer over the reader. Hyland goes on to consider the writer-audience relationship experienced by students and their readers, suggesting that student-writers need to acknowledge the seniority of the reader, while also displaying a 'degree of intellectual autonomy' (Hyland 2002c, p.220). This complex dynamic is also observed by Ivanič (1998, p.242) who suggests that the 'balance of power' usually sits with the reader and that this, therefore has an impact on the way student writers perceive and respond to their readers.

Other studies have also drawn attention to students' perceptions of or attitudes to their readers. Wong (2005) explores issues of audience awareness among four L2 student-teachers. He observes how one participant viewed the reader as an 'evaluator' (p.36), one as a 'coach' (p.36), one decided to imagine his students were his audience (instead of the lecturer) and the fourth teacher considered herself as the audience because of the reflective nature of the task. Hansen (2000) examines audience perceptions among L2 students on an EAP course revealing students concerns about writing for non-subject specialist readers. They were unsure how to pitch the subject content for their Academic Skills assessors. Ivanič (1998) found that one of her participants (Rachel) encountered a number of different audience-

related issues. Rachel tried to shape her writing for one particular lecturer, but this left her feeling torn between creating a version of herself for her readers and being 'true to herself…' (p.159). Furthermore, on interviewing one of Rachel's actual readers, Ivanič discovered that efforts to strategically engage with them had misfired, revealing how the writer's perception of the reader may be inaccurate (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010). Taken together, these three studies (Hansen, 2000; Ivanič, 1998; Wong, 2005) reveal the complexities of accurately gauging what the reader is looking for in a particular text.

As well as trying to engage with actual readers and assessors, students at university may also be encouraged sometimes to write as if they were addressing an imagined audience, such as a peer or classmate (The Writing Centre, 2021; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996). Although, clearly designed to be helpful, this kind of approach raises questions about the linguistic and rhetorical strategies needed to simultaneously address an imagined audience (e.g., a classmate) as well as an actual reader (e.g., a lecturer). To better understand the complexities of adjusting to multiple text types and audiences, some research has focussed on the strategies adopted by more experienced writers. According to Berkenkotter (1981, p.396) more accomplished writers make a 'mental sketch of their audience' attempting to fit their writing to their image of the reader. They suggest that professional writers are able to go one step further and can actually 'iternalize their audiences' (p.396). Similarly, Thompson (2001, p.58) observes how good writers are able to 'second-guess' what readers might need or expect. The notion of whether writers should address actual audiences or imagine or invoke their readers has prompted considerable debate. Audience *addressed* perspectives regard the audience as a 'concrete reality' (Ede & Lunsford,1984, p.156) whereas audience *invoked* perspectives view the reader as a

construct, created by the writer (Ede &Lunsford, 1984). Both approaches have their limitations, prompting Ede and Lunsford to propose a framework that incorporates characteristics of both addressed and invoked audiences, while also stressing the importance of relating this combined sense of audience to 'all elements in the rhetorical situation' (p.169). Hyland (2005) similarly seems to favour a conceptualisation of audience that is less concerned with 'actual readers' (p.364) and more focussed on rhetorical context, even if, as he acknowledges, this may present particular challenges to inexperienced writers.

A number of different linguistic features have been associated with audience engagement in different genres. For example, Kuteeva (2011, p.51) identified the main features of reader engagement in her work using wikis as 'transition and frame markers, clear paragraph structure and text organisation patterns'. For Palmieri and Mazzali-Lurati (2016, p.475) examining written texts in a business context, audience-oriented strategies included 'deliberation, negotiation, mediation, lecturing…' In his analysis of 240 published articles from 8 different disciplines, Hyland (2001a) specifically explores the language associated with 'bringing in the reader' (p.549), identifying six specific techniques, including: use of inclusive pronouns (we and you), interjections, questions, directives and references to shared knowledge (p.549). He uses these six strategies as a way of gauging 'writer's assessment of his or her reader's likely response' (p.557) to their article. He observes, for example, how the pronoun 'we', helps us to 'recruit our audiences to our purposes' (p. 562). In a later study, Hyland notes how this is an accepted practice within the academic writing discourse community, but he also goes on to explore the more controversial technique of using directives, identifying three types 'textual, physical and cognitive' (2002c, p.217). He suggests these are riskier strategies because they are 'claiming

greater authority for the writer' (2001a, p.565), thereby endangering the delicately balanced relationship of equals that characterises academic writing. He suggests that cognitive directives, for example 'consider; suppose; let's examine' (p.217) represent the greatest threat to the writer-reader relationship as they seek to persuade or perhaps even manipulate the reader into agreeing with their thinking. Another strategy to engage with the reader that Hyland regards as less risky is that of appealing to 'shared knowledge' (2001a, p.566) using for example the phrase 'of course' (p.567). Hyland (2002c) identifies a number of trends within different disciplines but acknowledges that more research in the disciplines is needed as well as further exploration of other factors affecting audience awareness at a personal, institutional and cultural level.

The concept of audience awareness is further complicated by the existence of cultural variations in perceptions of audience or reader. Alexander et al. (2008) observe how Chinese academic convention dictates that readers as well as writers are responsible for 'filling in the background knowledge' (p.11). Skyrme (2013) similarly observe that readers in Chinese culture, are expected to accept greater responsibility to work out things for themselves and are not therefore considered to be as passive as western audiences. Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996) argue that audience is a 'culturally constrained notion' (p.22), suggesting that those outside L1 culture do not have access to this kind of knowledge. They claim that L2 students may be particularly disadvantaged because the idea of audience is closely tied to that of presenting a strong argument, another culturally shaped activity. The idea of a passive western audience does not go unchallenged by Nystrand (1990) who maintains that 'readers not just writers bring particular purposes to the texts they process' (p.5). Hyland (2002c) in studying texts from his Hong Kong students found

that they struggled particularly with the use of directives, perhaps as he suggests because of the emphasis placed on ‘respect for authority and the importance of face’ (p.216). In a later study (2005), Hyland observes how L2 undergraduates seemed to be aware of linguistic options available to them to engage with their audiences but that they regarded as ‘relatively limited’ (p.375) the need to engage. Hyland (2005) proposes a number of possible reasons for this: effects of ‘institutional power, rhetorical confidence and, perhaps, cultural preference’ (p.375). The concerns of L2 students are clearly seen in these studies, however many writer-reader issues are shared by L1 and L2 writers, not least the impact of different power relationships and dynamics between writers and readers.

A number of studies have explored the effects on writers of the unequal power dynamic that may exist between writers and readers, especially between students and their assessors. In a critique of their own earlier 1984 study, Lunsford and Ede (1996) acknowledge how audiences ‘can not only enable but also silence writers...’ (p.170). They suggest that students’ sense of agency may be adversely affected both by their ‘immediate audience’ (p.170) but also by the positioning of audiences and themselves (i.e., the students) within ‘larger institutional and discursive frameworks’ (p.70-71). They remind us how ‘deeply situated’ (p.172) notions of self-representation and audience are, and how such representations, therefore ‘can never be innocent’ (p.176). Less experienced student writers may be unfamiliar with deeply ingrained writer-reader conventions and unprepared for the different practices they may encounter in the disciplines. In his closing comments, Hyland (2002c) notes how the writing patterns he identified were not necessarily the result of conscious informed choices on the part of the writers, rather he characterises them as deeply embedded ‘unreflective writing practices’ (p. 236), raising more questions

about the power of the reader or institution to shape the nature of discourse. Thurlow et al.,(2019) point to the constraining effects of political, social and cultural barriers observing how even more experienced doctoral students may succumb to pressures of 'playing it safe' (p.53) in their writing. They argue that EAP instruction reinforces prescriptive approaches to academic writing encouraging 'risk-averse' (p.54) attitudes to writing, rather than exploring alternative more creative ways of writing.

As well as writers attempting to shape themselves for their audiences, readers are also involved in creating an impression of the writer's identity through interaction with the writer and the text (e.g. Canagarajah, 2015; Sancho Guinda & Hyland, 2012; Silver, 2012; Tardy, 2012). Matsuda and Tardy (2007) for example emphasise the role of the reader in assessing the identity of the writer through a range of discursive (e.g. form and content) and non-discursive (e.g. font choices) features of writing. They observed how in a blind peer review task, the reviewers used a number of indicators including citation to deduce information about the identity of the writer. Morton and Storch (2019) also emphasised the role of the reader in shaping the identity of the writer by exploring factors in the lives of five supervisors (e.g. personal backgrounds, research interests etc.) to understand how particular impressions of writers might be formed by individual readers. This approach was very much influenced by the idea of voice as dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981), in other words the notion that voice is located in the dialogue or interaction between the writer, the text and the reader (Morton & Storch, 2019). Studies often reported a number of variables influencing the readers' impression echoing Tardy's (2012) characterisation of voice as being 'cumulative' (p.45) rather than determined by any single factor.

As Health and Social Care (HSC) students undertake a vast range of assignment types at university including care critiques, theoretical essays and reflective tasks they have to familiarise themselves with the expectations of many real and imagined audiences. As well as becoming accustomed to different audiences and genres of writing they are also adapting to disciplinary writing requirements and being exposed to varying attitudes to theoretical and practical knowledge. The next section explores in more detail ways in which the disciplines vary in their approaches to both knowledge making and representations of different ways of knowing.

Different ways of knowing: Epistemology

Understanding the conventions and practices of a discipline is an important part of developing academic voice or identity (Hyland, 2001b; Ivanič & Burgess, 2010; Matsuda, 2015). The shared beliefs about such practices and the way in which knowledge is created and distributed helps to define particular disciplines and to shape the writing of those working within them (Flowerdew & Costley, 2017). However, as well as recognising the different patterns of discourse within the disciplines, writers need to understand the form knowledge takes in their subject area and how it is characterised (Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Jones, 2009; Stock & Eik-Nes, 2016). For example, if knowledge is considered to be universal and objective or more context specific, even personal, then this will have a bearing on the way in which writers present their subject as well as themselves (Gimenez, 2012; Hyland, 2001b). In fact, Becher and Trowler (2001) go further to suggest that disciplinary practices and epistemology are ‘inseparably intertwined’ (p.23). This section of the literature review explores issues relating to epistemology in the disciplines more generally but focuses attention specifically on debates surrounding the

characterisation of knowledge in newer health-related disciplines which combine elements of both theory and practice.

The theory of knowledge or epistemology is a branch of philosophy which explores the nature of knowledge. Sol and Heng (2022) observe that for something to constitute knowledge it must be considered to be a 'true belief' (p.90) and there must be good reason or justification to believe it to be so. How knowledge comes into being and is deemed to be 'justified true belief' (p.90) can be viewed in a number of different ways according to varying ontological assumptions about the nature of reality (Clark, Foster, Sloan & Bryman, 2021). For example, positivist researchers would claim that genuine knowledge can only be obtained using scientific methods because social entities are separate from people (Clark et al., 2021). As an epistemological approach, Positivism maintains that knowledge should be objective and generalizable and based on random sampling and large numbers of participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). As a result, positivist researchers tend to employ quantitative methods. By contrast, interpretivism believes that knowledge relies on an understanding and interpretation of human actions and experiences in different situations (Flick, 2023), thereby placing more emphasis on the role of the researcher in interpreting depth and richness of meaning from often smaller scale less representative or generalizable approaches. Pragmatism, another epistemological position, rejects the notion that knowledge is only obtainable from scientific experiments, believing instead that knowledge is an experiential and 'self-correcting process' (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019, p.5). In other words, Pragmatists dismiss the notion that knowledge is either subjective or objective and instead view the process of gathering knowledge as continuous and fluid, employing a range of methods to achieve this. Varying underlying epistemological assumptions are often reflected in

the different attitudes to knowledge, academic culture and practices (including writing) within the disciplines.

The notion of academic disciplines is complex and has attracted considerable attention in recent decades. Becher and Trowler (2001) observe how disciplines often perform a structural role of organising knowledge and establishing boundaries between other clearly defined traditional disciplines and subjects that frame themselves as more interdisciplinary in nature. Krishnan (2009) points to six defining features of disciplines including the accumulation and organisation of a body of specialist knowledge, the use of specific research methods and particular terminologies and technical language. Aligning closely with the epistemological positions outlined above, knowledge within the discipline may be viewed as more or less stable in nature. Becher and Trowler (2001) suggest that if characterised as 'socially constructed' (p.37), disciplinary knowledge may be subject to a number of changes caused by higher-level factors (e.g. shifts in government policy) and lower-level factors such as the influence of individual academics.

Characterisations of traditional disciplinary distinctions often highlight a tendency for the 'hard' sciences (e.g., Maths, Physics, Biology, Medicine) to agree on key concepts and research methods while 'soft' sciences (e.g., Psychology, Sociology) may be less likely to agree on these core issues (Dang, 2018). However, the origins of such distinctions have been challenged more recently, casting doubt on their stability and usefulness, particularly in a landscape where interdisciplinary collaboration is increasingly encouraged and valued (Shapin, 2022). Becher and Trowler (2001) also point to changes in understanding over time and to the challenges of precisely distinguishing, between hard and soft sciences. Krishnan

(2009) suggests that overly rigid definitions and boundaries between disciplines can lead to a lack of organisational and intellectual flexibility.

Issues of disciplinary and academic identity are potentially even more complex for less traditional and/or newer disciplines such as Nursing, Speech therapy and Social Work. Having undergone a relatively recent process of professionalisation and academisation, these disciplines are less fixed in terms of their status and boundaries (Friedrichs & Schaub, 2011; Taylor, Irvine, Bradbury Jones & Mckenna, 2010). For example, the gradual move towards university-based training for nurses did not begin until the 1980s (Taylor et al. 2010) and degrees only became a requirement from 2013 onwards. A similarly recent transformation occurred within Social Work where a three-year degree programme for social workers was only introduced in 2003 (Social Care Institute of Excellence, 2004). In addition to the relative newness of these disciplines, their ways of working more collaboratively with other fields adds to the difficulties of defining their academic and disciplinary status. Gimenez (2011) observes how Nursing and Midwifery, another new discipline, both draw on ideas and concepts from other fields of study including Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology and Medicine. Hunter (2008) also points to the overlap between nursing and midwifery itself suggesting that midwifery has historically 'borrowed liberally' (p.413) from nursing. Friedrichs and Schaub (2011) similarly comment on the interdisciplinary nature of nursing but extend this characterisation to include Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy – areas of study that they suggest have been shaped by more 'traditional scientific' disciplines because of their own developing or less stable academic identities. A combination of their relatively recent transformations into academic disciplines and their interdisciplinary approaches to working have resulted in a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty

surrounding the emerging academic and disciplinary status of these academic subjects (Friedrichs & Schaub, 2011; Northrup, Tschanz & Biasio, 2004).

Adding to this often-ambiguous picture of the academic and disciplinary status of newer health care related subjects is a complex epistemological position born out a tension between the theoretical and practical or applied aspects of knowledge in the caring professions. This is an issue that has received particular attention in the field of nursing (e.g., Gimenez, 2012; Kaya, 2023; Motter, Hassler & Anthony, 2021; Oliveira, Dendasck & Oliveira, 2017; Pawlikowski, Rico & Van Sell, 2018; Peplau, 1988). However, Polkinghorne (2004) extends the debate to 'practices of care' (p.1) more generally which my research in this thesis proposes could also include the fields of Social Work, Speech and Language Therapy and Clinical Psychology. Polkinghorne argues for an approach to caring practices that places a higher priority on the 'situated judgement' (p.2) of professionals than on technically based scientific approaches in caring environments. Often referred to as the *science versus art* debate, many studies have sought to understand the relationship between this technically based or scientific approach to practices of care and the more humanistic person-centred skills associated with healthcare-related professions. Although definitions of nursing science are highly contested (Grace & Zumstein-Shaha, 2019) some key elements are found in all definitions. For example, the science of nursing is characterised as experimental, observation based involving problem-solving skills and logical reasoning (Kaya, 2023). It is frequently described as evidence-based practice (EBP) an approach designed to improve clinical decision making and standards of care (Kitson, 2004). For others, it concerns pathophysiology, disease process, and techniques learned during the nursing education and applied during patient care (Oliveira et al.,2017). The art of nursing, on the other hand, is referred

to as making meaningful connections with individuals, performing activities skilfully and rationally (Kaya, 2023), as well as being caring, compassionate and understanding (Oliveira et al., 2017).

This relationship between science and art has attracted considerable attention. Rizzo Parse (2015) highlights the uncertainty around the status of nursing as either a basic or applied science calling for nurse leaders to reflect on the nature of nursing knowledge and how it should be 'lived' (p.182) in academia and healthcare environments. Pawlikowski et al. (2018) explore distinctions in practice between positivist influenced objective empirical approaches (e.g. establishing a diagnosis) and more humanistic elements of care (e.g. comforting patients by holding their hand) arguing that a combination of science and art is essential for good practice. While some studies emphasise the complementary relationship between science and art (Kaya, 2023; Motter et al. 2021, Oliveira et al., 2017, Peplau, 1988) other commentators point to the interdisciplinarity of nursing (in particular) as a distinguishing feature. For example, the increasing dependence on science and technology in healthcare, challenges traditional perceptions of caring professions as largely vocational or skills-based subjects. Davidson (2019) argues that the unique skill set required for nursing (e.g. assessment, analysis, problem solving and decision-making) makes it a candidate for inclusion as a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subject. He suggests that had it not been for the entrenched sexist attitudes towards nursing as a largely female field of study, it may have already gained STEM status. Oerther (2018) goes further to suggest that an entirely new category – 'STEMpathy' (coined by Thomas Friedman)—could be created to reflect the uniquely hybrid and interdisciplinary nature of nursing which draws on both science and person-centred humanistic skills.

As an engineer himself, and an ‘honorary nurse’ (p.5) Oerther (2018) argues that Florence Nightingale was the first environmental engineer because she understood the value of fresh water, cleanliness and light. He therefore regards nursing as a natural member of the STEM family.

The science versus art debate points to a much deeper tension in terms of epistemological assumptions about knowledge in health-related disciplines. It not only raises questions about the degree to which these subjects can be regarded as either theoretical or practical (or both) (Rizzo Parse, 2015), but perhaps more importantly probes the precise nature of the relationship between knowledge and practice. In other words, whether knowledge resides entirely in the science or if ‘practical knowledge’ exists outside or in conjunction with scientific knowledge, and if so, how it should be viewed. Over three decades ago, Schön (1983, 1991) was grappling with what he referred to as a ‘widening rift between universities and the professions’ (p.viii) and was calling for a fresh take on the epistemology of practice. In his exploration of professions including architects, psychotherapists, and engineers, he points to the difficulties that they face when simultaneously managing frequent changes in theory and practice. Contrary to some of the literature reviewed here, he makes a distinction between what he characterises as more stable professions based on hard sciences, such as Health, and those professions less rooted in science, for example, Social Work. He does, however, provide an insightful analysis of the relationship between researchers and practitioners, asserting that the former are regarded as the producers of knowledge, while the latter are perceived as the appliers of knowledge.

According to Schön, the role of researchers is to provide the knowledge that solves problems of practice, and role of the practitioners is to provide the researchers with further issues to be solved. Based on this analysis, knowledge is characterised as *coming down* from the researchers with feedback *going back up* to the researchers in order to continue the cycle of knowledge creation. This very much conforms to the positivist tradition of objective knowledge creation separate from individual beliefs and opinions (Clark et al. 2021). Schön's (1983, 1991) analysis highlights the mismatch between the stable positivist world of research and the 'complexity, uncertainty, instability [and] uniqueness' of practice (p.39). He also questioned the emphasis on the problem solvers (the researchers) seeking instead to uncover more about the role of the problem setter (the professional or practitioner) in knowledge creation. Schön suggests that for example in the fields of psychiatry and social work non-technical ways of framing problems (to be solved) render positivist approaches ineffective. He regards the uncertain and messy world of practice as fundamentally incompatible with underpinning epistemological assumptions of positivism and technical rationality (p.43). He proposes instead that we seek to identify an epistemology of practice that exists within the 'intuitive processes' (p.49) or art of practice. He suggests that a different 'kind of knowing' (p.50) exists when professionals are engaged in practical action and that repeated reflections or deliberations in practice produce 'knowledge in action' (p.59), making the practitioner a *researcher* within the practical setting. Despite his arguments in favour of an epistemology of practice, Schön expresses concerns that this kind of 'professional knowing' (p. 69) may not be accepted or legitimised. Essentially, Schön characterises the role of the practitioner as agentive mediator (between theory and practice) and therefore legitimate creator of professional knowledge.

Schön's attempts to establish an epistemology of practice drew attention to differences between theoretical and practical knowledge, however more recent research demonstrates the variation in attitudes to practical knowledge within and between disciplines that incorporate elements of practice. In fact, according to Becher and Trowler (2001) such attitudes seem to be inextricably linked to epistemological assumptions within disciplines. For example, Gimenez (2012) argues that while nursing adheres to a more positivist model of science and linear epistemological position, thereby framing practitioners as receivers rather than creators of knowledge, Midwifery views knowledge as more dynamic, embracing physical and emotional concerns of women and different ways of knowing. However, Fulbrook (2004, p.255) contests this characterisation of nursing arguing that nurses frequently draw on 'embodied' knowledge, in other words knowledge gained from colleagues and from their own observations and experiences that is not typically represented in the literature. He suggests that the challenge nursing faces is how to capture and properly represent this kind of knowledge which is very much associated with the 'artistry' (p.256) of practice and how to legitimise this kind of knowledge so that it is recognised and valued.

Similarly, Reed (2006) believes that the traditional view of knowledge being handed down to nursing practitioners fails to adequately capture the role of nurses in the creation and development of knowledge. She points to a number of authors (e.g., Diers, 1995; Ellis, 1969, Paterson & Zderad,1987; Rolfe, 1996, 2000 & Shusterman,1997) who have challenged the conventional model of knowledge creation. She also believes that nursing meets the two basic criteria associated with knowledge production, firstly that healthcare settings are not just places where theory is applied but they also generate data which contributes to nursing

knowledge, and secondly that advanced practitioners, in particular, refine nursing theory by subjecting it to critical scrutiny. This chimes, not only with Schön's call for an epistemology of practice but also with earlier contributions from the influential American nurse, Hildegard Peplau, who as early as 1988 characterised nurses as 'working scientists' (p.12) in other words practitioners who tested theory in practice settings. Despite these calls for the role of nurses and other health professionals to be recategorized, it is important to note that some studies have reported a reluctance amongst practitioners themselves to be framed as knowledge creators preferring instead to be characterised as *professionals* rather than members of an academic discipline (Reed, 2006). This adds a further dimension to the already complex relationship between knowledge production and application.

Reflection on practice or experience is considered to be a vital part of professional and clinical development in nursing and midwifery practice (Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), 2024) and other practice-related professions such as Social Work, Speech and Language Therapy and Clinical Psychology (McCluskey, Gallagher & Murphy, 2022; Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2022; Sicora, 2019). As a result, the principles of experiential learning (E.L.), learning from reflection on practice, is believed to contribute positively to performance and development in many health-related professions (Ornelas, Schwartz, Sabin & Frogner 2022). E.L. is based on the groundbreaking works of Dewey (1938) and asserts that our own experiences and those of others are a source of learning (Murray, 2018). It also emphasises the way in which experience is highly individual, building on past experiences in our lives. Dewey's work became the foundation for Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (KELT) which identified a four-stage cycle of learning including concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation

(Murray, 2018). During the first and second stages of Kolb's cycle, the focus is on linking the new concrete event to individual experiences and critically reflecting on the event itself. The third stage involves the creation of theories to make sense of the earlier reflections and during the final stage learners experiment with and put to the test the new ideas they have generated (Murray, 2018). The characterisation of the practitioner as a reflector *in* and *on* practice (Schön, 1983,1991) and as tester of theory (Peplau, 1988; Reed, 2006,) can be seen clearly in some of the later literature already reviewed and firmly places the practitioner in and around discussions relating to the production, testing and further development of knowledge. E.L. activities in nursing and practice-based professions include 'case studies, simulations, role-play, [and] problem-based learning' (Murray, 2018, p.4). Such activities are believed to be highly beneficial in nurse education and have been found to promote 'critical thinking, application and analysis' (Murray, 2018) as well as improving confidence, communication and teamworking skills (Cheng, Huang, Yang & Chang, 2020).

Experiential learning is particularly valued in the process of applying and internalizing new knowledge (Nurunnabi, Rahim, Alo, Al Mamun, Kaiser, Mohammad & Sultana, 2022) and represents a way of combining intellectual and practical clinical skills. Although widely accepted as an effective learning model, Holman, Pavlica and Thorpe (1997) point to the limitations of the cyclical nature of KELT. They argue that learning does not need to be viewed as cyclical or divided into separate discreet elements. Instead, they suggest it is better to regard thinking, reflecting and experiencing as overlapping and interconnected functions. Despite these limitations, experiential learning seems to be a well-established feature of health care-related educational programmes. From an epistemological perspective it sits within a

constructionist framework which views the person as inextricably linked to and constructed by their social environment (Holman, Pavlika & Thorpe, 1997), setting it apart therefore from the often more positivist assumptions surrounding theoretical knowledge. The complexities of framing theoretical and practical knowledge in healthcare-related subjects presents a considerable challenge, the implications of which can be seen echoing through the lived experiences of individuals attempting to reconcile the tensions between what has been learned in the classroom and experienced in everyday professional practice (McClendon 2005; MacIntosh, 2003; Watson, 2018). In a personal account of her own nursing career, Watson (2018) describes the difficulties of trying to apply theory to practice and the frequent mismatch between the two. Similarly, McClendon (2005) describes her own challenges, as a nursing professional and the 'cognitive dissonance' (p.8) she experienced torn between the theoretical and the practical worlds of her profession.

Having explored issues around the epistemological assumptions on which many disciplinary practices are built, this section of the literature review highlights the way in which attitudes to knowledge and writing practices are often linked. The pressure exerted by disciplines to conform to particular conventions is considerable according to Hyland (2002b). It is not easy for students (especially L2) to simply 'slot into' (p.1094) new identities without first understanding and then negotiating disciplinary conventions (Hyland 2002b). These common practices may take a number of different forms including the way in which writers represent themselves and their arguments (Hyland 2001b). For example, the extent to which disciplines encourage the use of first-person pronouns in writing provides an indication of varying practices. In his study encompassing both *hard* (e.g. Physics, Biology) and *soft* fields (e.g. Philosophy, Applied Linguistics, Sociology), Hyland (2001b) observes the importance

of ‘I’ in establishing the position of the writer in Philosophy. By contrast, there was a noticeable absence of first-person pronoun use in science and engineering articles and only low usage in marketing. Patterns of first-person usage were, Hyland argues heavily influenced by underlying epistemological assumptions in the discipline but also by other factors such as the writer’s level of ‘seniority, experience [and] relationship to the community’ (p.223).

The importance of epistemology in determining disciplinary culture and practices is also highlighted by Jones (2009) who suggests that skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication, previously viewed as generic attributes, are in fact highly discipline specific and fluid in nature. This is clearly illustrated by Gimenez (2012) in his study of disciplinary writing practices in the fields of nursing and midwifery. By exploring attitudes to ‘criticality, evidence and impersonality’ p.404) he reveals subtle variations in practices which stem directly, he argues, from the different epistemological positions of these disciplines. He observes, for example how nursing characterises criticality as ‘problem-solving’ (p.413) and understanding the relationship between health and illness. This is a feature of midwifery’s framing of the concept, but they also included an understanding of ideology and social change, placing emphasis on critiquing professional practices. In relation to evidence, the more positivist leanings of nursing meant that data from randomised control trials (perceived to more objective and robust) was favoured over other sources of evidence. By contrast, midwifery students were encouraged to integrate into their writing a wider more holistic range of evidence incorporating both robust objective data and accounts of personal clinical experience and observation. Gimenez also found that attitudes to impersonality, although similar, were not identical. There was a general assumption across both disciplines that first-person ‘I’

should be avoided but he discovered that the ‘emphasis’ (p.415) varied. Whilst in nursing, impersonal or third-person language structures were deemed to convey greater objectivity and encouraged even in more reflective assignments, for midwifery students ‘personal writing’ (p.415) was also valued as part of professional development. Although Gimenez’s study revealed similarities between the two fields, the subtle variations in epistemological assumptions (positivism in nursing and constructivism midwifery) resulted in a delicate fine tuning of practices. This in turn led to particular concerns amongst students as they attempted to adjust to these disciplinary practices. Nursing students reported the challenges of having to find robust evidence to support claims whereas midwifery students found it hard to reconcile the diversity of views presented in a broader range of evidence.

This section of the literature review has revealed the complex and far-reaching implications of epistemological assumptions within disciplines and has highlighted in particular the way in which attitudes to theoretical and practical knowledge may impact on writing conventions within health care related subjects. The discussion now moves on to explore the precise way in which theory and practice intersect in reality and the implications this may have for the characterisation of this relationship in hybrid style academic writing.

The relationship between theory and practice

The convention of combining theoretical and reflective elements reveals something of the uniqueness of writing in the healthcare disciplines (Flowerdew & Costley, 2017), but also raises questions about the way in which students should represent themselves, the profession and the academy through their writing. For example, Richards and Pilcher (2018, p.165) acknowledge that student nurses have to convey

different sides of their role and suggest that they consciously combine ‘traditional text-based literacies’ with ‘non-text based’ elements such as compassion and empathy. This kind of hybrid task or requirement to link theory with practice is a common feature of health and social care assessment (Bowman & Addyman, 2014b) and one that writing guides frequently refer to (e.g., Tanguay et al. 2020). Linking theory to practice is an important feature of writing in these subject areas because it demonstrates the student’s understanding of the connection between their own actions, legislation and research (Tanguay, Hanratty & Martin, 2020). However, this kind of writing is not without its problems and some commentators (e.g., Ivanič, 1998; Gimenez, 2008) refer to the potential difficulties of switching between accounts of theory and practice; problems associated with adopting impersonal structures when discussing experience, and the potentially damaging impact this may have on the writer’s sense of identity. As already mentioned, this complex theory-practice relationship is also explored by writers with personal experience of working and studying in healthcare and who adopt a more critical perspective. McClendon (2005) suggests that nurses experience a damaging ‘disconnect between theory and practice’ and Watson (2018) similarly draws attention to the divide between her training and her experience as a practicing nurse, referring to the conflict between the theories of nursing and the qualities of ‘kindness, empathy, compassion and...dignity’ (p.199) needed to do the job. In order to better understand the impact of these tensions and the implications they have for student writers, attitudes to the theory-practice relationship within the healthcare field will now be explored.

Recognition of a long-standing theory-practice divide is widespread in the literature (e.g. Hatlevik, 2011; Mahmoud, 2014; Monaghan, 2015), with some authors highlighting the particular threat it poses to the concept of research-based practice

(Ajani & Moez, 2011; Scully, 2011). In other words, a lack of alignment between what is taught and what is practised may undermine the authority of the profession, prompting Scully (2011) to suggest that this is potentially 'the most important issue in nursing today' (p.94). While the literature seems to agree on the existence of a theory-practice gap, attitudes towards the problem are less clearly aligned. For some the divide between theory and practice is inevitable, even essential (Ajani & Moez, 2011; Ousey & Gallagher, 2007) while others see it as a problem to be fixed. For example, some commentators in the field regard reflective practice as an effective way of resolving any discrepancies between theory and practice (e.g. De Swardt, Du Toit & Botha, 2012; Ehrenburg & Haggblom, 2006; Hatlevik, 2011; Mahmoud, 2014). Hatlevik (2011, p.868) points to the 'mediating effects' of reflection and the way in which it may help individuals to make connections and to see the overall consistency between theory and practice. Likewise, Scully (2011) emphasises the role of reflection in 'bridging' (p.93) the divide between individual practice and theory and regards it a as the best way of tackling this issue. Other commentators focus attention on the value of practical solutions or interventions when considering how to narrow the theory-practice gap. These include suggestions to increase the number of simulated practice sessions for students (Mahmoud, 2014) or to encourage take up of internships, residencies or preceptorship programs designed to help students to transition from training into practice (Shoghi, Sajadi, Oskuie, Dehnad & Borimnejad, 2019). Carson and Carnwell (2007) suggest that Lecturer Practitioners could be used to bridge the worlds of theory and practice to administer a kind of 'reality check' (p.225) to help students acclimatise themselves to any theory-practice tensions or inconsistencies.

Many of these interventions are based on the premise that theory and practice can and should align as long as the appropriate course of action is taken. However, some commentators argue that tension between theory and practice is a vital part of a dynamic clinical environment (Ajani & Moez, 2011). Likewise, Ousey and Gallagher (2007) see the gap as essential because it encourages practices to evolve, viewing it more as a metaphor for ongoing development. In an earlier study Gallagher (2004) takes issue with the language of 'gaps' and 'divides' and 'bridges' suggesting that this kind of 'spatial imagery' (p.264) leads to an oversimplification of the relationship between theory and practice, thereby shutting down conversations about the complex connections between classroom-based theory and personal and professional experiences. Referring to an earlier study by Eraut et al. (1995), Stark, Cooke & Stronach (2000) begin to characterise the relationship between theory and practice in terms of differences in epistemology, that is to say between abstract or practical and private or public knowledge. This kind of closer inspection of the relationship between theory and practice has led some to question whether theory should be informed by practice or vice versa. Given the fact that health care professions are centred on caring for people, Robinson and Dearmon (2013) for example, suggest that an holistic, neopragmatic approach would in fact be more appropriate.

Ousey and Gallagher (2007) go further and consider ways in which the common privileging of theory over practice, combined with the power differential between teachers and students, may affect students' willingness to critically appraise practices in the profession. The same authors also acknowledge that attitudes to change in clinical settings may mean that practice lags behind scientific innovations. They advance the notion that theory may simply be 'too idealistic and

impractical'(p.203) but argue that practitioners should not stop trying to emulate the most recent scientific and theoretical advances, suggesting that this constant effort to evolve and improve practice is vital. Stark et al. (2000) also acknowledge the part played by 'gap makers' (p.158) in other words practitioners who may be resistant to change and who therefore influence the nature of the relationship between theory and practice themselves. According to Greenhalgh and Wieringa (2011) other factors may also be impacting on the theory-practice relationship. They suggest that the concept of 'knowledge translation' (p.502) based on a rational theorising of factors affecting the implementation of theory fails to acknowledge the contextual factors (e.g., research priorities, funding, what is considered most important to implement). In other words, they characterise the transfer of knowledge to practice as a complex non-linear process with many variables affecting implementation.

In summary, the gap between theory and practice is much debated both practically and philosophically (Van Manen, 2007) and remains an unresolved issue within the field of Health and Social Care. With regards to student writers, this debate poses a number of challenges as they are required to create an effective and authentic link between their experience of practice (often on placement) and their theoretical knowledge. According to some research (e.g. Craft, 2005) students may feel under pressure to make connections that they think their assessors want to hear and may even resort to changing their account of practice (Hilsdon, 2005) so as not to deviate from expected conventions. If students' own experiences of practice fail to reflect theory, Dyment and O'Connell (2011) suggest this may have a constraining effect on student writers. In his 2012 study, Gimenez's students had trouble identifying the right quality of certain sources, as well as matching examples from theory to their everyday professional experiences. The discussion moves on now to discuss the

many challenges associated with hybrid assignments and the linking of theory to practice.

Hybrid-Style Academic Reflective Writing

Reflective practice became popular in the 1980s and is now considered to be a prerequisite of professional development (Edwards & Thomas, 2010). Its benefits for HSC students are well documented and believed to improve critical thinking skills (Craft, 2005; Persson, Kvista & Ekelin, 2018); decision making (Wilson, 2013) and professional identity development (Binyamin, 2018). It is also credited with providing a way of bridging the gap between theory and practice, enabling practitioners to integrate theory into their professional lives more effectively (Binyamin, 2018; Bjerkvik & Hilli, 2019, Craft, 2005; Persson et al.,2018). As learning from experience forms such an important part of health and social care education programmes (Cheng et al., 2020; Nurunnabi 2022; Ornelas, et al.,2022), students are often required to capture their reflections in a number of different ways ranging from unassessed reflective journal entries to more formal reflections on different aspects of practice requiring references to theory (Tanguay, et al.,2020). This more formal kind of *Academic Reflective Writing* (ARW) is now one of the most common genres of assessed writing in nursing and midwifery education (Bowman & Addyman, 2014b). Although an umbrella term for a range of different academic reflective text types, it is often characterised by its combination of references to both theory and practical experience containing transitions between first person 'I' and 'my' and more formal third person structures. Given its unique position as a hybrid genre, combining theoretical and more reflective elements, academic reflective writing presents considerable linguistic and conceptual challenges for student writers (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Gimenez, 2008; Ivanič, 1998; Ryan, 2011; Ryan,

2013). In order to better understand the complexities of combining theory and elements of reflection on practice in the same assignment, the discussion turns now to explore the notion of reflective practice and reflective writing itself.

Despite the apparent value placed on reflective practice there is little consensus about its precise definition (Hébert, 2015). The Oxford English Dictionary (2025) defines reflecting as 'The action or process of thinking carefully or deeply about a particular subject, typically involving influence from one's past life and experiences...' Often considered to be one of the early contributors in the development of reflective practice, Dewey (1933, in Hébert, 2015, p.3) refers to reflective thinking as 'turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration'. Working within a positivist tradition, he regarded reflective practice as something 'akin to the scientific method' (Hébert, 2015, p.363) in other words it was used to justify belief and to eliminate uncertainty. For Dewey, knowledge gained from experience needed to be fitted into a positivistic framework to be considered valuable thereby reinforcing the dominant position of cognitive knowledge over experience. Schön (1983, 1991) later challenged this rationalist interpretation of knowledge gained from experience or 'implicit/tacit knowledge' (p.49) by calling for an epistemology of practice which placed greater value on alternative ways of knowing. He proposed a concept of reflecting during action ('reflection-in-action' p.49) as an alternative to the 'looking-back' (Hébert, 2015 p.366) model recommended by Dewey. In other words, he suggested that a practitioner could respond reflectively to a situation while it was unfolding by using intuition derived from previous experiences. Despite Schön's efforts to promote this 'in-action' approach to reflection, many of the reflective models widely used today (e.g. Gibbs, 1988; Kolb, 1984) have their origins in the Deweyan 'looking-back' form of reflective

practice requiring a robustly objective analysis of past actions in order to inform future practice (Tanquay et al., 2020) The Gibbs model for example presents a clearly defined five-stage cycle (description, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, action) to encourage a thorough and critical analysis of past experiences (Gimenez, 2011). These distinct and logical steps appear to embody the notion of 'serious and consecutive consideration' (1933, in Hébert, 2015, p.3) as set out by Dewey in his definition of reflective thinking.

Such models may offer a useful framework for encouraging and developing critical skills (Tanquay et al., 2020) but they are not without their critics. Hébert (2015) points to the inherent epistemological tensions within them, suggesting that the rigidity of reflective frameworks may inhibit the very reflective process they are meant to encourage. Even Schön's attempt to shift the focus away from rational, cognitive knowledge onto other practical ways of knowing and to establish a new epistemology may, she suggests, ultimately betray a rationalist desire to classify thinking and reflective processes. Edwards and Thomas (2010) similarly point to the contradictions caused by underlying 'technical rationalist assumptions' (p.404) in reflective models and question whether reflective practice is something that can even be taught. Because of its extremely context-sensitive nature, they believe reflection cannot be reduced to a 'collection of neutral attributes' (p.404). In fact, Hébert (2015) argues that reflective models fail to capture the all-important *pathic knowledge* underpinning practice in fields such as teaching, psychology and nursing. Drawing on the work of Canadian phenomenological researcher, Van Manen (2007) she suggests that a pathic model of reflection, one based on feeling and physical senses rather than *thought* would better reflect the reality of health care related professions.

The inherent tensions in reflective writing highlighted by Hébert (2015), Edwards and Thomas (2010) and Van Manen (2007) are also reflected in research exploring student experiences of this kind of writing. For example, in their review of 17 qualitative and quantitative studies relating to undergraduate nursing students' experiences of reflective writing, Bjerkvik and Hilli (2019) found considerable diversity in the impact of and attitudes to this type of writing task. While some studies referred to by the authors showed improvements in communication skills and decision-making skills (e.g., Edelen and Bell, 2011) others such as Naber and Wyatt (2014) revealed little difference in critical thinking scores as a result of reflective writing activities. The studies examined revealed a tendency for students to write descriptively about their experiences with only some engaging at a deeper critical level. Bjerkvik and Hilli (2019) noted how attitudes to reflective models also varied with some less experienced students valuing the structure they provided while other, often older learners, found them overly complex and restrictive. Other research highlights problems for students in relating their own experiences to reflective models. In his 2008 study, Gimenez found students struggled to make 'logical connection[s]' (p.159) between their own experiences in placement and the structure of the reflective models. Wood (2018) also questions the usefulness of formulaic reflective models because of their limitations in mirroring 'real-life' (p.86) reflective thinking processes. Similarly, Wilson (2013) discovered frustration amongst Social Work students who experienced a tension between reflection in practice or professional settings and the more prescriptive nature of academic reflective writing.

As well as struggling to relate their own experiences to reflective models, student writers also find it challenging to link theory to practice in academic reflective essays

(Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Gimenez, 2008). Furthermore, Ryan (2011) highlights how many students mistakenly believe that written reflections are informal and personal accounts not requiring reference to theory. Often students underestimate the amount of research needed to write an academic reflection struggling to match their own experience to the literature (Gimenez, 2012) and to long lists of learning objectives (Bowman & Addyman 2014a). In their study of a small group of post-registered nurses, Bowman and Addyman (2014a) found students were frequently unsure whether to write about theory first or their own experiences and also reported having little time to plan their writing as assignments regularly coincided with busy work placements. The often compressed and rushed nature of learning at university is also highlighted by Bond (2020) who observes how students have little time to 'become' or 'be' (p.72). Given the hybrid nature of academic reflective writing, Bowman and Addyman claim that students face significantly more challenges 'structurally, linguistically and conceptually'(Bowman & Addyman, 2014b, p.307) than those presented by more conventional essay formats. They attribute this in large part to the difficulties of negotiating the theory-practice gap, in particular coming to terms (in writing) with the value placed on different ways of knowing.

In navigating the theory-practice relationship, student writers often face conceptual and linguistic difficulties when moving between first person discussions of placement experiences, formal references to theory and consideration of changes to future practice following reflection (Ryan, 2011). Given the requirement to reflect on past events and to project forwards to future potential practice, it is perhaps unsurprising that students struggle with the 'shifts in timeframe' (Gimenez, 2008, p.159) that this kind of writing demands. The transition between first and third person also seems to present both linguistic (Ryan, 2011) and identity-related challenges. For example,

Ivanič (1998) notes the 'inherent pitfalls' (p.133) of assignments that 'encourage the interplay between academic and workplace discourse types' (p.33) and the challenging requirement for student writers to hold these 'identities simultaneously, switching between them strategically' (p. 133). Gimenez (2008) also reported the particular impact on L2 nursing students of requirements to write about personal experiences of placement *without* using 'I' and to adopt third person linguistic structures instead. For Gimenez this raises particular issues about 'ownership and identity' (p.161) for some L2 students who felt as though they had to take on a different identity to present their experiences, leading to feelings of being othered. In a similar vein, Hamilton and Druva (2010) draw attention to the culturally situated nature of reflective practice, observing how some L2 students may be less familiar with the conventions of self-reflection. Cameron (2012) Fulbrook (2003) and Mitchell (2017) all criticise the practice of requiring students to refer to personal experiences and knowledge using third person and call for greater acceptance and valuing of 'I' and the personal or 'tacit knowledge' it represents (Schön 1983,1991, p.49). Despite the obvious complexities of first and third person use and non-use, Thurlow et al. (2019) note how it is a subject that has received only superficial attention from lecturers with deeper identity-related issues often going unexplored.

In addition to identity and language-related issues, some studies have focussed on the tension in academic reflective writing between a requirement for honesty and authenticity and the need to address specific assessment criteria. Hilsdon (2005) argues that this tension is due to unequal power relations that exist in healthcare and educational settings. In other words, students in training may feel uncomfortable about disclosing the realities of professional practice in reflective accounts if they feel it may disadvantage them either professionally or academically (Craft, 2005). This in

turn may lead student writers to feel they have to conceal the reality of practice (Bjerkvik & Hilli, 2019; Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Hargreaves, 2004; Tummons, 2011) and even 'fabricate' accounts (Hilsdon, 2005, p. 62) in order to satisfy assessment criteria. As a result of these concerns, questions have been raised about the validity of reflection as an assessment tool (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a, Bjerkvik and Hilli, 2019; Ng, Wright & Kupe, 2019; Tummons, 2011). Dyment and O'Connell (2011) call for greater consistency in approaches to assessing such tasks and Hilsdon (2005) recommends further research is needed into an area that despite these concerns is greatly valued by many student practitioners because it helps them to make sense of aspects of their practice.

A number of writing guides exist to help students address some of the complexities of reflective writing (e.g. Tanguay et al. 2020; Gimenez, 2011). For example, Tanguay et al.(2020, p.81) remind students that :'your lecturers want you to understand how your actions relate to the wider conventions, legislation and conversations within your field'. Such apparently straight forward recommendations to link theory and practice seem to ignore significant evidence that highlights the complexities of the theory-practice gap (e.g., Hatlevik, 2011; Mahmoud, 2014; Monaghan, 2015) and the linguistic, conceptual and identity related difficulties (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a) associated with such tasks. Morton and Storch (2019, p.17) suggest that such writing guides may provide 'misleading or simplistic advice'. This sentiment is echoed by Cameron (2012) who takes issue with guides that provide advice about the use or non-use of first person suggesting that they fail to allow for the multiple functions that 'I' may have and that such guides should perhaps not be viewed, therefore, as 'timeless truths' (p.250).

As academic reflective writing combines references to theory and practice, it brings into sharp focus issues surrounding the theory practice divide and different ways of knowing (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a). Although attitudes to knowledge in other health related subjects (e.g., Social Work, Speech and Language therapy, clinical psychology) are less well documented, it is perhaps possible to infer from research into nursing and midwifery potential issues (e.g. privileging of certain kinds of know ledge) that might also affect student writers in other areas of Health and Social Care. Carel and Kidd (2014, p.530) in their investigations into perceptions of different kinds of knowledge in healthcare settings point to examples of 'epistemic injustice' in other words the personal first-person accounts of patient experiences, for example, are considered to be less valuable than equivalent third-person accounts provided by health professionals. Whilst the focus of Carel and Kidd's research is on patients and health professionals rather than students and health care lecturers, perhaps there are some parallels to be drawn. Carel and Kidd suggest that patients are 'epistemically marginalised' (p.530) and that health professionals by comparison are 'epistemically privileged' (p.530). It could be argued that this dynamic of 'privileged' and 'marginalised' knowledge is also visible in the relationship between trainee practitioners and their university lecturers and placement managers and that a better understanding of this relationship sheds light on the difficulties of situating personal knowledge within the context of an academic reflective assignment. The 'deflated epistemic status' experienced by patients (Carel & Kidd, 2014, p.530) may also be something that HSC trainee practitioners are experiencing with implications for the way in which they perceive and frame their own personal or tacit knowledge (Schön, 1983, 1991) within their writing.

According to Molinari (2022) the very nature of assessment tasks can privilege different ways of knowing. She suggests that the limited range of assessment tasks at university can 'narrow, distort or flatten epistemic representation' (p.33) leading, she argues, to some student writers being disadvantaged. Carel and Kidd (2014) suggest that variations in epistemic representation may be a result of different backgrounds, educational experiences and abilities of individuals and the valuing of certain kinds of knowledge over others. Recent years have seen a growth in interest in research relating to the adoption of different genres of writing at university. English (2011) argues that by allowing students to express themselves academically using alternative genres (e.g. short play, article for children) different aspects of identity and knowing have the potential to emerge. Where students feel an affinity with a particular genre, their sense of subject ownership is likely to increase as well as their own notions of identity and agency. For English (2011), greater freedom to choose how to express learning, means that the student writer's relationship with knowledge can change significantly. Similarly, Gilmore, Harding, Helin and Pullen (2019) advocate for greater experimentation with different kinds of writing (e.g. novels, poetry, drama) that promote more embodied forms of writing and learning that better reflect how we live and work.

Some writers suggest however that to characterise academic writing as entirely disembodied is to misunderstand it. Antoniou and Moriarty (2008) argue that 'fears and desires' (p.166) play a significant part in the development of academic identities and so academic writing can never be characterised as entirely disembodied – they would suggest instead that it is closely associated with expressing a sense of self. Pennington (2015) similarly urges a rethink of the creative versus academic writing distinction, suggesting instead that creativity in writing is best seen in terms of a

cline. She lists many aspects of academic writing (e.g. critical approaches, speculation, links to personal knowledge) as expressions of creativity. Molinari (2022) also embraces the notion of creativity in academic writing but seeks to push the boundaries of academic expression by moving beyond the written form which she believes restricts the kind of knowledge that is considered to be valuable. Therefore, she advocates for alternative mediums such as drawing or dance to be considered as legitimate ways of expressing knowledge. She reminds us that, historically, places of learning have used other text types to engage with knowledge citing the use of poems, letters and biography in science. She also points to more recent examples such as 'the graphic doctoral dissertation of Nick Sousanis (2015) [and] the musical PhD exegesis of A.D. Carson (2017)' (p.78).

To summarise, Academic Reflective Writing is clearly a well-established element of assessment in many health and social care related fields and its benefits are widely reported by students and lecturers alike. However, the complexities of this hybrid style of writing, not least because of the contested nature of 'reflection' itself, are also evident and perhaps less well documented. Studies point to confusion amongst students about the precise function of reflective writing with some students mistakenly viewing it as more of a pathic model of writing (i.e. focused on feelings and emotions) (Van Manen's, 2007) rather than a rational analysis of practice with surprisingly positivistic origins (Dewey, 1933). Added to this inherent tension, are the well documented challenges of the theory-practice relationship in healthcare and how best to reconcile and also characterise the often-reported mismatch or dissonance between classroom-based instruction and the real world of professional practice. Given the complexities of the issues that student writers are navigating it

seems almost inevitable that they will encounter the kind of linguistic, structural and conceptual problems outlined in this section.

Summary of Literature Review and Research Questions

In this review of literature, I have evaluated a significant body of research from experts in the fields of academic literacies, writer identity and disciplinary epistemology, as well as more recent and less numerous studies concerning writing practices within healthcare education and the experiences of HSC student writers. I have also included research relating to professional identity formation, identity work in professional settings and the often-reported gap between theory and practice in healthcare settings. This thesis sets out to explore questions related to developing our understanding of the ways which students experience and write about the theory practice relationship, the impact of professional identity formation on writer identity and the effects of varying first and third person writing practices on HSC student writers. The broad questions motivating this thesis are broken down into three individual papers and the research questions driving each paper will be restated (below) as they help to frame the summaries of the papers that follows.

Paper one

Paper one addresses the overall question of how different conceptualisations of the theory-practice relationship may affect students' experiences of writing hybrid-style assignments and does this through exploring the following questions:

1. How do student writers perceive the relationship between theory and their own experiences of practice?

2. How do varying conceptualisations of the theory practice relationship affect student writer approaches to linking theory and practice in assignments?
3. What are the implications for teaching practice?

The paper therefore focuses on healthcare students' perceptions of the relationship between theory and practice, the extent to which their lived experience aligns with academic theory and the impact of this on their own development and experiences as writers. In order to explore these issues, paper one links directly with debates in the literature about the theory practice gap, for example, whether it can be 'fixed' or whether it should be viewed as an opportunity for continuous development. It also explores alternative perspectives on the theory practice dynamic characterising the relationship between researchers and practitioners as more of a dialogue between stakeholders than a top-down process of knowledge application. The paper explores the consequences of these varying conceptualisations for student writers and considers implications for practice.

Paper two

Paper two addresses the question of how the professional identity formation process that HSC students undergo during placements, affects their overall development as writers. This second paper therefore explores the impact of intersecting professional and academic identities on HSC students as they try to establish their own academic voice. The specific questions paper two poses are:

1. How does professional identity formation affect the development of voice amongst HSC students?

2. How do levels of both professional experience and knowledge of academic writing skills contribute to the creation of voice?
3. What are the implications for future practice?

In addressing these questions, the paper examines participants' real-life experiences of creating new professional identities during placement, drawing extensively on theories relating to Professional Identity Formation (PIF) as well as Identity Work in organizational theory to evaluate the possible impact of this process on developing student writers. The paper therefore explores the cumulative effect on student writers of simultaneously trying to establish academic and professional identities drawing on extensive literature relating to academic writer identity development to understand the additional challenges that this may present.

Paper three

Finally, paper three addresses questions about specific writing practices within hybrid-style assignments through asking:

1. How are first-person and third-person structures used in HSC writing?
2. What does pronoun use reveal about the epistemology of HSC subjects?
3. How does first or third person use shape students' experiences of writer identity?
4. What are the implications for students, lecturers, academic skills advisors (the discipline as a whole)?

It focuses on the common convention of using first and third person in hybrid style assignments that combine both theory and practice. Through an analysis of writing

samples, it sheds light on the variety of practices relating to the first- and third-person usage and also captures, through interviews, the effects on student writers of switching between these different linguistic structures. Paper three draws on a wealth of studies exploring the epistemological positions of traditional disciplines and the less well reported challenges facing new health care related subject areas that incorporate elements of harder and softer sciences. It also refers to extensive research in the area of linguistic features of identity in writing with a particular focus on the use of first-person 'I', concluding with recommendations for future practice. The discussion now moves on to the overall methodology adopted in this work, before moving on to an account of the specific approaches taken in each of the individual papers.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines methodological approaches taken in investigating students' experiences of theory, practice and identity. It provides an overview of the study's research design; data collection methods; approaches to analysis; quality criteria; ethical considerations; limitations and finally to the ways in which reflexivity has been addressed. However, it begins with a brief account of the way in which the COVID pandemic affected this research project.

I was still in my first year as a part-time PhD student when the pandemic began in 2020, and it therefore had a significant impact on my approaches to research design and data collection (Goldstone & Zhang, 2022). As face-to-face contact was prohibited and travel restrictions were imposed in line with governmental social isolation policies, I redesigned my research so that it could be conducted remotely instead of in person (Burridge, Gates, SIyer, Roberts & Grigg, 2020). The original plan to carry out an in-person card sort activity (Appendix A) as a pre-interview strategy to engage with participants and to introduce them to the main themes of the research was therefore converted into an online survey that could be completed remotely by participants (Pyhältö,Tikkanen & Anttila, 2023). The statements planned for use in the card sort activity translated successfully into the Qualtrics survey format, but without my presence to facilitate the task and to deal with any arising questions, particular attention was paid to the instructions provided. To mitigate any possible disadvantages of this transition to a remote data collection approach, short online briefing meetings were held with each participant to rehearse any concerns they might have about completing and returning the survey. Semi structured interviews were similarly converted into online meetings via Zoom, so that participants could safely contribute to the project. These amendments to the

originally planned face to face activities meant that the data collection stage of the research process could continue through the periods of major disruption (2020-2022). In terms of supervision arrangements and ongoing training and development during lockdown (Goldstone & Zhang 2022) these continued online and access to resources was largely unaffected due to the availability of online journals and texts.

Ontological and epistemological stance

This study adopts a constructivist ontological stance, believing that reality is socially constructed through an ongoing process of human interactions and perceptions (Clark, Foster, Sloane & Bryman, 2021). In other words, it begins from the premise that students' perceptions of the same phenomenon may vary depending on their particular context, allowing for the possibility of multiple subjective realities. Epistemologically, this research aligns itself with interpretivist approaches, emphasising how knowledge is often 'value-laden' and 'co-created' between the researcher and participants through a process of dialogue and reflection (Tracy, 2020, p.60). In order to understand the meanings that Health and Social Care (HSC) students attach to their experiences of writing about theory and practice, qualitative approaches have been adopted allowing for the identification of relevant theory as part of an iterative process of data collection whilst at the same time acknowledging that interpretations may be shaped by the positionality of the researcher (Clark et al. 2021).

Phenomenology

This study employs an interpretivist phenomenological approach which focuses on the way individuals experience the world around them and how the researcher can distance themselves from their own biases to better understand individuals'

experiences (Clark et al. 2021). It is well suited to this research because the study aims to understand the way in which HSC students experience the relationship between theory and practice and how they represent their sense of this dynamic relationship in academic writing. A phenomenological approach offers the possibility to 'slow down and open up' (Vagle, 2014, p.22) the way students experience or make sense of the connection between what they learn in the classroom and what they see and do in placement settings. The phenomenological emphasis on bracketing prior knowledge (Tracy, 2020) also supports this study's inductive approach—in other words theoretical frameworks are not employed until later stages of the research process so as not to inhibit openness. The tentative non-defining nature of phenomenological methods (Vagle, 2014) helps to explore the transitory state of student experiences at a particular moment in their academic and professional journeys, without feeling the need to artificially draw any final conclusions. In fact, the Canadian phenomenologist Van Manen's approach of 'resist[ing] finality' (p.57) chimes particularly well with the notion that students' experiences are likely to change as knowledge and practice develop, emphasising the temporally situated nature of human experiences. Phenomenology's focus on the strong connection between language and meaning also chimes well with this research which analyses both intensely personal interview dialogue and samples of academic student writing to shed light on participants' sense of the theory-practice relationship and their understanding of professional and writer identity.

Case study Research design

As this research aims to gather rich details, an exploratory case study design is adopted (Yin, 2009) – the details of which are then related to the wider literature (Bryman, 2012). Case study is particularly well suited to this research project

because it allows for exploration of complex and particular issues (Clarke et al., 2021) and places emphasis on the situated nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2009). In this research, students' unique experiences of theory, practice and identity are explored within the physically separate but interconnected contexts of the university classroom and diverse professional health-related settings. The case study design also lends itself to varied forms of evidence collection (Clark et al. 2021) which in this research include transcripts from guided interviews (Appendix B), an online survey questionnaire (Appendix C) and analysis of student assignments (Appendix D). One of the strengths of case study is that theory can emerge from the lived experiences of the case (Simons, 2009) which chimes with phenomenological principles of not imposing preconceived knowledge or concepts on the research (Flood, 2010). Case study can also facilitate non-hierarchical relationships between researcher and participants (Simons, 2009) which sits well with the overall qualitative and reflexive aims of this research project to establish a relaxed and open dialogue with students about their experience of reconciling theory, practice and identity. Approaches to analysing data from case studies tend to balance discrete findings with more holistic insights (Simons, 2009) and a fuller account of the approaches used in this study (e.g., Qualtrics survey, Thematic analysis, AntConc corpus analysis software) will be provided in later sections of this chapter.

Sampling

As is often typical for case study design, sampling in this research was purposive in nature (Clarke et al. 2021). In other words, it sought to draw on the knowledge and experiences of particular HSC student groups who were familiar with combining theory and practice in their university assignments. Self-selection sampling was

used in order to attract participants who shared a particular interest in the subject and who were willing and able to provide their insights (Gaganpreet, 2017). The recruitment process involved emailing HSC students across all subject areas (e.g. Adult Nursing, Speech and Language Therapy, Social work and Clinical Psychology) to invite participation. Those who registered an interest were invited to attend an initial briefing to establish whether they wished to proceed with their involvement in the project. In this kind of small-scale study, exploratory rather than representative samples are generally more appropriate (Denscombe 2010), and the potential limitations of self-selection biases (Gaganpreet, 2017) are frequently offset by the specific knowledge that niche populations bring to the study. For example, the respondents in this research had often experienced challenges associated with linking theory and practice in their own writing, and some even had experience of other writing genres, placing them in a unique position to articulate issues relating to different aspects of writing and identity. The case study comprised six Health and Social Care students from a university located in the Southeast of England. Although drawn from different health-related subjects and levels (see Table 3.1 below), all students had an in-depth understanding of the kind of hybrid assignment writing tasks that the study was exploring, and they were eager to share their experiences. All participants were white, L1 speakers of English and with the exception of one American participant all were British. To protect their anonymity pseudonyms were used throughout the study.

Table 3.1: Details of participants' courses, level and year of study

Participant	Course	level	Year
Ash	BSc Adult Nursing	5	2
Riley	BSc Adult Nursing	5	2
Kit	MSc Speech and Language Therapy	7	1
Frankie	MSc Speech and Language Therapy	7	1
Jessie	MA Social Work	7	1
Kelly	Professional Doctorate Clinical Psychology	8	1

Limitations of case studies

Critics of case study as a research design highlight the possibility for distortion of interpretation, the dangers of researcher subjectivity, reduced validity, and of reporting on phenomena that are 'locked in time while the people in it have moved on' (Simons, 2009, p.24). Others raise concern about little scope for generalization of findings (Yin, 2009) and the value of context-dependent knowledge and experience (Flyvbjerg, 2011). As this research adopts a phenomenological approach the situated nature of students' knowledge and experiences relating to the theory-practice relationship are regarded as strengths which help to deepen understanding. It is precisely this wealth of niche detail that students share with me that will lead to deeper insights about the theory-practice relationship (Flyvbjerg, 2011). From this phenomenological perspective, my own situated position as both a researcher and as an experienced tutor in an HE setting is also viewed as an asset (Clark et al. 2021) because of the insight I can bring to the analysis and interpretation of data. However, the integrity of this kind of qualitative enquiry rests on the degree of self-awareness or reflexivity that the researcher can exercise during the research process (Vagle, 2014) and as a result this will be explored in greater detail later. Finally, the criticism of limited generalizability, often levelled at case study design is addressed by Flyvbjerg (2011) who argues that smaller situated studies can also be of value. Similarly, Williams (2000, p.215) suggests that more limited or 'moderatum generalizations' also have a role to play in the furthering of knowledge. The contributions of this research are therefore framed as valuable not because of their quantity but rather their rich and insightful observations about combining theory and practice in academic writing and the impact this may have on writer identity.

Data collection

The research methods chosen in this study, namely online survey (Appendix C), semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) and analysis of student assignments (Appendix D) are well-suited to the constructivist epistemological stance of this research as they allow for the gathering of rich, context-specific insights into the participants' experiences of reconciling and writing about theory and practice. Although more often associated with quantitative approaches and frequently used as an alternative to structured interviews (Clarke et al. 2021), an online survey (Appendix C) was used in this study to—orientate participants to the areas covered by the research (Figure 1below); prepare them for later interviews, and also to provide the researcher with some sense of individual attitudes to broader questions prior to interview

Section A: Theory and Practice
This section aims to explore your perception of the ***relationship between theory and practice in healthcare*** by considering:
Part 1: Your understanding of theory and practice
Part 2: Your sense of professional identity
Part 3: Your sense of control/influence over professional issues
Part 4: Your experiences of writing about theory and practice

Section B: Identity
This section aims to explore the concept of ***identity*** by considering:
Part 1: Your experience of university
Part 2: Your experience of academic writing
Part 3: Your personal sense of identity

Section C: Agency
This section aims to explore the concept of ***agency*** by considering:
Part 1a: Factors affecting your progress at university
Part 1b: Factors affecting your progress at university(cont'd)
Part 2: Your experience of writing at university

Figure 1: overview of survey content

For the purposes of this research, Qualtrics, a cloud-based survey platform was used because of its versatility in the creation, formatting, distribution and analysis of surveys (Qualtrics XM, 2024). The survey statements, themselves, were designed to closely reflect the research objectives (Sue & Ritter, 2012) and were therefore clearly grouped under the three main headings of 'A. Theory and Practice', 'B.

Identity' and 'C. Agency' (Figure 1 above). 98 statements in total were divided between the three sections and in order to prevent any misunderstanding over instructions, participants were simply invited to select either 'agree' 'disagree' or 'don't know' (Clarke et al. 2021). Given the complex and often contested nature of key concepts such as 'identity' and 'agency', care was also taken to unpack these ideas to avoid confusion (Sue & Ritter, 2012). For example, the term identity was often substituted for phrases such as 'sense of who I am'– 'who I want to be'—'the way I see myself' in order to mitigate any particular conceptual or linguistic barriers (Figure 2 below) Similarly, the word 'agency' was used sparingly with statements exploring instead, for example, more tangible notions of students 'sense of control', 'progress' and 'motivation' (Appendix C).

5. I feel I can be myself in some parts of my writing (e.g. reflection on practice), but not in others (e.g. writing about theory).
6. I prefer using first person (e.g. 'I'/'my') when I am writing, rather than more impersonal or formal language.
7. Sometimes it is difficult to switch from theoretical writing (3rd person) to reflective writing (1st person) in the same essay.
8. It feels like I have to be two different people in the same essay, one formal and one more personal.
9. I think carefully about who is going to read my essay, so that I can create a particular impression of myself in my writing.
10. I feel comfortable expressing my opinion in my academic work.

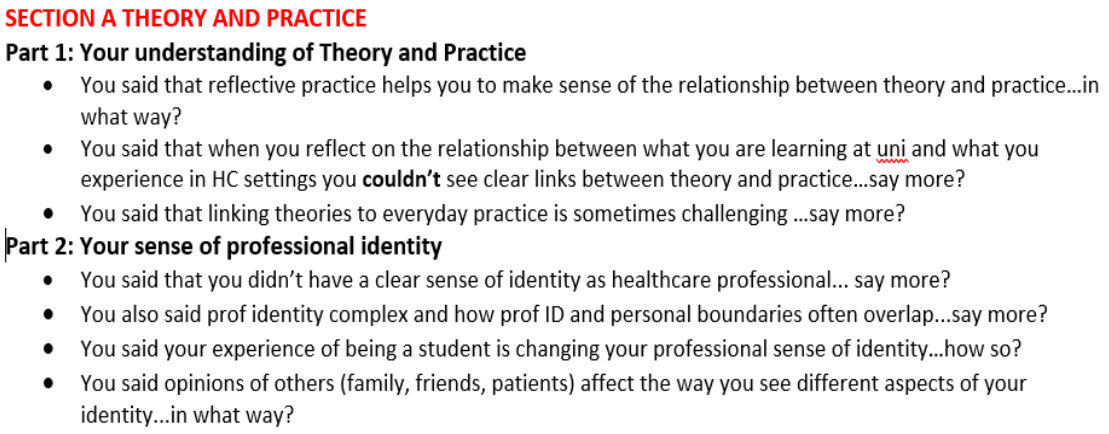
Figure 2: Examples of survey statements

Each subsection of the survey also contained meaningful introductory sentences (Sue and Ritter, 2012) to help participants contextualise and orientate themselves professionally and academically to the subjects. For example, section A of the survey begins with the following sentences relating to the common requirement for HSC students to link theory and practice*: 'As a healthcare student, you are encouraged to relate the theory of healthcare to the reality of everyday practice. The following statements aim to explore your understanding of the relationship between theory and practice'.* Statements were also designed using a funnelling technique

(Brace & Bolton, 2022), to establish the broader picture of participant attitudes towards theory and practice, identity and agency before inviting them to think more deeply about specific linguistic practices in their own writing. The survey was piloted amongst colleagues to check for tone, fairness and accessibility of language (Sue & Ritter, 2012) revealing a number of issues (e.g. technical glitches and overly long statements) that were addressed before sending it to participants. Some common limitations of online surveys are that statements may be misunderstood or that opportunities for deeper follow-up questions are lost (Clark et al. 2021). However, as the online survey in this case was used prior to and in conjunction with interviews, it was possible to use survey data as a starting point for deeper discussions during interviews and to address any queries respondents may have had. Once all participants had completed the survey, the data were analysed using Qualtrics analytical tools to produce a breakdown of responses, in percentage terms (Appendix E).

From a phenomenological perspective, interviews are considered to be an invaluable tool because they allow for a more open dialogue about the phenomenon under investigation (Vagle, 2014). Semi structured interviews were used in this study to encourage participants to share their thoughts and experiences of reconciling health care theory to practice both in reality and in writing. A ‘Progressive focusing’ (Richards, 2003, p.2) technique was used when designing the interview guide (Appendix B) to ensure the participants were reminded of context and broader issues before drilling down into some of the more specific questions about ‘theory and practice’, ‘Identity’ and ‘Agency’. Although an interview guide (Figure 3 below) was used as an aide memoire, discussions were very much exploratory, often taking the lead from the participants (Clarke et al. 2021) to tap into their individual experiences

of linking theory to practice in their writing. Different question types (e.g. 'introducing', 'follow-up', 'probing' 'interpretive' etc) were used to open up the discussion as much as possible (Kvale, 1996, in Clarke et al., 2021, p. 429) and time was left at the end of each interview for participants to add any further comments they wished.



SECTION A THEORY AND PRACTICE

Part 1: Your understanding of Theory and Practice

- You said that reflective practice helps you to make sense of the relationship between theory and practice…in what way?
- You said that when you reflect on the relationship between what you are learning at uni and what you experience in HC settings you **couldn't** see clear links between theory and practice…say more?
- You said that linking theories to everyday practice is sometimes challenging …say more?

Part 2: Your sense of professional identity

- You said that you didn't have a clear sense of identity as healthcare professional… say more?
- You also said prof identity complex and how prof ID and personal boundaries often overlap…say more?
- You said your experience of being a student is changing your professional sense of identity…how so?
- You said opinions of others (family, friends, patients) affect the way you see different aspects of your identity…in what way?

Figure 3: Examples of interview questions

As the interviews took place during periods of national lockdown, all discussions occurred on Zoom and were (with the participants' permission) recorded and transcribed automatically. Time was taken at the start of interviews to build rapport by reminding participants about confidentiality measures and by explaining the overall structure and timing of the interview (Clarke et al. 2021). Some potential limitations of online interviews are that they can be subject to technical problems and that the physical absence of the interviewer may reduce the potential for engagement and understanding (Clarke et al. 2021). However, they can also be convenient, saving time and giving respondents control over the location of the call, possibly helping to reduce any pre-interview nerves. While a semi-structured approach to the interview process provides important freedom and flexibility to explore ideas, it is vital that the analysis of interview data is rigorous to ensure a deep and accurate understanding of phenomena (Vagle, 2014). The discussion now

moves on to consider the way in which thematic analysis was used to systematically examine data collected from interviews.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was well suited to the interpretivist stance of this research because it allowed for an inductive bottom-up approach to the interpretation of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). The iterative style of this analytical approach chimed with the study's aim to focus on the students' experiences of the relationship between theory and practice and on their meaning-making processes (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2022) in professional and educational contexts. The approach to analysing interview data incorporated both an holistic, instinctive view of overarching codes (Appendix F) and a more detailed analysis of initial codes and themes (Appendix G) and revised codes and themes (Appendix H) (Braun & Clark, 2022). It began with what Flood (2010) describes as a 'naïve reading' (p.12) of transcriptions which involved reading them several times to 'grasp' their 'meaning' whilst maintaining an open mind about their significance. Intuitive ideas from these initial readings were captured using free writing techniques (Li, 2007) that encourage unstructured free-flowing writing as a way of generating initial thoughts. This free-writing process was repeated after reading each participant's interview transcript (e.g. Appendix I) allowing me not only to capture initial thoughts and further questions but also to consider possible theoretical directions to take in the analysis of data. The free writing itself took approximately 1.5-2 hours to complete for each transcript and I revisited the scripts frequently during the closer analysis of individual participant comments to remind myself of any important contextual information or initial impressions that might help to refine my interpretation of particular remarks. These approaches sit well with the underlying inductive phenomenological stance in

this study which encourages the ‘bracketing’ of any prior knowledge which may interfere with the rigorous analysis of the phenomenon (Vagle, 204, p.67).

This instinctive initial reaction to transcriptions was followed by a more rigorous ‘fine-grained’ coding process to capture individual meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.35). Firstly, I checked all transcriptions for accuracy against the original recordings and made amendments where necessary. Then, I read each script again to note possible codes in the margin (Appendix F) which was followed by a closer reading and the creation of initial codes and themes (Appendix G). Lastly, I reviewed all of the ‘candidate themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.35) to produce a final set of codes and themes (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008) (Appendix H). As an example of this process, in one participant interview, they recounted the challenges of linking past experiences of practice to recently learned theories. This was initially coded as ‘difficulties matching past events with theory’ and eventually became a theme entitled ‘time lapses in theory and practice’. The revised themes were then considered in relation to the overall research questions and the study’s context (Flood, 2010) before cross-referencing and interpretation of the data began (e.g. Appendix J). Conscious that the role of the researcher and the researched may impact on one another and that my own values and assumptions might shape the questions asked as well as my analysis of the answers given, I reflected on my own subjectivity throughout the research process. A more detailed account of reflexive strategies adopted will be provided below (see *Ethics and Reflexivity* p.81) as part of the overall ethical considerations of the research. The next section outlines the approach taken to the last of the three methods used in this study, namely, the collection and analysis of writing samples.

In order to understand students' experiences of combining theoretical knowledge and professional practices in writing and subsequent implications for writer identity, participants were invited to submit relevant writing samples. The only stipulation was that assignments should include examples of writing about theory and practice with possible shifts between first and third person use. Otherwise, participants had complete freedom of choice in terms of the type, the number and length of assignments chosen (Appendix D). This approach suited the phenomenological stance of the study because the personal choices made by participants reflected something of their own meaning-making processes (Smith et al. 2022). For example, one participant (Jessie) told me how she had been thinking of three assignments in particular as we were talking in the interview and that these were the ones she wanted to share with me (Appendix D). The first was an assignment that contained first and third person in the main body; the second contained case study background in first person and analysis in third and the last one was a reflective report written entirely in third person. She was eager for me to see these assignments because of the range of third and first person use that they represented and challenges they embodied for her as a writer. The process of gathering samples was therefore highly personalised with some participants choosing to submit one or more pieces of writing (see Table 3.2 below) including reflective accounts (samples 4 and 11) alongside more theory-based largely third-person assignments (samples 3, 9 and 10). Departmental writing guidelines were not provided, but students explained how approaches to pronoun use were often informed by individual lecturer's requirements and commented that it was a hot topic amongst the students themselves who were eager to follow the 'right' conventions in relation to pronoun use in order to prevent the loss of marks.

Table 3.2: Breakdown of writing samples submitted by participants

Participant	Writing sample number	Type of assignment	Course	level	Word count
Ash	1	Case study	Adult Nursing	5	2000
Riley	2	Review of theory	Adult Nursing	5	2000
Kit	3	Case study	Speech and Language Therapy	7	3000
Kit	4	Reflection	Speech and Language Therapy	7	500
Frankie	5	Case study	Speech and Language Therapy	7	3000
Jessie	6	Reflective report	Social Work	7	6595
Jessie	7	Critical incident analysis report	Social Work	7	3294
Jessie	8	Analytical reflection on planned activity	Social Work	7	2170
Kelly	9	Secondary Data Analysis	Clinical Psychology Doctorate	8	4814
Kelly	10	Systematic review	Clinical Psychology Doctorate	8	4979
Kelly	11	Formative reflection	Clinical Psychology Doctorate	8	1372

Once all the samples had been received, they were individually scanned for personal pronouns using AntConc (Lawrence Anthony's Website, 2025) corpus analysis tool which amongst other functions allows for a 'word frequency' and 'key word in context' (KWIC) analysis, both of which were used in this research (Appendix K). Word frequency analysis can be applied in various ways depending on the nature of texts being examined, with little consensus on the most effective method for ranking commonly occurring words within a corpus (Egbert & Burch, 2023). Where the frequency of particular words is being directly compared, it is common to 'normalize' the frequency or to take into account varying lengths of text in order to ensure the accuracy of the count (Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998) . However, given the variations in both length of samples and genres of essays submitted by participants in this research, the frequency count was used to establish a more general sense of the range and pattern of pronoun usage across different genres rather than to offer a direct comparison (Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998) between individual assignments. The initial search terms included a range of personal pronouns (e.g. I, my, myself,

me, our, us) and third person noun alternatives (e.g. the author, the researcher, the practitioner) with a later focus on first person 'I' use in particular. The frequency count approach (Hyland, 2001b) and keyword in context analysis was also combined with a breakdown of pronoun functions using a framework adapted from Hyland (2002a) and Tang & John, (1999) (Appendix L). Finally, in order to add a personal and experiential dimension to the corpora findings an interpretation of comments from interviews relating to participants' experiences of pronoun-use was also used. The discussion and interpretation of these findings in relation to the existing literature and overall research questions can be found in the final paper that comprises this overall thesis (see pp.154-192). To conclude this section of the methodology chapter table 3.3 (below) summarises the discussion so far relating to data collection methods and analytical approaches.

Table 3.3: Overview of data collection methods and analytical approaches

Data collection method	No. of participants	Analytical approach	Comments
Online survey (Appendix C)	10	Qualtrics analysis – breakdown of responses in percentage terms (Appendix E)	The online survey was initially completed by 12 participants, 6 of whom went on to participate in all aspects of the research. The survey comprised 98 statements divided into 3 sections (A Theory and Practice; B Identity; C Agency)
Semi-structured interviews (Appendix B)	6	Thematic analysis including holistic, initial coding, revised coding and cross-referencing and interpretation of data (Appendices F,G,H&J)	Interview guide questions were developed using responses from individual survey responses and therefore covered the three broad areas in the survey. However, the lead was taken from participants in order to explore issues of particular importance to them. Interviews were 60 minutes in length per participant.
Analysis of written assignments (Appendix D)	6 (11 scripts)	AntConc Corpus Analysis tool was used. Pronoun usage was analysed in terms of 'frequency' and meaning of 'key words in context' (Appendices K&L)	Participants submitted between 1 and 3 assignments each (11 in total). Choices were personal reflecting individual's interests in particular aspects of the research. All scripts were analysed for pronoun usage using AntConc Corpus analysis software.

Ethics and reflexivity

Concerns about ethics in social research tend to revolve around four main areas including any potential for harm to participants; lack of informed consent; possible

invasion of privacy and any instances of dishonesty (Diener & Crandall, 1978 in Clarke et al. 2021, p.113). While ethics may sometimes be characterised as an issue of compliance, Brooks, Te Riele and Maguire (2014) advocate for a more integrated and holistic approach to ethical concerns. This section therefore provides an overview of measures taken throughout the research process to ensure the safety of participants and the integrity of the research.

Following the initial request for and confirmation of ethical approval from the university's ethics committee a number of subsequent ethical procedures were followed during the design, data collection, analysis and dissemination stages of the research (Oliver, 2010, p.24) (see Appendix M for initial approval and Appendix N for subsequent approval). The purposive self-selection sampling approach adopted to recruitment meant that potential participants were not placed under any pressure by the researcher to involve themselves with the project (Oliver, 2010). Only those interested in the subject of hybrid assignments and writer identity issues responded to a general call for participants that was emailed to all HSC students. In addition, potential candidates were invited to attend a 20-minute online briefing to explain how issues relating to confidentiality, consent, safety and use of data would be addressed (BERA, 2024). This was also an opportunity for candidates to raise any concerns they may have had about the project or to withdraw. If happy to proceed, individuals were then sent a research information sheet (Appendix O) along with a consent form (Denscombe, 2010) to be completed and returned (Appendix P). These initial meetings with potential recruits demonstrated the process of 'constant negotiation and renegotiation' (Brooks et al.,2014, p.159) that is vital for the ethical integrity of the project.

Given the phenomenological stance of this study which emphasises the need for the researcher to bracket their own values and experiences it was important to adopt a reflexive approach (Vagle, 2014) when exploring students' experiences of writing about theory and practice. Although a contested concept, reflexivity often relates to the selection of the topic, the research context, the researcher-participant relationship, approaches to data collection and the characterisation of social world (Lumsden, Bradford & Goode, 2019). By adopting a reflexive approach, the researcher acknowledges that factors such as age, ethnicity and background may influence the qualitative research process (Clarke et al., 2021). In this case my own interpretations of students' experiences of writing about theory and practice are offered with a further layer of interpretation added by analysing these understandings in relation to theories about student writing and identity. This 'double' layer of interpretation (Clarke et al., 2021, p.26) requires an ethically reflexive (Brooks et al., 2014) approach to fully understand the impact of the researcher on the researched and the research process.

I chose this particular topic because as an Academic Skills Tutor working closely with HSC student writers, I had become aware of the linguistic and often ethical challenges that students faced when combining theory and practice in their writing. The practicalities of shifting between third and first-person accounts often worried students because they knew that 'I' could only be used at certain times but were not always sure about the conventions. I was also struck by the deeper ethical debates that students were often having with themselves about what they could and could not say (in writing) regarding the realities of real-life practice. This joint interest in language and concerns about the accurate representation of practical experience prompted this research.

Although I was not technically an ‘insider’ (Brooks et al.,2014) because I did not work in the HSC department, I was not an ‘outsider’ either because I did share similarities in terms of my educational experiences with the participants. My stance was therefore more of an ‘in-betweener’ (Brooks et al.,p.107) –in other words, my educational background and professional role brought a degree of insight but my distance from the HSC department helped students to talk more openly about their experiences. I was aware of the ethical responsibility this placed on me in terms of not allowing my own experience to overly influence interpretations of data but also conscious of my role in making sure student experiences were reported accurately without compromising confidentiality at any stage. Brooks et al. (2014) point to the shifting nature of power dynamics and the ethical implications of developing rapport with participants. Given my ‘in-betweener’ status the power relations between me and the participants were generally more equal (Brooks et al., 2014) but as part of an ethical rapport-building approach I was eager to remind participants about the measures taken to ensure their confidentiality. There was therefore an ongoing process of ethical renegotiation, firstly in relation to myself and the impact of my positionality on the project and secondly in relation to my participants and the desire to capture the essence of their experiences whilst protecting their anonymity.

Quality criteria

In phenomenological research, validity tends to be framed in terms of the rigor, transparency, and authenticity in the representation of participants' lived experiences (Vagle, 2014). In this study a sustained focus on student experiences of writing theory, practice and identity is evidenced through use of holistic and more finely grained methods including online survey, semi-structured interviews and writing

analysis. The online survey (Appendix C) provided students with an opportunity to explore topics broadly while interviews (Appendix B) allowed for a more nuanced discussion about experiences of writing and identity. Finally, the analysis of student writing (Appendix D), in conjunction with interview responses, helped to establish a tangible connection between writing practices and student experiences. Validity in phenomenological research also relies on the researcher's ability to bracket (Vagle, 2014) their own biases, and assumptions to avoid influencing the process of data collection or analysis. Reflexivity (Lumsden et al., 2019) was therefore an integral component of maintaining validity throughout the study. By continuously reflecting on my own role, I was able to keep the study firmly rooted in participants' perspectives.

By adopting a case study design the aim was not to seek 'conceptual closure' (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 312) on the subject of writing and identity but rather to remain open and sensitive to the situated nature of students' experiences. The richness and depth gained from case study provides valuable knowledge and insights (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Geertz, 1973) and, as noted in an earlier section, offers the possibility of 'moderatum generalizations' (Williams, 2000, p.215) allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to other contexts or populations. The adequacy of sampling is also identified as a contributory factor in validity (Simons, 2009). In this research the case is worthy of recognition because of the breadth of subjects, levels, experience and depth of understanding about writing that it represents. Participants were drawn from a range of subjects from within HSC programmes including second-year undergraduates, masters students and a doctoral student. This range of levels of academic and professional experience provided invaluable insights into

student experiences of theory, practice and identity issues at different stages of their professional and university careers.

Limitations

While small-scale phenomenological research projects provide rich insights into participants' lived experiences, several limitations (e.g. reduced generalizability; researcher subjectivity; sample compositions) may be associated with this kind of approach from positivist perspective (Tracy, 2020). As these broader theoretical constraints have already been addressed in detail in previous sections, a brief summary of practical limitations arising during the research and measures taken to address them will be provided here. Although efforts were made to ensure the accessible design of the survey statements through piloting (Brace & Bolton, 2022), one or two overly complex statements and unexplained key terms (e.g. ‘voice’, ‘position’) went unnoticed and required further explanation at the interview stage. In addition, some of the interview questions themselves needed further breaking down (Yin, 2009) to ensure that participants had fully understood them. This did not relate to the more general guide questions prepared beforehand (Appendix B), but rather to some ad hoc questions that sought to probe more deeply into issues raised by participants. On these occasions, interviewees often asked for questions to be repeated or rephrased. As the interview process is pivotal in shaping the data produced (Richards, 2003) and meaning making is central to phenomenological research (Vagle, 2024) it was important to spend time clarifying questions in order to elicit genuine representative responses from interviewees. Whilst these impromptu strategies effectively resolved any misunderstandings during the interviews, the framing and honing of questions in semi-structured interviews is an area for on-going development.

Separation of data

Data were used to address the overall research questions which concerned students' perceptions of the theory-practice relationship, the impact of the professional identity formation process on writer experiences and finally the range of personal pronoun usage in hybrid style assignments and its impact on student writers. Each of the three papers in this thesis addressed specific aspects of the broader research questions in the following ways. Paper one addressed the question of students' perceptions of theory and practice by gathering data from online survey and semi-structured interviews to examine student experiences of reconciling and writing about theory and practice and the impact of this on their sense of writer identity. Responses from online surveys provided a general guide to participant attitudes towards theory and practice, however it was the interpretation of data collected from the semi-structured interviews that shed particular light on students' meaning-making processes in their understanding of this complex relationship. The second paper addressed the questions of the way in which professional identity formation further complicates the process of writer development for HSC students. This paper once again drew on data from survey responses to establish participant attitudes to the development of professional identity formation and their perceptions of this process. Interview data was essential to this study because it provided a more nuanced understanding not only of the challenges of establishing a professional identity from scratch, but also of the possible difficulties posed by multiple aspects of professional identity when trying to establish a unified voice in academic writing.

Finally, paper three addressed questions concerning writing practices in hybrid style writing by focusing on patterns of third- and first-person usage and their impact on

student writers. This final paper drew data from online survey, interviews and analysis of writing samples submitted by participants. Personal pronoun usage was analysed using AntConc corpus analysis tool(Lawrence Anthony's Website, 2025), in particular its 'word frequency' and 'key work in context' (KWIC) functions. Findings from this corpus analysis approach were combined with the interpretation of interview data relating to participants' experiences of pronoun-use in order to add a personal, dimension to the corpora findings. As in papers one and two, this final paper included an interpretivist element however its corpus analysis approach to pronoun use patterns contrasts with and complements methods adopted in the first two papers. By addressing the overall research questions in three separate papers it was possible to provide both a clear and meaningful contribution to the respective literature in each area whilst at the same time collectively offering a cohesive and comprehensive exploration of the overarching research questions.

CHAPTER 4: THE THREE PAPERS

This chapter contains three papers which form the basis of this research. Each paper is prefaced by details of the intended journal audience and a brief overview of the paper itself. A more detailed analysis and interpretation of the key findings from individual papers and the ways in which they contribute to the overall thesis is included in the next chapter (p.193), but this chapter focuses on the contributions of the individual papers that make up this thesis.

With its clear implications for teachers of EAP and academic skills, paper one targets the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* because its intended readership includes researchers and teachers of EAP. Paper one highlights the numerous challenges student writers face when linking theory and practice including difficulties of reconciling gaps between theory and real-life experience; 'matching' literature to practice and negotiating different aspects of identity to establish a coherent and authentic voice. Paper one also provides new perspectives on the way in which conceptualisations of theory and its translation into practice may affect students' fundamental perceptions of this relationship and the way they characterize it in their writing.

PAPER 1

TITLE: 'Theory is two dimensional, but practice is 3D or even 4D': Exploring Health and Social Care students' experiences of linking theory to practice in academic writing.

ABSTRACT

Relating theory to practice is a key requirement of many Health and Social Care (HSC) programmes at university, and Academic Reflective Writing (ARW) has become a common type of assessment within HSC disciplines (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a). This hybrid style of academic writing combines elements of third-person reference to theory with more reflective first-person observations on professional practice–a genre that often presents challenges for student writers (Gimenez, 2008). This paper draws from a larger study which examines the writing experiences of six HSC students from different subject areas, at varying stages of their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The project adopts a phenomenological approach analysing data collected from in-depth interview and online survey. This paper explores participating students' perceptions of the theory-practice relationship and the challenges they face when reconciling classroom-based instruction with real-life practice in their university assignments. Findings point to the difficulties of conceptualising the theory-practice relationship in writing and to complex decision-making processes influencing participants' approaches to linking theory and practice. The paper concludes with an analysis of implications for future practice.

Keywords: Health and Social Care Students; Linking theory to practice; Theory-practice gap; Academic Reflective Writing…

INTRODUCTION

The requirement to link theory and practice is a universal feature of Health and Social Care degree programmes at universities and includes a wide range of tasks including journal writing, reflective essays; patchwork assignments; critical incidents;

and reflections on professional placements (Tanguay, Hanratty & Martin, 2020). The purpose of these tasks varies from supporting personal development and well-being (e.g., journal writing) to more formal high-stakes assignments (e.g., reflective essays) requiring students to relate theory and research to their own practice contexts. Since the 1990s this kind of hybridised Academic Reflective Writing (ARW) has become one of the most common reflective writing genres used in Health and Social Care programmes (Bowman & Addyman 2014a). Its benefits are well documented, and reflective writing is frequently characterised as having bridging or 'mediating effects' (Hatlevik, 2011, p.868) helping students to navigate the gap between theory and practice. It is also credited with helping students to develop critical thinking skills (Persson et al. 2018); a sense of professional identity and self-efficacy (Binyamin, 2018), and coping and decision-making strategies (Craft, 2005; Reljić, Pajnkihar & Fekonja, 2019; Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, it is widely believed to play a significant role in developing essential competencies (Bjerkvik & Hilli, 2018; De Swardt et al.,2012; Mahmoud, 2014; Ryan, 2011; Scully, 2011) as well as contributing to personal growth and wellbeing (Craft, 2005). Finally, from an academic perspective ARW also provides quantifiable evidence of students' abilities to demonstrate their understanding of evidence-based practice (EBP) by combining the most 'current, valid and relevant evidence' with their own experience and understanding of patient needs to support the best possible outcomes (Ormstad, Jamtvedt, Svege & Crowe, 2021, p.2).

Despite these widely reported benefits, a number of concerns have been expressed about this frequently used text type. With its emphasis on linking theory and practice, ARW has been found to cause anxiety amongst students putting them under pressure to adopt an authorial position that they feel their assessors will favour

(Craft, 2005) or even to 'partially fabricate' their accounts (Hilsdon, 2005, p.62). Students may feel that they are taking a risk by engaging in this kind of full-disclosure writing, unsure about potential assessor responses to personally or professionally revealing reflections (Hilsdon, 2005). If students feel constrained in what they can say (Dyment & O'Connell, 2011) and potentially regard such tasks as an invasion of privacy (Ng, Wright & Kuper 2019) then this may have implications for the authenticity of reflective writing itself. As students move between references to theory and observations on practice, they may also experience difficulties associated with switching between third and first person (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Ryan, 2011). At a deeper level, this requirement to combine theoretical knowledge and professional experiences, may also affect writer identity, leaving students to reconcile different aspects of their identity in ways that are both personally authentic and acceptable to the academy (Cameron, 2012, Fulbrook, 2003, Gimenez, 2008; Ivanič,1998).

Problems may also exist for the markers of this kind of hybrid writing–some studies have questioned the ability of assessors to exercise genuine objectivity when reviewing reflective accounts (Tummons, 2011) leading to further concerns about the validity and therefore viability of such assessment practices (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Bjerkvik & Hilli,2019; Moniz, Arntfield, Miller, Lingard, Watling & Regehr, 2015). The often high-stakes nature of ARW also raises more critical questions about the impact on student experiences (and outcomes) of unequal power relations between students and their assessors (Freire, 1970; Hilsdon, 2005). Another source of frustration for some students is the requirement to use reflective models (e.g., Gibbs) when writing about theory and practice. Whilst less-experienced practitioners may find them useful, more experienced students often find them restrictive (Bjerkvik

& Hilli, 2019; Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, reflective models have attracted criticism because of their 'recipe following' (Boud & Walker, 1998, p.193) format, conveying perhaps an unrealistic sense of reflection as a linear unproblematic activity (Wood, 2018).

The complexities of hybrid-style academic reflective writing are therefore considerable, encompassing linguistic, identity and conceptual challenges for students. It is these conceptual challenges, particularly the gaps between theory and personal practice, that Bowman and Addyman, (2014a) suspect may lie at the heart of many of the problems identified by students when attempting to link or match their own experience to theory. This paper seeks to deepen our understanding of students' perceptions of the theory-practice relationship and to explore ways in which conceptualisations of research and professional experience shape the practice of reflection, reflective writing and writing more broadly.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The theory-practice relationship

Students on a range of health and social care degree programmes at university (e.g., Nursing, Social Work, Midwifery, Speech and Language Therapy, Clinical Psychology etc.) are often required to write about links between theoretical knowledge obtained in lectures and practical experience gained during placement (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Tanguay et al., 2020). Moving between university and professional settings in this way often highlights the difficulties of matching theory to practice, thereby exposing students to the much-debated theory-practice gap (Carson & Carnwell, 2007; Scully, 2011). Often regarded as highly problematic, the gap and more specifically how to close or narrow it, is a source of much concern within the Health and Social Care sector (De Swardt et al. 2012; Hatlevik, 2011;

Mahmoud, 2014; Monaghan, 2015). Many strategies for bridging the gap have been identified in the literature—for example Mahmoud (2014) argues that simulation sessions and pre-practice activities might better prepare students for real-life clinical settings. Other studies have foregrounded possible benefits of internship programmes and residences which provide newly qualified staff with periods of supported transition into practice (Shoghi et al., 2019).

Interventions using Lecturer Practitioners (LPs)—facilitators who work with students to help them integrate the 'idealism' of theory and the 'reality' of practice have also been recommended to support students' transition into practice (Carson & Carnwell, 2007, p.225). As well as these more practical interventions, reflective writing activities are also frequently referred to as a way of helping students to make sense of or to mediate the theory–practice relationship (De Swardt et al., 2012; Ehrenburg, 2006; Hatlevik,2011; Mahmoud, 2014; Scully,2011). Many such positive initiatives reflect a widespread belief that with the right kind of intervention the theory-practice gap can be closed or at least narrowed (Gallagher, 2004). However, in spite of such adjustments, the reality often points to a stubbornly persistent divide which many students experience during their initial training and later as more experienced practitioners (Monaghan, 2015). Recounting her experiences of becoming a nurse, Watson (2018) noted how very different she found sitting in the classroom with her peers from being on the ward. Similarly, McClendon (2005, p.8) refers to the fundamental differences or 'cognitive dissonance' she experienced when trying to reconcile the worlds of academia and nursing practice.

Although the prevailing view seems to be that the gap is problematic and needs to be addressed (Scully, 2011) other perspectives reveal alternative conceptualisations

of the theory-practice relationship. For some the existence of a gap is essential, even beneficial, because it motivates professionals to improve their working practices and to resist complacency (Ajani & Moez, 2011; Ousey & Gallagher, 2007). Others (e.g., Gallagher, 2004; Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011; Ousey and Gallagher, 2007) challenge the very conceptualisation of the theory-practice divide, suggesting that the much-used metaphor of the 'gap' is distorting the reality of the theory-practice relationship. Gallagher (2004) argues that it masks the complex and abstract nature of learning and provides an oversimplified and misleadingly *physical* representation of the relationship between research and practice. Implicit in the metaphorical language of gaps, he suggests, is the notion of two tangible entities that have somehow become separated or have drifted apart and simply need to be realigned. This in turn has given rise to a proliferation of other metaphors (e.g., bridges, spanning, linking etc.) that are all rooted in similarly 'spatial imagery' suggesting that theory and practice are essentially physical entities (Gallagher,2004, p.264).

Whilst the use of metaphor might facilitate easy reference to an otherwise complex issue, there is a danger that such language diverts attention away from, and even shuts down, debate about the true complexities of the theory-practice relationship (Ousey & Gallagher, 2007). Similarly, Greenhalgh & Wieringa (2011) highlight the dangers of oversimplification and argue for a more creative use of language that points to the intricacies of the theory-practice relationship highlighting the importance of the practitioners' own instinctive knowledge; the power-knowledge dynamics and the complex partnerships between researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders (p.501). This more complex rendering of the theory-practice relationship is echoed by Stark et al. (2000) and Ousey & Gallagher (2004), who highlight the human

element in the process of research integration. Changes to practices do not just happen spontaneously–they have to be introduced, explained and discussed with staff. Changes may be welcomed–questioned–debated—even resisted for a range of personal and professional reasons (Stark et al. 2000). From this perspective, the theory-practice relationship takes on an interpersonal dimension—less of a one-way transfer of science into practice, and more an interactive exchange or dialogue where practitioners act with agency during the implementation of new practices.

Alternative theory-practice perspectives

The idea of the agentive professional practitioner, contributing to the creation of knowledge, was advanced by Schön (1983, 1991) almost three decades ago. He challenged the notion of 'applying theory' to practice, believing it to be fundamentally at odds with the complex nature of professional practice–for Schön, the "hard" knowledge of science could not simply be super imposed on to the "soft" knowledge of practice (p.viii). He argued that a new epistemology of practice was needed, and his research explored the theory-practice relationship in the areas of architecture, psychotherapy and engineering. Whilst he conceded that some professions were more closely aligned to hard sciences than others, he observed a common perception among professionals that knowledge and real-life practice did not match. He argued therefore that the normative model of education which advocated the transferral of theory onto practice, was incomplete (Schön,1983, 1991). He believed that the fluidity of the practice situation and the constant developments within the research field meant that it was unlikely that two such dynamic and separate entities would align with one another. He therefore framed the relationship between them, not in terms of one reflecting or matching the other, but as a relationship built on principles of 'exchange' (p. 26)–researchers provide techniques to be applied and

tested out on problems in practice, and practitioners offer researchers valuable feedback and ideas for new research. Schön's assessment of this relationship therefore placed the professional in the difficult position of negotiating the exchange between a constantly developing research world and a uniquely complex and unstable professional environment.

His analysis of the theory-practice relationship fundamentally challenged the Technical Rationality model (p.41), questioning the deeply embedded belief that standardised scientific principles could be applied to real-life situations to solve problems. In fact, the very identification of problems was challenging for Schön because unlike scientific environments where problems (e.g., diseases) might be clearly diagnosed, in the world of professional practice, problems first had to be defined or constructed. The subjective elements in this process conflicted with the positivist model of applying generalized principles to real-life problems, leaving the professional to choose between theory and practice or 'rigor or relevance' (Schön, 1983,1991, p.42). Schön does not entirely reject the Technical Rationality model (Kinsella, 2007) but rather points to another approach, namely, *reflection-in-action* which he feels acknowledges the existence of other kinds of 'tacit' knowing (p.49) that professionals use in real-life practice. With this approach, practitioners do not simply receive knowledge, they help to create it (Kinsella, 2007).

Schön was not without his critics and Eraut (2004) and Boud and Walker (1998) draw attention to a lack of precision in his analysis and a failure to examine the context of reflection. However, the influence of Schön's analysis of professional knowing can be seen in more recent studies–Ousey and Gallagher (2004) support an enactivist view (p.203) where the practitioner plays a vital role in influencing the

path that action takes. Robinson and Dearmon (2013) also distance themselves from notions of theory informing practice or vice versa, preferring to promote more holistic or complimentary perspectives relating to theory and practice in healthcare environments. In the field of nursing, Reed (2006) makes a case for nurses not just being the recipients and testers of knowledge but also playing an active role in its production. The extensive literature in this area paints a complex picture of the theory-practice relationship. For some the gap between research and practice is highly problematic and should be bridged, for others it is viewed as a positive reminder of the need for ongoing development. As can be seen from the literature certain writers even question the fundamental notion of the one-way flow of knowledge from theory to practice, instead characterising the relationship as one of exchange or even of knowledge co-creation.

Implications for student writers

For students situated, uniquely as they are, between the academy and professional settings, the theory practice divide is often brought into sharp relief. As well as dealing with the practical and logistical challenges of attending university and professional placements, students are frequently required to portray or conceptualise the relationship between theory and practice in their writing. If it is assumed that practice does and should flow from theory–a 'technically based' approach to healthcare (Polkinghorne, 2004), then student writers may experience difficulties in representing any perceived disconnect between theory and their own practice, torn between the realities of their lived experience and the pressure to establish clear positive links to research. If on the other hand, the relationship is conceptualised more as a two-way exchange (Reed, 2006; Schön, 1983,1991)

rather than one-way application (or indeed as something between these extremes), then this may also have implications for student writers as they try to position themselves as more agentive practitioners with an active role in shaping practice. This paper addresses the overall question of how different conceptualisations of the theory-practice relationship may affect students' experiences of writing hybrid-style assignments and does this through exploring the following questions:

1. How do student writers perceive the relationship between theory and their own experiences of practice?
2. How do varying conceptualisations of the theory practice relationship affect student writer approaches to linking theory and practice in assignments?
3. What are the implications for teaching practice?

METHODOLOGY

Forming part of a broader research project into Health and Social Care (HSC) student-writer experiences, this paper adopts a phenomenological approach exploring the experiences and perceptions of its participants, placing particular emphasis on the way in which meanings are socially constructed (Flood, 2010; Vagle, 2014). The specific aim of the paper is to increase our understanding of the way HSC student writers conceptualise the theory-practice relationship and the implications this may have for their writing. As the study aims to gather rich details, an exploratory case study design is adopted (Yin, 2009)–the details of which are then related to the wider literature (Bryman, 2012). The case study comprises six students (see table 4.1.1 below) from a university in England and includes undergraduate and postgraduate students from the disciplines of Adult Nursing; Speech and Language Therapy, Social Work and Clinical Psychology. Self-selection

sampling was used (Gaganpreet, 2017) in order to attract participants who had a particular interest in the subject and who were willing to share their insights through participating in online survey (Appendix 1[1]) and semi structured interviews. Participants not only represented a variety of subjects and academic levels (see table 4.1.1), but also a range of ages and professional experience. Some participants (e.g. Ash, Riley and Frankie) were younger undergraduates and postgraduates gaining their first experience of practice through placements, while others (e.g. Kit and Jessie) were transitioning from well-established careers in different areas (e.g. teaching and childminding) to begin new professions as Speech and Language Therapists and Social Workers. In the case of Kelly, she had both many years of academic and professional experience and was therefore able to reflect more broadly on aspects of practice and writing. This diversity of academic, professional and personal experience accumulated by participants formed unique 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p.133) which offered invaluable insights into individual experiences of hybrid style writing at university.

Table 4.1.1: Participant Details

Participant (pseudonym)	UG/PG	Level	Course	Age range	Ethnicity	Language
Ash	UG	5	Adult Nursing	20-30	White British	L1 speaker of English
Riley	UG	5	Adult Nursing	20-30	White American	L1 speaker of English
Kit	PG	7	Speech and Language Therapy	35-45	White British	L1 speaker of English
Frankie	PG	7	Speech and Language Therapy	30-40	White British	L1 speaker of English
Jessie	PG	7	Social Work	30-40	White British	L1 speaker of English
Kelly	PG	8	Clinical Psychology Doctorate	35-45	White British	L1 speaker of English

[1] As appendices are numbered in individual papers for journal submission, footnotes will be used to indicate how numbered appendices correspond to the alphabetically organised appendices that are attached at the end of the thesis. In this case, Appendix 1 corresponds to Appendix C.

As this research was carried out during periods of national lockdown, an online survey (Table 4.1.2) was used as an exploratory instrument to outline the scope and content of the study and as a method of remotely filtering out students who chose not to progress to the interview stage.

Table 4.1.2: Data Collection Overview

	Online Surveys	**Pre-interview online briefing**	**Semi-structured online Interviews**
Number completed	10	10	6
Duration	15-20 mins	20 mins	60 mins
Number of questions	97	Informal discussion	Approx. 25—30

The online survey (Appendix 1[2]) was divided into three sections entitled–A *Theory and Practice–B Identity and C Agency* and participants were invited to respond to a total of 97 statements relating to each theme (see example extract Table 4.1.3 below).

Table 4.1.3: Example of online survey statements from section A: Theory and Practice

As a healthcare student, you are encouraged to relate the theory of healthcare to the reality of everyday practice. The following statements aim to explore your understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.	**Agree/disagree/don't know**
1. The relationship between what I am learning at university and the reality of everyday practice is complex.	
2. Reflective practice is helping me to make sense of the relationship between theory and practice.	
3. I am naturally reflective, and I am used to reflecting on my practice.	
4. Linking healthcare theories to my everyday practice is sometimes challenging.	
5. When I reflect on the relationship between what I am learning at university and what I experience in healthcare settings, I can generally see clear links between theory and my practice.	
6. It is inevitable that there will be differences between what I study and the real world of healthcare.	
7. My colleagues/peers and I often talk about the gap between how healthcare should be in theory and how it really is.	

[2] Appendix 1 corresponds to Appendix C.

Measures were taken to ensure that the survey was accessible and unambiguous (Sue & Ritter,2012)–for example each subsection of the survey contained a brief contextualised introduction (See Table 4.1.3) to help participants orientate themselves by establishing relevance and meaning. Topics also moved from broader to narrower more complex ideas (Brace & Bolton, 2022), and contested concepts (e.g., agency) were broken down to reduce the possibility of linguistic or conceptual barriers. Finally, instructions were clear and unambiguous, inviting participants to simply agree, disagree or indicate that they did not know in response to statements (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Once completed, the survey was piloted to check any technical problems or ambiguity of meaning and a number of adjustments were made following feedback.

On completion of the survey, participants were invited to attend a short online briefing session (see Table 4.1.2 on p.98) before moving on to the semi-structured interview phase of the research which encouraged respondents to elaborate on themes raised in the survey (Dornyei, 2007). A 'Progressive focusing' technique (Richards, 2003, p.2) was used when designing the interview guide (Appendix 2[3]) to ensure the participants were reminded of context and broader issues before drilling down into some of the more specific questions. Although an interview guide was used as an aide memoire (Dornyei, 2007), the approach was flexible to ensure that participants were able to explore any interesting tangents. Time was also left at the end of each interview for participants to add any further comments.

[3] Appendix 2 corresponds to Appendix B.

The approach to coding interview data (See Table 4.1.4 below) incorporated both a detailed thematic analysis and a more holistic, instinctive view of significant findings (Simons, 2009; Dornyei,2007). Initially, a 'naïve reading' of transcriptions was carried out (Flood, 2010, p.12) to establish a general sense of meaning while remaining open to different ideas (Appendix 3[4]). A free writing technique was used to capture these initial intuitive thoughts (Li, 2007), followed by a more rigorous analysis of arising codes. This involved the identification of *initial* codes and themes (Appendix 4[5]) followed by a further review of categories (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008) in order to establish a final list of revised codes and themes (Appendix 5[6]) which were then cross referenced to participants' comments (Appendix 6[7]). Final themes and initial free writing impressions were then used to interpret participant contributions in relation to research questions and the study's context (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Table 4.1.4: Process of analysis

Phase	Coding Process (Braun & Clarke, 2022)
Phase 1	Familiarisation with the data set (e.g. reading, rereading, making notes)
Phase 2	Coding (e.g. systematically work through data set to identify meaningful elements and applying short description or code)
Phase 3	Generating initial themes (e.g. identifying broader shared meanings from the codes)
Phase 4	Developing and reviewing themes (e.g. check themes make sense in relation to codes and full data set)
Phase 5	Refining themes (e.g. check each theme is clearly defined and carefully named)
Phase 6	Writing up (e.g. weave together reflexive notes with more formal writing)

Potential respondents were invited to complete a consent form (Appendix 7[8]) before deciding whether they wished to participate. Further time was allowed at the pre-interview stage to discuss any ethical concerns including steps taken (e.g.,

[4] Appendix 3 corresponds to Appendix F.
[5] Appendix 4 corresponds to Appendix G.
[6] Appendix 5 corresponds to Appendix H.
[7] Appendix 6 corresponds to Appendix J.
[8] Appendix 7 corresponds to Appendix P.

anonymization of results; use of pseudonyms; storage of data) to ensure confidentiality (Brooks et al. 2014).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Survey

As outlined above an exploratory online survey instrument was used as part of a remote recruitment strategy during a period of national lockdown. Its function was multipurpose–to initiate a dialogue with potential participants, to establish the parameters of the study and to help students to make informed decisions about their involvement in the research. The survey yielded ten responses including four students who decided to opt out after the survey and six students who subsequently went on to participate in all aspects of the study. As surveys were used to help prepare participants for later interviews, the findings were viewed indicatively, with greater emphasis being placed on the more nuanced responses elicited during interview. However, survey findings immediately pointed to a general concern amongst participants about the relationship between healthcare theory and experiences of everyday professional practice. Although 70% of respondents could generally see clear links between theory and practice, 90% of respondents felt that it was sometimes challenging to link theories to everyday practice. 90% also revealed that they often talked about the gap between theory and practice with their peers and 80% of participants thought it was sometimes difficult to write about theory and practice when they did not seem to match. 70% also agreed that it was difficult to switch between third person theoretical writing and first-person reflective writing in the same essay. Despite the difficulties of combining more formal and reflective writing, 70% of respondents agreed that reflective writing was helping them to make sense of the relationship between theory and practice.

Interview Findings

This section moves on to discuss the main findings from the interviews in relation to the paper's research questions. It therefore explores participants' perceptions of the theory-practice relationship in their everyday lives as students and trainee practitioners, examining ways in which students' lived experiences of academia and professional practice affect their experiences of writing. Three key themes were identified in discussions: 1) participants' perceptions of the theory practice relationship, 2) their experiences of linking literature to practice and 3) issues relating to identity when writing about theory and practice.

When asked about the relationship between research and real-life practice all participants acknowledged differences between theory and professional practice but varying attitudes to this came across in interviews. For Kit, Ash and Riley the relationship was characterised as a mismatch or disconnect (Carson & Carnwell,2007; Hatlevik, 2011; Monaghan, 2015) with practice failing to live up to the theory they had been taught in the classroom. There was an underlying sense from these participants that practice should flow directly from theory (Polkinghorne, 2004) and a feeling of frustration when it failed to do so. For example, Kit felt very strongly that theory was not 'transferable' and that no matter how much theory you read, it was not 'going to prepare you for working with a 4-year old'. She added:

> 'They're different things…I don't know how it would be possible to combine them, because you know…theory is two dimensional…but practice is you know 3D or even 4D…with the water coming at you in the cinema...they're different dimensions'

Kit's vivid description of trying to apply theory to practice bears a striking resemblance to Schon's (1983, 1991, pp.42-43) analysis of the theory-practice relationship where he refers to the differences between 'swampy lowlands'—the uncertainties of real-life practice—and the 'high hard ground' of technical rationality,

in other words generalised scientific principles. The sense of exasperation in Kit's account of 2-dimensional theory meeting 3 or even 4-dimensional practice seems to chime with Schön's appeal for a new epistemology of practice that more accurately represents the messiness of the practice situation and that challenges the notion that generalized principles can be applied to professional settings.

This strong sense of dislocation between theory and practice (Ajani & Moez, 2011; McClendon, 2005; Watson, 2018) was similarly experienced by Ash and Riley. Ash observed how 'the picture they paint in uni isn't quite the reality you face in real healthcare environments', adding that practical issues such as staffing shortages and 'time constraints' often compounded the problem. Riley also noticed the disconnection between classroom theories which were 'sequential and systematic' and the reality of placement contexts where colleagues often lacked the time needed to implement theoretical principles precisely. Both Ash and Riley were frustrated by the gap between theory and practice and by implication seemed to suggest that if staffing issues were addressed there would be more time to implement theoretical knowledge in the way it was taught. Their comments echo the findings of Greenhalgh and Wieringa (2011) who identify context-related factors such as funding and research priorities as potential inhibitors of transferring knowledge. Similarly, Wolfe (2008, p.211) points to the impact of complex organisational and behavioural systems on the 'bench-to-bedside' process of translating research into practice. The following comment from Ash was selected because it encapsulates this sense of dislocation between theory and practice which while specific to him, also echoed the sentiments of other participants:

> '…I believe it was palliative care and the use of pink sponges…I think in the lecture they said pink sponges are being phased out, because of the risk of chewing and swallowing the sponge…but when I went on my placement no one I spoke to had any idea about that…'

From a positivist technical models' approach (e.g., Polkinghorne, 2004; Schön, 1983, 1991) where the emphasis is on the *application* of scientific principles to real-life problems, this example might be viewed as a *gap* in terms of the transmission of theory to practice. However, when considered from a more practitioner-centred perspective (e.g., Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011; Schön, 1983, 1991; Stark et al., 2000) the space between theory and practice could be viewed as a moment of transition in the complex process of 'knowledge distillation' (Titler, 2008, p.114). In other words, new research has to pass through many intermediaries and brokers before it reaches the point of integration into practice. As Titler (2008) notes, implementation is the final stage in a highly complex process of information dissemination involving both organisations and individuals. From this perspective, the interface between theory and practice becomes more porous, more person centred and more complex. The typically oversimplified metaphors of 'gaps' and 'divides' employed to represent the relationship between theory and practice fail to convey the complex and intricate web of processes that characterises the movement of knowledge from research to practice (Gallagher, 2004).

While the professional ramifications of these discussions are beyond the scope of this paper, the student writers' understanding of the theory-practice relationship is central to their ability to link research with their own experiences—whether the space between theory and practice is conceptualised as a *gap* or as a place of transition or even negotiation or interpretation may have a bearing on the way in which students represent the relationship in their writing. For example, if students interpret the gap as something lacking in their individual practice rather than as a common feature of knowledge transmission, they may feel uncomfortable documenting this in an assessed assignment (Craft, 2005). This may, in turn, raise ethical and rhetorical

issues for writers who are eager to represent their experience authentically but who are also conscious of the often high-stakes nature of their assignments (Hilsdon, 2005). Schön (1983,1991) was aware of the tension between the technical rigor of theory and the reality of practice and felt that practitioners (like Ash in the example above) were often caught in a difficult position between the two.

Participants in this study displayed varying attitudes to their place or role in the theory-practice dynamic and provided insights into their own ways of coping with any apparent lack of alignment. When discussing the disconnection she had experienced in her own placements, Kit commented 'I feel like I have failed in this because…you know my experience was not that of the theory…'. There is a strong sense in Kit's comment of disappointment and feelings of personal responsibility when theory and practice do not align. Where conceptualisations of the theory-practice relationship are perhaps rooted in positivist or technical approaches, the expectation of unequivocal alignment between theory and practice may leave practitioners feeling bruised by the disconnect. McClendon (2005) in her personal account of experiences as a nurse argues that this dislocation or 'cognitive dissonance' (p.8) can have profoundly wounding effects on nurses arguing that theory should flow from practice and that nursing should have its own distinctive ontology.

Frustrated by the disconnect, Kit, in an earlier comment reduces the role of theory to that of a starting point, commenting 'I think what the theory gives you is a checklist…it's a springboard, but it's no more'. By contrast, Kelly, an experienced student and practitioner, seems to take a more philosophical attitude to the gap, believing there will always be a disconnect because individual professionals come

from varying ‘backgrounds and upbringings’ and therefore naturally interpret theory differently. She places greater emphasis on the part played by clinical experience (Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018) reflecting that ‘you very quickly have to...consider what you’ve learned, but also forget a lot’. Like Kit, she regards theory as ‘a guideline...a base to go...that is all’, but her view seems to be borne out of greater professional experience rather than any sense that theory and practice ought to align more closely—for Kelly theory is vital, but so too is experience.

Although all participants were aware of differences between theory and practice, their comments reveal interesting variations in reactions to this phenomenon. As has been seen in their responses, emotions ranged from feelings of frustration and personal responsibility to a prioritising of experience over theory, tentatively pointing to a connection between stages of professional and academic development and attitudes to the nature of the theory-practice relationship. Another area of concern for participants was connecting literature and real-life practice in writing which the next section explores in more detail.

Experiences of linking literature to practice

The need to establish links between theory and practice is a frequent requirement of hybrid-style assignments on Health and Social Care programmes (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Tanguay et al., 2020) and is often regarded by students as highly challenging (Gimenez, 2012). This kind of writing requires a good understanding of the evidence-based practice principles of ‘currency, validity and relevance’ (Ormstad, et al., 2021 p.2); effective critical appraisal techniques (Moule, 2021), and the ability to link aspects of theory to professional practice (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Gimenez, 2008). When discussing their approaches to writing this kind of

assignment, a number of issues were highlighted by participants including difficulties involved in matching theory to experience; issues relating to the currency and availability of literature and the challenges involved in capturing time shifts in writing, in other words relating past events in practice to more recently read theories.

When discussing their experiences of linking theory to practice, a frequently used expression was that of 'fit'. In other words, participants viewed the process of linking the literature to their experiences as one of finding the best match. Jessie sums up the challenges of this process when she says:

> 'I'm either trying to make it fit something I don't think it fits very well and you're trying to make those links and that your heart is saying actually it doesn't really fit and…that's not right, but you know your head is saying but I need to do this assignment and find a case to fit the theory to it'

Her comments reflect the difficulties of relating theory precisely to practice (Carson & Carnwell,2007; Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011; Hatlevik, 2011; Monaghan, 2015; Wolfe, 2008), but also convey a sense of the pressure felt to fulfil the assignment brief (Craft, 2005; Hilsdon, 2005). In an earlier comment she reveals a further possible nuance to the linking process when she says, 'somebody may look at exactly the same case and say another theory fitted best and sometimes I think that comes down to your personal preference of how you interpret and understand the theories.'. This adds a further potentially subjective element to the task of linking theory and practice, casting doubt, once again on the positivist technical models' notion of an unequivocal connection between theory and its implementation in practice (e.g., Polkinghorne, 2004). Her focus on individual interpretations of theory points towards the idea of practitioners having a more agentive role where their own 'tacit knowledge' (Schön 1983,1991, p.49) has value and plays a part in knowledge production (Reed, 2006; Robinson & Dearmon, 2013). Kit similarly struggles to find a perfect match between theory and practice, commenting that 'you generally find

something in the right ball-park area…something must fit…, so I will just go and look for it'. Her strategic approach (Faranda, Clarke & Clarke, 2020) is to aim for a 'ballpark area' rather than a precise fit and she seems to use her extensive experience of academic writing in other areas to ensure that the task is efficiently completed and that all the assignment criteria are met (Hilsdon, 2005).

The participant comments collected in this study help to shed light on the complexities of linking theory and practice revealing the kind of cognitive challenges involved in academic reflective writing. However, their responses are also important in terms of linking to larger debates surrounding the nature of the theory-practice relationship and the extent to which practitioners may or may not be involved in the implementation and even the creation of knowledge in their fields.

Another issue that participants raised when discussing the process of linking theory and practice concerned the currency and availability of literature. For example, Kelly raises concerns about the literature used in her subject area of Clinical Psychology when she notes, 'a lot of theory is based around...quite old studies...quite outdated and a lot of it has been conducted by middle class white men or middle-class white students usually in US, so a lot of the data that we do have isn't necessarily as generalizable as we once thought it was'. Kelly acknowledges how previously considered prestigious research has more recently been revealed to be unrepresentative of diverse communities (Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie and Mortenson, 2020). While this specific example clearly has implications for the validity and relevance of evidence within Kelly's area of study, it also emphasises the importance of critical appraisal in the process of linking theory to practice in writing

more generally (Moule, 2021) and the need for students to factor this into any decisions about research-practice 'fit'.

Ash's experience points to a lack of evidence in certain areas when he observes, 'I feel that there can be quite a few gaps in terms of what has been written about and what has been applied…and if you can't find real life examples of application of a theory it can be quite difficult to incorporate it into your essay'. His comments draw attention to the complexities of the research-practice relationship reminding us of the practicalities of the knowledge production, application and review cycle (Titler, 2008; Wolfe, 2008). This more nuanced point about the importance of follow-up studies to report on the implementation of theory forms part of broader concerns about linking theory to practice and the requirement for students to find good quality evidence to support assignments (Ajetunmobi, 2002). The pressure to avoid lower-ranked sources in favour of more authoritative evidence (e.g., randomised controlled trial) was observed by Gimenez (2008) in his study amongst nursing students and points to the high-stakes nature of the academic reflective writing as a genre (Bowman and Addyman, 2014a) and the potentially negative impact this may have on student writers (Hilsdon, 2005).

Another challenge for participants attempting to relate theory to practice in their writing concerned the representation of time shifts in the learning experience (Gimenez, 2008). For example, Jessie notes, 'the longer it is after the event has occurred or the practices occurred that you're writing formally about it and trying to fit a theory to it, the more…you may possibly be likely to forget certain bits.' Here Jessie raises a very practical point about remembering the details of what has happened in practice and the consequences of not keeping a record or reflective

journal as a reminder (Mahlanze & Sibiya, 2017). In the absence of such notes and relying on perhaps imperfect recollections of past events she acknowledges that there is a danger of 'almost over imagining certain bits that…the bits that fit with the theory'. This observation potentially raises questions about the authenticity of assignments that link theory to practice and the overall validity of this form of assessment (Dyment & O'Connell, 2011). Similarly, Ash stresses the practical problems of remembering details if they have not been written down but he also sums up the difficulties of capturing learning across time when he says:

> 'trying to incorporate…theories that you are just learning about now…to an event that happened in the past…it's a bit weird because it is all after the fact…I can't say, I learned this and this because I'm only learning it now…so it kind of changes how you write it'

In this comment, Ash seems to be drawing attention to changes in perception and understanding of theory and practice that can occur over time and the challenges that a writer faces when trying to accurately represent stages of their learning retrospectively (Lemke, 2000). This notion is also expressed by Jessie when she considers how time plays a part in the understanding of theory. She observes,

> 'I suppose how long you've known the theory…and if it's brand new theory you might not have had the experience of several years to consider it and apply it to different cases…'

Their comments begin to probe the very essence of the learning process. For example, the notion that knowledge changes over time with experience is central to Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) which characterises learning as an ongoing process of adaptation to the environment. However, perhaps Ash and Jessie's reflections on their own understanding of learning over time (Lemke, 2000) question the linear nature of Kolb's model, pointing instead to less rigid conceptualisations of learning, where experience may precede theory and where context has a mediating effect on meaning (Holman, Pavlica & Thorpe, 1997).

For the HSC students involved in this study, learning from lectures and from their professional experience was an everyday reality. However, capturing the intricacies of the intersection between knowledge and experience, in their assignments, was far from a routine writing task, containing many cognitive, emotional and rhetorical challenges (Ivanič, 1998). Even the practical problems of accurately remembering something could influence writing, raising the possibility that factual details may be unintentionally reimagined to better fit the available research (Craft, 2005; Hilsdon, 2005). Students' familiarity with research and their interpretation of it may also have a significant impact on the representation of the theory-practice relationship in writing. In this sense, academic reflective writing may uniquely challenge students to make sense of and reconcile learning over varying time periods and in different contexts (Lemke, 2000). Clearly, the task of linking theory to practice, is far from straight forward with significant implications for student writers and markers alike.

Relating theory to practice: Issues of identity

The requirement to move between discussions about theory and professional experience in their assignments also caused some participants to consider issues relating to their own identity as writers (Ivanič, 1998). While they generally coped with the linguistic shifts between first and third person (Ryan, 2011), they often appeared to struggle with the implications this had for combining the caring and more analytical aspects of their identity. For example, Jessie experienced a marked change as she moved between the 'the lived experience sort of voice' and 'putting that sort of analytical hat on….'. For Jessie, the linguistic shift seemed to represent the tension between her emotional involvement with clients and the more distanced analytical stance required of her as a student. Ash experienced a similar tension as he moved between first and third person commenting, 'the jarring thing about it is the

sudden shift from a third person neutral voice writing to first person…this is my personal experience here's how I felt type thing...'. Jessie and Ash's responses here seem to echo something of the clash between theory and practice experienced by McClendon (2005) and Watson (2018) and the sharp contrast between research and practice identified by Schön (1983,1991). Reconciling the rational world of research with the messier, emotionally charged experience of real-life practice is not simply an academic challenge–it requires students to make sense of the complex theory-practice dynamic and to establish their own voice and identity within that relationship (McClendon, 2005; Watson, 2018; Schön 1983,1991).

For Riley and Frankie, the first person-third person shifts seemed to be more associated with feelings of identity suppression (Bartholomae, 1985; Ivanič, 1998). Like the students in Gimenez's (2008) study, Frankie, for example felt constrained by third person writing conventions when talking about professional practice. She explained how 'clunky and weird' it was to discuss personal aspects of practice in this way, and she clearly felt passionate about making disciplinary writing more accessible to those inside and outside the profession (Molinari, 2022). In Riley's case the use of first person in academic writing seemed to present a threat to her sense of authorial identity (Hyland, 2002b). Having been schooled in a non-UK system where distinctions between formal and informal writing styles were strictly drilled, she expressed her dislike of using first person in essays (Davies, 2012) describing how she 'cringed' when handing in hybrid-style assignments, referring to the mix of first and third person as being like 'oil and water' . By contrast, issues of identity suppression for Kit were more associated with the requirement to use reflective models (Gimenez, 2008;). She felt constrained by the overly controlled nature of reflective models (Bjerkvik & Hilli, 2019; Wood, 2018) preferring to express

reflections in the form of poetry instead because it felt like a better fit with her own identity (Cronin & Hawthorne, 2018; English, 2011).

Some participants were very aware of different aspects of their identity and how they might influence their writing (Ivanič, 1998). For example, Jessie acknowledges the complex nature of her professional identity when she says, '…you can be for example like a daughter and a mother and a sister and wife and a different role to different people... you have these different elements of your professional identity'. In a later comment she highlights the challenges of combining or representing these different aspects of identity in her writing when she says, 'it's difficult making them sort of come out with the same voice'. Her comments echo the Bakhtinian (1981) notion of multiple voiced texts except the voices on this occasion all represent different aspects of the writer's own professional identity. Jessie's powerful image of competing 'accents' or elements of identity highlights the difficulties of reconciling professional voices but reminds us of many other aspects of personal and cultural identity (Gimenez, 2008; Ivanič, 1998) that students may also be trying to reconcile in their writing. Riley also discusses different aspects of identity and how she moves between them as a writer depending on the situation. She explained how she wanted to adapt to different writing contexts by 'mirroring what everyone around you is doing'. She was eager to stress that this did not mean that she was somehow diluting herself, but that she was simply adapting her writing identity to suit the situation. This seemed to reflect Ivanič and Camps (2001, p.21) notion of disciplinary 'dress-codes' that can be adopted when required and the idea of 'transportable identities' promoted by Ushioda (2011a, p.16) where writers exercise agency as they move from one aspect of their identity to another.

The requirement to link theory and practice clearly prompts many identity-related issues ranging from the difficulties of representing the emotional and analytical sides of professional roles to the challenges of asserting a sense of self and of reconciling the competing intersecting elements of different professional and academic identities in writing. For some participants the movement between different aspects of professional identity (e.g. evidence-based principles and caring role) seemed to be embodied in the shift from third person to first person, causing them to experience a 'jarring' sensation. Others were concerned about the de personalising impact of using third person to discuss emotionally charged aspects of their role. Taken together these findings therefore point to complex conceptual and identity-related issues connected with hybrid style writing.

Implications for practice

This paper has explored student writers' attitudes to theory and practice and the effects that different conceptualisations of this relationship may have on participants' experiences of writing. Put simply, student writers' perceptions of theory and practice are likely to affect their sense of identity and agency as a student, a professional and also as a writer. Unpacking some of the commonly used metaphors of gaps, divides and bridges (Gallagher, 2004; Greenhalgh and Wieringa, 2011) to explore underlying assumptions about the theory-practice relationship may therefore help students to position themselves more authentically and comfortably in their own writing. Integral to this process is also the alignment of practice with relevant and appropriate literature. This paper has also revealed the complexities of this process and the many factors – cognitive, emotional and ethical – underpinning commonly used expressions such as *linking* or *fitting* theory to practice. Closer

examination of such metaphors may help students to rehearse some of the difficulties that this kind of hybrid writing presents.

The findings point to the need to encourage discussion among students about issues relating to identity and agency, as professionals and as writers. This might provide opportunities for student writers to rehearse potential dilemmas associated with positioning themselves between their own lived experience and their theoretical knowledge (Rahimian,2015). The data from this paper suggest that this might also enable student writers to explore the way in which changes in their professional attitudes over time may lead to changes in their approach to writing and reflecting on practice. Given the complexities of the academic reflective writing genre which requires students to connect experience, identity and research in their assignments, Ryan (2011) argues for a more systematic approach to teaching reflective writing with a particular focus on analysing the critical features of this text type.

As the discussion has shown, participants in this research often expressed concern about the high stakes nature of academic reflective writing and the way that this constrained their ability to reflect in an authentic way. They recognised the value of both academic and more personal reflection but felt that each would benefit from being disentangled from the other. This view is echoed by Addyman and Bowman (2014a) who suggest that reflective writing should be lower stakes or formative, with a greater emphasis on honesty. They also advocate the use of group dialogue to encourage more authentic reflection. The idea of talking, rather than writing about reflections was also championed by one of this study's participants who had experienced the benefits of sharing reflections in group discussions. She had been particularly struck by the way speaking (rather than writing) leant itself to the fluid,

constantly evolving nature of reflection. Other participants were also concerned by the ambiguous nature or function of academic reflective writing and one respondent wanted to see greater clarity in the way assignments were framed – she suggested combining formal writing with more creative annotations, thereby clearly separating the personal reflection and commentary from the more formal text.

Finally, the findings from this paper highlight that further experimentation with less conventional formats of academic reflective writing such as patchwork texts (Winter, 2003) or more creative modes of expression (English, 2011) such as poetry, (Cronin and Hawthorne, 2019) painting or even dance (Molinari, 2022) might offer alternative ways for conveying the complexities and the unfinished nature of learning (Freire, 1970; Murray, 2018). Providing greater choices and a more flexible range of genres for expressing reflections on practice may also help to empower student writers and to mitigate the effects of unequal power relations between students and lecturers (Hilsdon, 2005).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This paper has reported on healthcare students' experiences of writing about theory and practice in their undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. It has explored the way in which different conceptualisations of the theory-practice relationship may affect participants attitudes to their own real-life experiences as well as their approaches to writing about theory and practice and the development of writer identity. It has also examined the many variables that affect student decision-making processes when they are trying to connect literature to their own experience and the complexities of capturing accurately and authentically moments in time of the learning process. Consideration has also been given to the practical teaching

implications of findings, examining participants own suggestions for improving their experiences of hybrid-style writing as well as exploring other possible pedagogical strategies. As this study forms part of a wider investigation into HSC student perceptions of combining theory and individual experiences in writing, it is hoped that further research in this area will extend our understanding of the challenges faced by these students. In particular, a closer examination of the difficulties posed by reconciling intersecting professional and academic identities in writing would provide further insights into the unique nature of writing within subjects that draw on theory as well as observations and reflections from professional practice.

PAPER 2

Paper two's focus on professional identity formation meant that it was written with the *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* in mind which specialises in research relating to vocational and occupational learning. This second paper provides insights into the complexities of beginning to establish a professional identity in placement settings and the extra responsibility that this places on HSC student writers at university. It reveals the often-challenging process of transitioning from one professional identity to another, highlighting feelings of imposter syndrome and concern over intersecting aspects of professional and personal lives.

TITLE: 'They are just like different mes…' An exploration of Health and Social Care students' experiences of reconciling professional and academic identities in hybrid-style assignments**.**

ABSTRACT

The concept of voice or writer identity has been researched extensively over recent decades and remains a contested issue. For Health and Social Care (HSC) students who are often studying and working at the same time, there is a common requirement to combine elements of theoretical and practical work-based knowledge in hybrid-style assignments (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a). Navigating complex issues surrounding professional identity formation can add an additional challenge to the often already difficult process of developing a voice or writer identity at university. This paper focuses on six HSC students from different specialisms, at varying stages of their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, all of whom have experience of combining elements of theory and experience in their writing. It explores participating students' perceptions of identity at university and at work and examines their attitudes to their own identities as writers. The project adopts a phenomenological approach analysing data collected from in-depth interview and online survey. Findings point to significant challenges for HSC students as they attempt to reconcile aspects of personal, professional and academic identity development in their writing. The paper concludes with a consideration of implications for future practice.

Key words: health and social care students, hybrid assignments, intersecting identities, voice.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades Higher Education has seen a global increase in its provision of professionally oriented qualifications, which has led, in turn, to a growing interest in the academic literacy status and needs of students engaged in vocational courses

(Jefferies et al., 2018; Lum, Alqazli & Englander, 2018; McEwen &Trede, 2014; Strauss & Mooney, 2011). Healthcare students are often mature and may experience a range of challenges as they adjust to life at university (Goppe & Deane 2013; Lillis & Turner 2001; Taylor & House, 2010). Gimenez (2008) highlights, for example, the requirements placed on student nurses and midwives to master a number of different assignment types (e.g., care critiques and reflections on practice) that often draw on combinations of theoretical and professional knowledge. As well as the inherent linguistic challenges in these hybrid-style texts shifting as they do between first and third person (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a; Ryan, 2011), there are also implications for the way in which student-writers perceive and represent their own identity or sense of self (Gimenez, 2008; Hyland, 2002a; Ivanič, 1998). Given their unique position spanning both professional and academic worlds, Health and Social Care (HSC) student-writers often encounter a complex intersection of personal, professional and academic dimensions of identity and agency. This paper explores how HSC students' experiences and perceptions of identity and agency at university and in their professional settings may influence their identity as writers, concluding with recommendations for writing support strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While notions of impersonal or identity-free academic writing have long been challenged within the literature (e.g., Hyland, 2010; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Williams, 2006), there is still little agreement about the precise nature of identity or voice in academic writing (Matsuda, 2010) or indeed the extent to which identity should be expressed through writing at university (Potgieter & Smit, 2009). Like their peers in other subject areas, HSC students are grappling with notions of authorial identity in their writing (Hyland, 2010). However, unlike their

contemporaries they are often simultaneously developing a sense of professional identity in clinical settings and therefore navigating multiple identities as student writers. In order to situate the complexities of writer voice and agency within broader debates surrounding intersecting identities (Atewologun, Sealy & Vinnicombe, 2016), this paper reviews literature relating to concepts of identity and agency in academic writing (Stock & Eik-Nes, 2016), but begins by drawing on theories of Professional Identity Formation (PIF) in health-related professions (Sarraf-Yazdi et al., 2021) and Identity Work in organizational theory (Brown, 2022).

Professional identity formation

According to the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (2020) professional identity is developed over time both individually and collectively, in a number of educational and practice settings, and through exposure to colleagues, patients, educators and professional bodies. However, there is little agreement on the precise process involved in professional identity formation (Fitzgerald, 2020) with some studies exploring ways in which personal and professional identities become integrated (Sarraf-Yazdi et al., 2021) while others (e.g., Walker, Dwyer, Broadbent, Moxham, Sander & Edwards, 2014) identify elements such as positive role models and a sense of belonging as central to identity formation. MacIntosh (2003) draws attention to the complexities of reconciling in-training models of professional identity with the reality of PIF in clinical settings. She proposes a three-stage iterative model that acknowledges an initial period of skills acquisition ‘assuming adequacy’—followed by a growing realization of dissonance between theory and practice ‘realizing practice’ and a third stage of understanding one’s own relationship to work—'developing a reputation’ (p.730). Her research focuses on 21 nurses with levels of experience ranging from 3-34 years, examining the strategies they use to

manage different aspects of their developing professional identity at varying stages of their career. She urges individuals to treat this as an on-going process of 'reworking professional identity' (p.730) and suggests that it will help new graduates in particular to manage their expectations of the transition from training to real-life practice.

MacIntosh's notion of identity formation over time chimes with theories of experiential learning where knowledge changes through adaptations to the environment (Kolb, 1984) and also through a process of learning from the experiences of others (Murray, 2018). However, there are also factors that can negatively impact on PIF. Aubeeluck, Stacey and Stupple (2016) report on the feelings of Imposter Phenomenon often experienced by graduate nurses entering practice because of an 'anti-intellectualism culture' (p. 104). They argue that graduate nurses are often characterised by the media as 'too posh to wash' (p.104) resulting in feelings of failure despite their high academic achievements. Similarly, Peng, Xiao, Tu, Xiong, Ma, Xu and Cheng (2022) found high levels of Imposter Phenomenon amongst both nursing students and nurses alike, with final-year students being at particular risk. Feelings that achievements may be due to luck rather than ability may persist for long periods of time or as Aubeeluck et al. (2016) suggest can be a natural shorter-term feature of periods of flux or change. Such periods of transition or liminality (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016; Kulkarni 2019) may also lead to feelings of uncertainty and even a sense of 'identity limbo' (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016, p.49).

Identity work theories

Identity Work theorists (e.g., Alvesson, 2010; Atewologun et al., 2016 ; Brown, 2022; Brown, Lewis & Oliver, 2021) provide further insights into notions of identity creation

and negotiation in professional settings. This body of research tends to frame the individual as highly agentive and able to negotiate different aspects of intersecting identities in a way that positively affects 'asymmetric power' encounters in the workplace (Atewologun et al., 2016, p.239). In other words, by actively focusing on different aspects of identity (e.g. gender, ethnicity, seniority) in the often-hierarchical setting of the workplace, identity work theorists believe individuals can help to maximise their 'power positions' (p. 239) and therefore their impact in professional environments. Brown (2022) advocates for a broader perspective approach that draws on ideas from multiple schools of thought such as Identity Role Theory, Social Identity Theory, Narrative Theory and Psychodynamic Theory, all of which, he suggests, at least, agree on the notion of identity being 'constantly in flux' and 'continuously edited' (p.1213). This area of identity research points to further potential challenges for HSC students who find themselves moving between the worlds of academia and professional placements. Students may already be grappling with unequal power relations in the academy where control tends to reside with the reader (Hyland, 2002b; Ivanič,1998) and where, as Ede and Lunsford (1996) observe, less experienced student writers may be unfamiliar with deeply ingrained writer-reader conventions and therefore less agentive in their writing. So, reconciling multiple aspects of identity in the workplace would appear to add an additional challenge to student writers on health care programmes as they attempt to establish a sense of their own emerging identity as writers.

Intersecting identities and voices

The literature points to many examples of overlap between professional and personal identities. For example, Sarraf-Yazdi et al. (2021) recognise how numerous sociocultural beliefs and values (e.g. moral, religious, academic) intersect with

professional identity formation amongst medical students. They suggest deliberate efforts need to be made over time to support students in 'harmonis[ing]' (p.3519) different aspects of personal and professional identity to improve clinical practice. Similarly, Fitzgerald, (2020), in her concept analysis of 68 studies examining the nature of professional identity found that professional knowledge and skills often overlap with features of personal and group identity. Sims (2011) observes the intersection between personal identity and two different professional identities (social work and learning disability nursing) amongst students studying on joint training programmes (Sims, 2011). In this case, participants' characterisation of professional identity was found to be influenced by personal experience and perception. As noted earlier, identity work theorists (e.g. Atewologun, 2015) explore the dynamics of multiple intersecting identities in professional settings to help individuals harness and maximise aspects of personal identities (e.g. gender, ethnicity) at work. Other studies, highlight the problems of transitioning from one professional identity to another (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016) in an increasingly diverse and precarious professional landscape. They suggest that feelings of 'liminality' or being 'in between' (p.48) can occur when moving from one position to another within the same workplace or when moving to other organizations. They recommend that those experiencing this kind of identity transition should define themselves as 'both rather than neither' (p.58).

The process of creating a professional identity has also been found to be beneficially affected by *writing*. Mitchell, Blanchard and Roberts (2020) place writing at the heart of the process of professional development because it gives students the confidence to apply knowledge that they have written about to real-life situations. While some nursing students saw writing as a means to an end, others, particularly those

working at higher levels, acknowledged the part it played in helping their transition into practice and in separating their own thoughts from those of others (Mitchell et al.'s 2020). Findings established a firm link between writing and the development of critical thinking and decision-making, both important features of professional identity formation(Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 2020). A similarly strong connection between writing and professional identity was identified by Tyndall and Scott (2017) whose participants experienced greater confidence in communications, advocacy and linking evidence-based practice to patient outcomes because of their writing for assessment. Whilst academic writing is clearly an asset in terms of knowledge and professional identity development (Allen, Bowers & Diekelmann, 1989; Mitchell et al. 2020; Tyndall & Scott, 2017), it also raises questions about the way in which student writers should characterise their own identities (Fulbrook, 2003; Gimenez, 2008; Ivanič, 1998), a subject which will be explored in the next section.

Identity or voice in academic writing

The concept of identity or voice in academic writing has been researched extensively in the last few decades and Matsuda (2015) broadly groups studies into 'personal' or 'social constructionist orientations' (p.146). In other words, personal perspectives, often associated with genres such autobiography, tend to emphasise the uniqueness of the writer's voice, something coming from within that cannot be taught. By contrast, social constructionist perspectives, associated with academic writing, view voice in a more functional way as something that should be adapted to meet the requirements of different genres, and which should avoid the inclusion of any elements of personal voice. In between these two extremes is the notion that writing is both constructed from previous texts (Bakhtin, 1981) and unique because it is responding to a singular writing context. These fundamental distinctions are

significant because they help to explain the wide-ranging attitudes to the presence or apparent absence of writers in their own texts. Another useful framework for understanding the concept of voice is offered by Ivanič (1998), an influential commentator in the field of writer identity who considers both individual and socially constructed elements of voice in her model. She identifies four distinct components to identity that capture something of the writer's sense of who they are as a person *Autobiographical self*—the impression they consciously or subconsciously seek to convey of themselves *discoursal self*—their position or opinion *self as author* and finally a sense of ways in which identity is constantly evolving due to changing socio-cultural and institutional factors. This framework appears to offer a more inclusive model for identity that values both personal and discoursal elements. However, the extent to which aspects of personal identity are welcome in academic writing may be highly discipline specific (Hyland, 2001b) raising questions about whether students feel obliged to absent themselves from their writing in order to conform to specific disciplinary conventions (Fulbrook, 2003).

Even though academic conventions may encourage impersonal writing (Cameron, 2012), many studies point to ways in which student writers can convey at least something of themselves through their own work. This may be in the form of establishing an explicit opinion or position through argument (Bartholomae, 1985; Hyland, 2010; Matsuda 2015), or in a slightly less direct way by using a range of rhetorical strategies. For example, Ivanič (1998) and Hutchings (2014) highlight the role of referencing as a way of discerning identity – in other words, writers can express themselves by aligning or distancing themselves from the opinions or voices of others. Furthermore, Ivanič and Camps (2001) suggest that student writers have the agency to accept or reject aspects of dominant voice types by mixing-and-

matching elements of disciplinary voice, thereby empowering them to take control of their identities. Other elements of language such as dialect, register and pronoun use (Holland et al.,1998) and even grammar choices (Ahearn, 2001) may also reveal something of the writer's identity. However, as Hutchings (2014, p.316) reminds us, such strategies require considerable facility with language and the 'sifting and shaping' of 'disparate personalities' to achieve a unified sense of voice.

Voice in Health and Social Care

Although research into the topic of voice in healthcare subjects is limited, a number of studies have drawn attention to certain issues. For example, Gimenez (2008) observes how nursing and midwifery students are frequently expected to 'project an impersonal voice' (p.160) which, he believes, raises issues of 'ownership' and 'identity' for students as they navigate multiple text types within their courses (p.161). He links the complexities of voice to variations in disciplinary epistemology and notes how subtle distinctions even between nursing and midwifery may affect the nature of voice and therefore the expectations imposed on student writers (Gimenez, 2012). In a similar vein, Fulbrook (2003) questions the practice of writers in nursing referring to themselves as 'the author' (p.229) suggesting that it distracts the reader from what is being said and devalues 'personal knowledge'(p.229). This tendency to adopt third-person structures points to a history of positivist approaches in health care and unequal power relations between doctors and nurses which according to Mitchell (2017) no longer reflect current practices where nurses are intimately involved in the lives of their patients. Fulbrook (2003) urges the discipline to move away from such practices and instead to 'celebrate 'I'' (p.229) and the importance of other kinds of knowledge. Ivanič (1998) also highlights the difficulties for students of switching between theoretical and experiential writing arguing that it is 'fraught with conflicts of

identity' (p.68). She observes the impact of this on one mature student who felt - '[i]t's like a working-class person trying to speak posh…one minute with the dinner jacket on and the next with the cleaning outfit' (p.155). For students moving from practice environments into the academy there is also a danger, according to Hutchings (2014),that they experience a loss of professional voice as they grapple with the complex conventions of identity in writing. Finding an authentic voice can take time and Mitchell (2017) suggests that some students may feel quite wounded by negative feedback about issues relating to voice and identity in their writing.

Because of the practical orientation of health care programmes, they frequently employ Experiential Learning (EL) techniques such as simulated activities and actual clinical placements (Grace, Stockhausen, Patton & Innes, 2019). Kolb's (1984) theory of EL is often considered to be useful in such contexts because it proposes a sequence of stages (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and experimentation) that lead to the creation of knowledge (Murray, 2018). However, the reality of learning from real-life experience may be much more complex than Kolb's cycle suggests with greater overlap between the different stages involved and other practical issues (e.g., lack of time to reflect and limited previous experience to relate to) affecting the internalisation of knowledge (Holman, Pavlica & Thorpe, 1997). Additionally, as students attempt to relate their experiences to theory, they may also have to address the frequently reported gaps between theory and practice (Carson & Carnwell, 2007; Hatlevik, 2011; Mahmoud, 2014; Monaghan, 2015). Reconciling these discrepancies is identified by MacIntosh (2003) as a key stage in professional identity formation and by Mitchell et al. (2020) as a particular challenge for student writers.

Learning how to articulate voice or academic identity through writing at university is a common concern for all HE students (Hyland, 2002b) but for students with one foot in the academy and the other in the profession, the challenges of negotiating multiple and often overlapping identities are even greater. This paper adds important insights to the area of academic identity research by exploring the unique factors affecting voice development amongst HSC student writers. Specifically, it sheds light on the part played by professional identity formation in this process by exploring the following questions:

1. How does professional identity formation affect the development of voice amongst HSC students?
2. How do levels of both professional experience and knowledge of academic writing skills contribute to the creation of voice?
3. What are the implications for future practice?

METHODOLOGY

Part of a broader research project into HSC student-writer experiences, this paper adopts a phenomenological approach (Flood 2010) to exploring perceptions of writer identity and agency amongst a small group of Health and Social Care students. This methodology is particularly well suited to the study because it allows for an open and delicate examination of students' attitudes to intersecting aspects of personal, professional and academic identity at a particular moment in time. The tentative, non-defining nature of phenomenological approaches (Vagle, 2014) means that student experiences can be carefully examined without prejudicing the findings by attempting to impose artificial conclusions on them. An exploratory case study design (Yin, 2009) is also employed because it allows for an examination of the situated and complex nature of intersecting identities and encourages the use of

different data collection methods including online survey and interview (Clark et al. 2021). Case study also chimes well with phenomenology because it lends itself to inductive approaches where theoretical perspectives are bracketed in order to facilitate open attitudes to the research. A self-selection approach to sampling was adopted in order to encourage those with a particular interest or knowledge in the subject to become involved (Gaganpreet, 2017). Ten HSC students initially responded to the invitation to participate with six eventually completing all aspects of the research (Table 4.2.1 below). Participants included undergraduate and postgraduate students from the disciplines of Adult Nursing; Speech and Language Therapy; Social Work and Clinical Psychology (Table. 4.2.1).

The online survey was used as an exploratory instrument—it served as a way of engaging with potential participants, a means of outlining the scope and content of the study and as a method of remotely gauging whether students were able to participate in all stages of the research or only certain aspects.

Table 4.2.1: Data Collection Overview and Participant Information

	Online Surveys	**Pre-interview online briefing**	**Semi-structured online Interviews**
Number completed	10	10	6
Duration	15-20 mins	20 mins	60 mins
Number of questions	97	Informal discussion	Approx. 25—30

Participant	**Course**	**level**	**Year**
Ash	BSc Adult Nursing	5	2
Riley	BSc Adult Nursing	5	2
Kit	MSc Speech and Language Therapy	7	1
Frankie	MSc Speech and Language Therapy	7	1
Jessie	MA Social Work	7	1
Kelly	Professional Doctorate Clinical Psychology	8	1

The online survey (Appendix 1[9]) was divided into three sections entitled–A *Theory and Practice–B Identity and C Agency* and participants were invited to respond to a total of 97 statements relating to each theme. An extract of the survey can be below seen in table 4.2.2 below.

Table 4.2.2 Example of online survey statements from section B: Identity

As a healthcare student, you may have to juggle different roles and responsibilities. The following statements aim to explore your sense of identity as a healthcare professional and as a student.	**Agree/disagree /don't know**
1. I have a clear sense of my identity as a healthcare professional.	
2. I feel that my professional identity is complex.	
3. Professional identities and personal boundaries in healthcare often overlap.	
4. My experience of being a student is changing my sense of identity as a healthcare professional.	
5. I find it hard to reconcile the differences between my student (theoretical) identity and my professional (real-life) healthcare identity.	
6. The opinions of others (e.g., family, friends, patients etc.) also affect how I see different aspects of my identity.	
7. I don't give much thought to issues of identity—I am just interested in getting the job done.	

Qualtrics, a cloud-based survey platform was used in the study because of its design flexibility and its ease of access for participants (Qualtrics XM, 2024) – surveys were emailed to participants so that they could be completed at their own convenience (Clark et al. 2021). The survey statements were constructed to closely reflect the research objectives (Sue & Ritter, 2012) and also organised using a funnelling technique to establish broader topic areas (e.g. professional identity) before drilling down into finer details about participants' particular experiences of for example, reconciling different aspects of professional and academic identity in writing (see table above). Statements were worded in such way that the key concepts of identity and agency were broken down to avoid any confusion (Sue & Ritter, 2012). For example, when considering issues of 'professional agency' statements focused on specific examples relating to the *achievement of professional goals, communication*

[9] As explained previously, Appendix 1 corresponds to Appendix C.

issues at work and *availability of resources* in order to exemplify the key concept of agency (Brace & Bolton, 2022)

On completion of the survey, participants were invited to attend a short online briefing session (see Table 4.2.1) before moving on to the semi-structured interview phase of the research which encouraged respondents to elaborate on aspects of identity and agency raised in the survey (Dornyei, 2007). Once again, a funnelling or 'progressive focusing' technique (Richards, 2003, p.2) was used when designing the interview guide (Appendix 2)[10] to ensure the participants were reminded of context and broader issues before drilling down into some of the intersecting aspects of personal, professional and academic identity. Although an interview guide was used as an aide memoire (Dornyei, 2007), the approach was flexible to ensure that participants were able to explore any interesting tangents relating to their own experiences of intersecting identities at work and in writing. Time was also left at the end of each interview for participants to add any further comments. The approach to coding interview data (see table 4.2.3 below) incorporated both a detailed thematic analysis and a more holistic, instinctive view of significant findings (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Dornyei,2007; Simons, 2009). In order to protect the anonymity of all participants, pseudonyms were used throughout the research process.

Table 4.2.3: Process of analysis

Phase	Coding Process (Braun & Clarke, 2022)
1	Familiarisation with the data set (e.g. reading, rereading, making notes)
2	Coding (e.g. systematically work through data set to identify meaningful elements and
3	applying short description or code)
4	Generating initial themes (e.g. identifying broader shared meanings from the codes)
	Developing and reviewing themes (e.g. check themes make sense in relation to codes and full data set)
5	Refining themes (e.g. check each theme is clearly defined and carefully named)
6	Writing up (e.g. weave together reflexive notes with more formal writing)

[10] Appendix 2 corresponds to Appendix B.

Mindful that identity research in general and interviews, in particular, can lead to elements of 'identity construction' (Atewologun et al.,2016; Kulkarni, 2019) this research acknowledges that interpretations reflect elements of my own positionality as a researcher (Gabriel, 2015) and therefore a reflexive approach was adopted in this study in order to fully understand the impact of the researcher on the research process itself and on those being researched (Brooks et al. 2014; Lumsden et al. 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The exploratory online survey produced ten anonymised results including responses from four students who decided to opt out after the survey and six who subsequently went on to participate in all aspects of the study. As the survey was used to help prepare participants (and the researcher) for later interviews, findings were treated indicatively, with greater emphasis being placed on richly nuanced interview data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Despite this emphasis on broader participant narratives, survey findings revealed some useful indications of students' perceptions of and attitudes to issues relating to identity and agency at university and in professional settings.

Identity: survey results

The survey statements summarised below (Table 4.2.4 below) were designed to explore participants' initial attitudes to their professional and personal identities, and the extent of overlap between them. They also begin to explore participants' experiences of using certain techniques in writing (e.g. use of personal pronouns, establishing a stance) that are associated with expressions of voice in academic writing.

Table 4.2.4: Attitudes to personal, professional and writer identity

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Didn't know
I have a strong sense of my own identity (who I am).	8	1	1
I have a clear sense of my identity as a healthcare professional.	6	3	1
Professional identities and personal boundaries in healthcare often overlap.	8	2	0
There is a tension between my work-self, my home-self and my university-self.	3	4	3
I see my identity as something stable and fixed	2	8	0
I have a strong sense of the person I want to be in the future (e.g. professionally, personally, culturally etc.).	9	1	0
I don't always feel I can be myself when I write about the reality of everyday practice.	6	4	0
I feel comfortable expressing an opinion in my academic work	5	5	0
I prefer using first person (e.g. 'I'/'my') when I am writing, rather than more impersonal or formal language.	1	6	3
Sometimes it is difficult to switch from theoretical writing (3rd person) to reflective writing (1st person) in the same essay.	7	2	1

As can be seen from Table 4.2.4 participants were generally clearer (8/10) about their sense of personal rather than professional identity (6/10) with eight out ten experiencing an overlap between the two. Attitudes towards the intersection of professional, personal and academic or HE identity varied—four respondents felt their different identities sat alongside each other comfortably, three experienced a tension between their different selves and three students did not know. Most students (8/10) saw their identity as fluid rather than fixed and had a strong sense (9/10) of who they wanted to be in the future. With regards to voice or writer identity six out of ten respondents did not think they could be themselves when writing about everyday practice and only half the respondents felt comfortable expressing an opinion, suggesting a possible lack of confidence both professionally and academically. Finally, attitudes to using first and third person in writing also varied with just over half preferring writing in third rather than first person and most students (7/10) finding transitions between first and third person difficult.

Agency: survey results

The following survey results (Table 4.2.5) reflect participant's perceptions of their ability to make progress at university and in professional settings. They also provide a sense of students' agency or control in their academic writing.

Table 4.2.5: Participants' perceptions of their levels of agency at work, university and in writing.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Didn't know
Despite the challenges at work, I generally remain focused and feel in control of things.	7	1	2
I feel I am in control of progress I make in my studies.	7	0	3
My positive mindset helps me to be an effective student.	10	0	0
Studying at university and working in a professional setting at the same time is helping me to develop my practice and to progress my career.	9	0	1
Studying at university makes me feel as though I am taking control of my professional development.	10	0	0
If I am particularly interested in (or knowledgeable about) a topic, I feel more in control of my writing.	10	0	0
I feel confident about presenting the views of other writers in my writing.	7	2	1
By agreeing or disagreeing with authors, I can begin to establish my own position (or voice) as a student writer.	10	0	0
Since I started at university, I have gained confidence in writing.	6	2	2
I tend not to feel in control when I am writing academic essays.	3	5	2

Although certain constraining elements (e.g., mental health, teaching styles, comparisons with peers) were acknowledged by participants most (7/10) reported positive attitudes to levels of agency in professional settings and at university. All students (10/10) identified positive mindset and self-belief as a key ingredient in being effective students. The intersection between their academic lives and their professional lives was also viewed as largely positive and empowering with 9/10 students believing university and placements were helping them to develop their careers and all students (10/10) felt that their studies were helping them to take control of their professional development. With regards to agency in writing, all students again (10/10) recognised a link between their knowledge levels and their sense of control as a writer; most (7/10) felt confident presenting the views of others

and all students (10/10) agreed that aligning or distancing themselves from the voice of others helped to establish their own identity as writer. More than half of the participants across all levels agreed that gaining experience of writing was increasing their confidence but only half the students felt an overall sense of control in their writing.

Interview findings

While the survey results produced some useful indicative results, they also revealed a number of contradictions and areas of uncertainty ('don't knows') requiring more sensitive and nuanced examination through discussion. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' understanding of identity and agency as health care professionals and as student writers. A personalised interview question guide (Appendix 2[11]) was prepared for each participant, based on their survey responses. The interview questions therefore built on issues raised in the survey, encouraging participants to elaborate on their responses. Interviews revealed different attitudes towards the process of professional identity formation (Fitzgerald, 2020; MacIntosh, 2003); the degree of overlap with other aspects of identity (Sarraf-Yazdi et al., 2021) and the part played by experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018) in shaping writer identity. Other factors, including levels of metacognitive knowledge (Ushioda, 2011), degrees of agency (Hutchings, 2014; Mercer, 2012), strategic learning approaches (Miller, 2012; Faranda et al.,2021) and even an interest in other creative forms of writing (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008) often intersected in uniquely personal ways to shape participants' experiences of writer identity and agency.

[11] Appendix 2 corresponds to Appendix B.

Professional Identity Formation: Participants' experiences

Participants were at varying stages of their professional identity development with some just at the start of Masters' programmes while others were in the second year of undergraduate courses or the first year of a doctoral level qualification (see Table 4.2.1 p.130). This meant that, together, they represented many different stages of professional identity formation (MacIntosh, 2003) and were therefore able to contribute unique insights to the effects of professional identity development on their changing sense of self. For example, some reflected on the impact of transitioning from previous roles (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016) and the feelings of imposter syndrome (Gasalberti, 2014) that they often experienced as trainees in their new professions and how this made them feel both personally and professionally.

An important insight into this issue was provided by Frankie who was just beginning a two-year MSc in Speech and Language Therapy. Frankie was quick to acknowledge her lack of professional experience and explained how she had just started to undertake some clinical placements as part of her course. During the interview, she talked about her experience of working in a hospital for the first time commenting, '…It felt real like imposter syndrome...I felt I shouldn't be here…6 months ago…never studied anything like this and now suddenly I'm here'. Frankie's initial comments point to feelings of imposter phenomenon, in other words a sense that success is due to chance rather than ability (Gasalberti, 2014). However, she adds that at the end of the placement, only eight days later 'I felt really comfortable…just sitting there and nodding along…it did feel like kind of a stepping stone in terms of…my development of professional identity'. Her comments reveal how quickly she began to feel more at ease with her new-found identity 'nodding along' with the rest of the team. On this occasion Frankie's sense of imposter

phenomenon seems to be short lived and perhaps associated with a natural process of transition (Aubeeluck et al., 2016) rather than a more persistent longer-term feeling of anxiety.

During the interview, she gives an impression of a gradually developing sense of professional identity, with small things contributing to this process, such as hearing herself using technical terms while discussing issues with other classmates. Frankie also refers to a sense of growing 'collective identity' reflecting definitions of PIF (e.g., Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 2020; Fitzgerald, 2020) when she observes, 'very recently I am starting to see myself as you know as a professional – it is shaping the way I see myself...I've discussed things again and again with other voices that are growing alongside mine…we're all shaping…developing together…' She seems to value opportunities to draw on and learn from the experiences of others as a way of addressing gaps in her own professional knowledge and to that extent appears to be benefiting from the practice of experiential learning (Grace & Zumstein-Shaha, 2019; Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018).

Other issues relating to professional identity development are raised by Kit who is also at the start of a two-year MSc in Speech and Language Therapy. As a former teacher who was inspired to switch careers after seeing Speech and Language Therapists working in her classroom, she explains the difficulties of transitioning from one well-established professional identity to a completely new one (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). She recalls how her lecturer had encouraged her to 'think like a therapist' and how she realised that, 'I don't do that yet…I still think like a teacher'. Whilst recognising the many benefits of her teaching experience and the credibility it lends her in her new career, Kit still seems to be experiencing considerable

uncertainty about her new identity (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). There is a sense perhaps, of struggling to let go of a 'cherished sense of self' (Brown et al.,2022, p.826) and even a feeling of loss (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018). Similarly, Jessie, a 2nd year postgraduate Social Work student also seems to be struggling with feelings of imposter phenomenon (Aubeeluck et al.,2016; Gasalberti, 2014; Peng et al., 2022) and the complexities of moving from a former role (Child Minding) to a new one (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). She explains how she feels like the 'poor relative' within her cohort, because child minders tend to be viewed as less well-qualified or professional commenting, 'you've always got that chip on your shoulder'. She acknowledges that she is 'not at ease with [her] professional identity' and that it is still very much 'a journey that's in transition'.

She also comments on the compressed nature of the course (Bond, 2022) making the process of transition feel rushed and contributing, therefore, to a 'less secure' sense of her identity. However, despite these reservations Jessie appears to take a measured, longer-term approach to PIF as can be seen in this comment below:

> 'I don't think there is any kind of…point at which you start to feel I, yes, I am a student social worker, I think just maybe the more you say it out loud to people, the more you sign off emails it just sort of seeps slowly into your professional identity…I suppose as the journey continues there will be this transition period, when I stop being a student social worker and become newly qualified social worker and then down the line I'll stop being newly qualified…I'll just be a social worker'

She appears to acknowledge the various stages of PIF that develop over time (Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 2020; MacIntosh, 2003) as well as the smaller things contributing to identity formation such as the simple repeated act of 'signing off emails' or 'saying it [Social worker] out loud'. It is clear from these participants' accounts that they are in an early phase of establishing their professional identities (MacIntosh, 2003) and very aware of the difficulties associated with becoming a

professional in new area. In addition, participants reflected on the challenges of reconciling areas of overlap between professional and personal aspects of identity. This is significant, not only because it raises questions about managing multiple intersecting identities (Atewologun et al. 2016), but also because it has implications for establishing a unified voice in academic writing that represents and reconciles potentially multiple aspects of identity.

Overlapping identities

The tensions between professional and personal elements of identity in nursing (Nursing & Midwifery Council, 2018) are clearly identified by Ash (2nd year undergraduate Adult Nursing student) when he observes, 'because nursing engages you at such a personal level in terms of your emotions and personal qualities like compassion and things like that, it's very difficult to…separate the two things'. He feels his emotions are inseparable from his professional environment (Mitchell, 2017; Sims, 2011) and that professional issues also impact his life outside work. Sims (2011) seems to suggest that this kind of overlap is inevitable, arguing that the complexity of modern healthcare means that notions of 'bounded' or 'pure' identity (p. 67) are unhelpful and greater fluidity in professional identity is needed to deal with ever-more complex professional situations. Like Ash, Kit, expresses concern about the overlap between personal and professional identities arguing, 'you have to have like separation….everything is persona…you don't have to take all of that baggage'. Whilst acknowledging that on occasions her personal and professional worlds might intersect (Fitzgerald, 2020; Sarraf-Yazdi et al., 2021; Sims 2011), Kit, seems to be less willing to accept a merging of identities, seeking instead to create the same kind of protective persona (Freeman, 2013) that she associates with her former career as a teacher.

By contrast, Riley, a 2nd year international undergraduate Adult Nursing student seems to be actively seeking connection or overlap of identity. She describes a sense of not fitting into the typical profile of students on her course. She comments: '[It's]like your entire identity does not overlap with how the workforce kind of wants you to be'. Her remarks seem to chime with notions of professional persona (Freeman, 2013; Giles, 2020) suggesting that 'the workforce' has a typical identity distinguished by particular attributes (Brown,2022) that she does not feel she possesses. She adds, 'it depends on who I'm shadowing that day because some people will not see me as an equal'. It is as though her sense of identity is affected by those around her (Holland et al., 1998), is context specific (Larsen-Freeman, 2019) and is a product of both personal and social factors (Bond, 2020). Riley acknowledges that she is still very young commenting, 'I haven't figured out how to you know put my work face on'. It is as though she is still developing her 'work face' or persona (Freeman, 2013; Giles, 2020) which may reflect feelings of transition or liminality (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016; Kulkarni, 2019) as she develops into her professional identity.

Participant comments reveal some of the difficulties of managing areas of overlap between aspects of personal and professional identity (e.g. Ash and Kit) but also problems associated with feeling that one's personal identity or culture perhaps does not fit the 'typical' professional profile. As well as negotiating the complexities of intersecting aspects of personal and professional identity, student writers are also often making sense of different disciplinary identities (Gimenez, 2008; Hyland, 2002b) as well as the impact on voice of varying approaches to theoretical and more personal ways of knowing (Fulbrook, 2003). The next section considers the role of both academic and professional experience in the development of voice.

The impact of professional and academic experience on writer identity formation

Findings from this study point to a close relationship between academic and professional experience and the development of authorial voice in writing. Although only one of the six participants, Kelly (Clinical Psychology Doctorate) had considerable experience in both of these areas, her reflections on the process of voice formation demonstrated a logical and clear connection between high levels of professional and academic experience and the formation of writer identity.

Kelly emphasises the interrelated nature of professional and academic identity formation when she comments, 'I don't think you can get through this course without sticking to who you are as a clinician... following who you are what you bring in your experience but yes very aware of the kind of overseeing academic side of things'. She places considerable emphasis on the role of professional experience (Murray, 2018) and clinical knowledge but also on academic skills (Tyndall & Scott, 2017). In a later comment she reinforces the importance of continuous professional development and the impact this has had on her writing, when she observes 'you're learning all the time…we're kind of working out who you want to be as a clinician and, naturally as you change, the way that you write changes with you'. Here she captures the ongoing iterative nature of professional identity development over time (MacIntosh, 2003) and the corresponding changes that this brings to her academic writing. Kelly seems to be identifying writing as an integral and fluid part of the professional and writer identity formation process (Allen et al. 1989; Mitchell et al. 2020), reflecting the comments of Kiriakos and Tienari (2018, p.279) that–'writing helps us to come to terms with who we are –and to question ourselves'. At other times during the interview, Kelly reflects on how she has changed since her

undergraduate days. She observes how she no longer writes what she thinks her lecturers want to hear (Hilsdon, 2005), but instead draws on experiences gained at work (including professional writing) to present herself more authentically through her writing (Ivanič, 1998). Her confidence as a writer can clearly be seen when she comments:

> 'if you don't agree with what I've written as the writer that's absolutely fine, but hopefully you can see where that opinion has come from by the evidence that I've used to back it up'

She is very aware of the constraints of academic writing (Hyland 2002b, 2010, Ivanič, 1998, Ivanič & Camps, 2001) but is happy to work round them in order to reveal something of her own identity (Hutchings, 2014). This is clearly visible when she notes, 'to make sure it sounds like me I'll put in...something that I care about…'. She uses references to other voices (Hutchings,2014; Ivanič, 1998) very deliberately and strategically to convey a sense of herself, even if it is in a more subtle way. In a later comment, she acknowledges that she cannot 'explicitly' give her opinion but comments 'I'll try and do that by bringing in research that speaks to me and I believe is now relevant and important in practice and in theory, so yeah, it's more like an indirect this is me'.

Unlike other participants who expressed considerable nervousness about their readers (Hyland,2001a), Kelly describes how she, as a doctoral student now views her lecturers and readers as 'colleagues' thereby seeing herself more as an equal (Hyland, 2002c). Throughout the interview, she conveyed a sense of confidence both professionally and academically, something which she attributed very firmly to *experience* (Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018). For Kelly, this seemed to encompass professional/clinical identity development (MacIntosh, 2003), high levels of agency and resilience gained from years of academic and clinical training (Mercer, 2012;

Ushioda, 2011a) as well as metacognitive knowledge (Faranda et al. 2021) accrued from years of study. She also placed particular significance on the part played by professional writing (e.g., client reports) – observing how sensitivity to audience is vital when conveying potentially life-altering information to clients (Francis & Robertson, 2023). The cumulative effect of her academic and professional experience seems to result in a conscious agentive ability to make decisions about her identity as a writer (Mitchell, 2017).

Less experienced writers and practitioners

By contrast, other participants who were at varying stages of their professional and academic development identified a number of challenges associated with writing in their disciplines. Some of the issues raised such as the difficulties of writing about theory and practice seemed to relate more specifically to problems associated with different stages of professional identity formation (MacIntosh, 2003), while other issues such as lack of confidence in offering opinions or in challenging the literature, or in understanding lecturer expectations perhaps reflected elements of uncertainty about both professional and academic practice (Goppe & Deane, 2013). Participants also pointed to difficulties with the learning experience itself often referring to the rushed or highly compressed nature of courses (Bond, 2020) and the lack of time for reflection on learning (Murray, 2018). In some cases where participants were also interested in creative writing, this presented certain challenges in terms of reconciling different types of writer identity (English, 2015). As the following discussion demonstrates, many of these factors appeared to affect participants' experiences of writing and their sense of voice.

Participants often expressed concern about an apparent mismatch between theory and practice. Such feelings of dissonance are characterised by MacIntosh (2003) as

a specific stage of professional identity development that she refers to as ‘realizing practice’ (p. 731) during which practitioners struggle to reconcile what they are hearing in the classroom with the reality of everyday practice. It is assumed that practitioners will move through this stage (MacIntosh, 2003), however for some the disconnect continues to affect them negatively long into their careers(McClendon, 2005; Watson, 2018). Ash and Riley were both concerned about the lack of resources in professional settings that inhibited good practice. For example, Ash commented, ‘the things that university mentally equips you to do kind of hinge on having the time to do them and there is no time’. Similarly, Riley paints a picture of the two very different worlds of theory and practice when she says, ‘in lectures they’re like all rainbows and butterflies ...and then in real life, there’s never time to do it that way’. For Kit, it is not so much about resources, as the dramatic difference between the theory and her experience of the reality. With a sense of frustration, she observes how ‘the evidence base doesn’t help me when one of my clients is having a meltdown...it’s so different’. Dealing with these feelings of dissonance impacted on participants in different ways. For Kit, it made her feel ‘unsuccessful’ as a practitioner and impacted her sense of morale as a writer (Holmes, Waterbury, Baltrinic & Davis, 2018; Mitchell et al. 2020).

A lack of professional identity or experience was flagged by one participant as reason for a less confident approach in her writing (Hyland 2002b). Frankie felt that her inexperience as a practitioner (Kolb 1984; MacIntosh, 2003; Murray, 2018) meant she could not challenge any disconnect between theory and practice that she may have witnessed during placement. She summed this up by saying ‘I don’t feel like I have a leg to stand on’ adding ‘if that’s what the literature says that’s what it must be’. She was concerned that any discrepancies between theory and practice

might raise issues about authenticity in her writing (Hilsdon, 2005). She sums this up when she says, ‘I couldn’t really be straightforward and honest and say well actually I’ve noticed things that doesn’t really match up with these theories ’. Her nervousness was evident during the interview and seemed to chime with insecurities often experienced by novice writers, wanting to ‘downplay their personal role’ (Hyland, 2002b, p.1104). Although more experienced than Frankie in their academic studies and in terms of their exposure to professional settings, Jessie and Ash also expressed concern about linking theory and practice in their writing. Ash struggled to apply theories he had just learnt about, to past experiences – feeling that it was somehow inauthentic to be claiming insights that he had not experienced at the time (Gimenez, 2008; Lemke, 2000). Jessie also raised questions about the subjectivity of links made between theory and practice reflecting that such connections may depend on individual interpretations or student’s familiarity with theories. These examples point to the potential impact on student writers of both a lack of professional experience and subject knowledge and also perhaps varying levels of confidence in articulating themselves in writing.

The tension between different aspects of participants’ identity as writers also emerged when discussing the challenges of switching between third person references to theory and first-person accounts of real-life practice in hybrid- style assignments. Ash described the sudden change as ‘like flicking a switch, there is no gradual shift’ and Riley felt that it was ‘so weird’ to have first and third person structures in the same sentence. For Jessie the requirement to use first and third feels like writing in different ‘accents’ and she struggles to make them ‘sound in tune with each other’. In an earlier comment Jessie explains how balancing ‘different elements of your professional identity’ is like being ‘a daughter and a mother and a

sister and a wife'. Here she seems to invoke the idea of multiple identities (Alvesson, 2010; Atewologun, 2016) and a need to somehow unify them. She goes on to explain that the challenge for her is not the linguistic 'switch from I to the author', the problem lies instead in switching 'between two elements of your thinking'. This observation, also expressed by Ash, points perhaps to deeper epistemological challenges of reconciling theoretical and practical aspects of writer identity (Fulbrook, 2003; Schön, 1983, 1991). Frankie also echoes the tension between the theoretical rationalist approaches (Pawlikowski et al., 2018) and more personal aspects of her professional identity (Fulbrook, 2003; Schön,1990), expressing frustration that third person should be used to discuss such sensitive human issues relating to her clients.

Participants also provided important insights into their sense of identity as writers when they were discussing attitudes to readers (Hyland, 2001a). Less experienced participants seemed to focus more on the marking criteria than on establishing their position or voice (Cameron, 2012; Hyland, 2002b). Ash was eager to give the reader what they 'would want to hear' and Frankie was also concerned about giving markers 'an easy box to tick'. This suggested a considerable imbalance in the power relation between reader and writer (Ivanič, 1998) with pressure placed on the writer to conform to the expectations of the academy (Ivanič,& Camps 2001). Some seemed to feel this more than others, for example, Jessie 'sometimes' felt her voice was constrained and Frankie also noted that the academic environment was 'a bit stifling', but Riley was more acutely aware of this. She felt there was too much 'hand holding' but did not feel she could challenge this – her frustration is clear when she says 'don't argue, just do it'. Although Kit, was a more experienced writer and wanted her readers to 'enjoy the reading experience' she was also eager to 'help

them give you marks', revealing once again, a strategic and criteria-driven approach to assessment (Cameron, 2012; Faranda et al., 2021; Hilsdon, 2005).

Participants frequently reflected on the process of learning through experience (Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018;) and in so doing revealed some of the nuanced and incremental changes that lead to bigger shifts in identity formation (Lemke, 2000). Riley felt that she had grown up really fast because 'you see a lot' and that this had made her writing more 'genuine' and less 'robotic'. Both Jessie and Frankie felt they had learned a great deal from their classmates because of the varied experience in their groups (Murray, 2018) and Jessie added that she had been able to write more effectively about certain topics by vicariously reflecting on the experiences of others (Kolb, 1984). However, there was also much discussion about barriers to learning (Murray, 2018). Lack of time was frequently mentioned – Kit referred to her course as an 'academic bullet train'. Jessie felt her course had been 'very very rushed' and that that had made her feel 'less secure' about her identity. Frankie also observed how it 'was hard not to get burnt out'. This seemed to reflect Bond's (2022, p.72) observation that intensive compressed courses leave little time for students 'to become' or 'to be'. This certainly seemed to be reflected in the more strategic, instrumental criteria driven approaches adopted by participants (Cameron, 2012; Faranda et al. 2021) and also a tendency to play it safe with their writing. Kit summed this up when she said, 'our time is so limited and precious on this degree I am going to be unlikely to do something...if it's a bit out there'.

Although certain types of more informal reflective writing were seen by some participants as a way of venting and processing their learning (Craft, 2005), the many variations of reflective writing which often combined formal references to

theory with quite personal reflections on practice (Bowman and Addyman 2014a) left some participants confused about the style and purpose of such tasks. As three of the participants enjoyed writing for pleasure, they often referred to their identity as creative writers, wishing (in two cases at least),that they could bring a little more of their creative selves into their academic writing (Molinari, 2022). For example, Kit understood the need for measurable outcomes, but felt creative alternatives could also be helpful when reflecting on individual practice and development (English, 2018; Gilmore et al., 2019). Personally, she favoured poetry but acknowledged that for some it might take the form of 'painting', a 'song' or even 'performing arts' (Molinari, 2020). Although a very competent academic writer herself, she acknowledged that academic writing felt 'artificial' for her, and she seemed more at home with her creative writing identity. This desire to merge more creative and academic writing identities is explored by Antoniou and Moriarty (2008) who suggest that there are in fact more creative elements in academic writing than perhaps is realised.

Similarly, Frankie was a successful student writer but noted that 'I definitely enjoy personal writing a lot more than I enjoy academic writing'. She was eager to develop her 'own style academically' and had a strong sense of a future self (Ushioda, 2011a) writing a book about her experiences in an inclusive style for those both inside and outside of the discipline. Until her recent experience of academic writing in the UK, Riley had enjoyed both creative and academic writing and felt she had a 'different persona' in each style, but the requirement to mix third and first person in essays had created an uncomfortable tension between her creative and academic writing identities (Davies, 2012). Unlike Kit and Frankie, Riley was eager to separate academic and creative writing because for her, the use of 'I' signalled 'all the fun of

writing'. These participants, who happened to have interests in creative writing, brought yet another dimension to the picture of multiple complex intersecting (sometimes competing) identities that students may be navigating as they tackle their academic assignments.

Implications for practice

The intrinsic links revealed in this study between professional and academic identity formation point to a number of important implications for practice. A more explicit focus on the different stages of professional identity formation (Cruess, Cruess & Steninert, 2019) and their possible effects on establishing an academic voice would help HSC students to deal more effectively with professional and academic identity issues in practice and in writing. For example, understanding that feelings of dissonance (MacIntosh, 2003), uncertainty (Freeman, Carr, Phillips, Noya & Nestel, 2021) and even imposter phenomenon (Peng et al., 2022) may be a natural part of identity formation might help students to manage the complexities of this and to articulate them more confidently in writing. The data and insights from this study suggest that discussions designed to explore and normalise the likely overlap between professional and personal identities would help student writers to position themselves in their own writing more effectively at varying stages of their development. A particular focus on the challenges of characterising the relationship between theory and practice in writing (Mitchell et al. 2020) is recommended because it would bring into sharp relief the difficulties of linking elements of professional identity and knowledge with more personal aspects of knowing. Providing opportunities to openly discuss discrepancies between theory and practice would support student writers at different stages of their professional and academic

careers, helping them to write in ways that were both acceptable to the academy as well as an authentic reflection of their own experience.

Further possible implications for practice might be the reframing of academic reflective writing formats to distinguish more clearly between personal and professional learning. For example, the introduction of pathic writing (Van Manen & Li 2002) which focuses on the physical experience of practice rather than on theoretical interpretations of practice, associated with the more positivist origins of reflective writing (Dewey,1933), would help student writers to distinguish between theoretical and personal aspects of their professional identities. The introduction of more creative text types as well as non-text-based tasks (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; English, 2015; Molinari, 2020; Winter, 2003) is also recommended because it would provide writers with greater freedom of choice to express different aspects of their intersecting professional, personal and academic identities and would signal a greater acceptance of different ways of knowing and being (Fulbrook, 2003; Reed, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The complexities of establishing voice or writer identity in academic texts is well documented. However, the challenges faced by Health and Social Care students when reconciling personal, professional and academic aspects of identity, are less well understood. This paper has shed light on the close connection between professional identity formation and writer voice development, revealing how levels of experience both professionally and academically can influence writer confidence. Insights from the study reveal how a lack of professional experience and knowledge frequently affected participants' approaches to writing – manifesting in concerns

about matching theory to practice in honest and authentic ways. Difficulties in shifting between theory and practice in writing seemed to mirror deeper issues surrounding the tensions between different aspects of theoretical and personal identity. The impact of fast-paced course delivery was also clear with participants often feeling they had little time to reflect on their practical and theoretical learning experiences, resulting in the adoption of more instrumental criteria-driven approaches to writing. This paper has made some practical recommendations to address student concerns and anxieties about writer identity but drawn important attention to the broader issues that HSC students face when navigating complex intersecting aspects of professional, personal and academic identities.

PAPER 3

Finally, the third paper in this thesis which explores the impact of third- and first-person language conventions on Health and Social Care (HSC) students, targets the *Journal of Nurse Education Today* because of the journal's role in stimulating critical debate on relevant issues within nursing, midwifery, and interprofessional healthcare education. Paper three sheds light on a significant range of writing conventions used when linking theory and practice in HSC assignments and the challenges that different expectations may impose on student writers. It focuses particularly on different requirements regarding personal pronoun use and the concerns that this raises for writers as they switch between third and first-person structures when relating theoretical principles to examples of practice.

TITLE: ‘The author thinks that….’ Issues of writer identity for Health and Social Care students at university.

ABSTRACT

Although research has identified a significant range of rhetorical devices used by writers to establish their voice, personal pronoun use is still considered to be one of the key indicators of authorial identity (Hyland, 2002a). Health and Social Care (HSC) students are often required to combine elements of theoretical and practical knowledge in hybrid-style assignments (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a) and therefore need to master the art of shifting between third person accounts of theory (e.g. ‘the author’/‘practitioner’) and first-person reflections on practice (e.g. ‘I’/’my’). This can be challenging for students linguistically, but it also requires them to reconcile their own attitudes to theoretical and personal knowledge. This study focuses on the experiences of six HSC student writers at varying stages of their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from different specialisms including Adult Nursing and Speech and Language therapy. The paper combines an analysis of student writing with a phenomenological interpretation of interview data, examining personal pronoun conventions and practices in HSC assignments and exploring students’ experiences of using first and third person structures. Findings point to significant variations in approaches to pronoun use within the discipline and to difficulties involved in moving between representations of theoretical and more personal knowledge. The paper concludes with a consideration of implications for future practice.

Key words: Hybrid assignments, personal pronoun use, writer identity, health and social care students

INTRODUCTION

The precise nature of writer voice or identity is much debated and extensive literature in this area offers little consensus regarding linguistic features associated with voice or the factors affecting its development (Matsuda, 2015; Robbins, 2016; Stock and Eik-Ness, 2016). Many studies draw on postmodern conceptualisations of identity characterising it as socially constructed, often ununified, multiple and dynamic across time (e.g., Burgess & Ivanič, 2016; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Lemke, 2000; Norton, 1997). Such research points to the socially situated nature of voice, highlighting ways in which writer's experiences of working in different contexts and disciplines and with different audiences and text types can shape the way they consciously or unconsciously present themselves. Linguistic characteristics of writer identity have also been the focus of much interest and studies examining texts produced by professional and novice writers reveal numerous rhetorical devices associated with voice, including modality; reader-engagement; writer stance; reference to others; and personal pronoun use (Stock & Eik-Nes 2016). Variations in disciplinary conventions surrounding writer identity have also been highlighted (e.g., Hyland, 2001b; Hyland, 2002a) raising questions about the impact on voice of different ways knowing and of acquiring knowledge (Potgieter & Smit, 2009). This paper explores issues of disciplinary writing conventions and their implications for voice amongst a small group of students studying health and social care related subjects (e.g., Nursing, Speech and Language Therapy, Clinical Psychology and Social Work) at a UK-based university. By examining participants' use of and attitudes to first-person pronouns and other third-person forms in a range of texts, it seeks to extend understanding of writing

practices and their impact within health and social care subjects that combine scientific knowledge with practical ways of knowing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writer identity or voice

Research into the socially constructed nature of writer identity is extensive and covers the impact on voice of numerous factors including - the requirements of different discourses (Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Hyland, 2001b), the impact of the reader (e.g., Hyland 2005; Matsuda, 2015); the effects of unequal power relations on writers (e.g., Ivanič, 1998, Ivanič and Camps, 2001) the influence of different disciplinary conventions (Hyland 2002a; Potgieter & Smit 2009) and even the effects of different time frames (Burgess and Ivanič , 2010; Lemke, 2000). Ivanič (1998) was an early and highly influential contributor to our understanding of the situated nature of identity. She captures the complexities of voice by distinguishing four inter-related strands including 'autobiographical self' – what writers consciously or unconsciously bring to their writing; 'discoursal self' – the impression they wish to convey; 'self as author'—their opinions or stance on a particular topic and finally 'possibilities for self-hood' – a complex notion of the way in which socio-cultural factors, including power relations, may enable or constrain individuals in the development and expression of their identity (Ivanič, 1998).

In his interaction model Hyland (2008) also stresses the importance of discourse and stance in establishing voice but includes reader engagement as an additional factor for consideration. This theme is explored in other research (e.g., Carbone & Orellana, 2010; Hyland 2001a, 2002c, 2005; Matsuda, 2015) often highlighting ways in which writer perceptions of the reader and their changing expectations play a

significant part in the shaping of writer identity (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Lemke, 2000). The impact of unequal power relations between writers and readers has also been explored in the literature (e.g., Ede & Lunsford 1996; Hyland, 2005; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001) and although often considered to be restrictive, key commentators in this area (e.g. Cameron, 2012; Hyland, 2010; Ivanič & Camps, 2001) argue that writers can still convey a sense of their own voice through, for example, their choice of pronouns, modality and tenses (Ivanic & Camps, 2001). Although arguably limited, these elements of choice suggest that student writers are not completely disempowered by the conventions of their disciplines and that they can in fact retain some agency in the way they choose to present themselves to the reader.

Epistemology in the disciplines

Understanding the nature of disciplinary discourse, the way knowledge is conceptualised, how it is acquired and developed, is a recurring theme in the literature surrounding voice (Hyland, 2001b; Ivanič & Burgess., 2010; Matsuda, 2015,). To establish an effective disciplinary voice, writers need to recognise the form knowledge takes in their subject area and how it is characterised (Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Jones, 2009; Stock & Eik-Nes, 2016). For example, if knowledge is considered to be universal and objective or more context specific, even personal, then this will have a bearing on the way in which writers present their subject as well as themselves (Hyland 2001b; Gimenez, 2012). Characterisations of traditional disciplinary distinctions often highlight a tendency for the ‘hard’ sciences (e.g., maths, physics, biology, medicine) to agree on key concepts and research methods while the ‘soft’ sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology) may be less likely to agree on these core issues (Dang, 2018). However, the origins of such distinctions have been

challenged more recently, casting doubt on their stability and usefulness, particularly in a landscape where interdisciplinary collaboration is increasingly encouraged and valued (Shapin, 2022).

For newer disciplines, such issues surrounding disciplinary and academic identity are potentially even more problematic. For example, certain hybrid subjects combining theory and practice such as Nursing, Speech therapy and Social Work have undergone relatively recent professional and academic transformations and are therefore still in the process of establishing their identity and status (Friedrichs & Schaub, 2011; Taylor et al., 2010). Within the field of nursing alone, the gradual shift away from vocational or hospital-based education towards university-led provision only began in the 1980s (Taylor et al., 2010), culminating with an announcement in 2009 that all new nurses would need to have degrees from 2013 onwards (Bowcott, 2009). This process of academisation is similarly quite recent in Social Work where a three-year degree programme for social workers was only introduced in 2003 (Social Care Institute of Excellence, 2004). Furthermore, Friedrichs and Schaub (2011) observe how occupations such as Nursing, Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy often have to draw on the practices and methods of more 'traditional scientific' disciplines because they have not yet established their own academic or scientific identity. The relative newness of these academic disciplines, together with their interdisciplinary approaches to working, may often therefore contribute to an ambiguity surrounding their disciplinary and academic status (Friedrichs and Schaub, 2011; Northrup et al 2004). For example, the increasing dependence on science and technology in healthcare challenges traditional perceptions of caring professions as largely vocational or skills-based subjects (Davidson, 2019). The changing nature of the profession has implications for its

public image but also for perceptions of professional identity of those individuals already working in the sector or for those students training to join the profession.

This issue of disciplinary classification has received considerable attention in the field of nursing with studies often reporting an unresolved tension between positivist science-based principles and the more humanistic elements of caring for patients (e.g., Kaya, 2023; Motter, Hassler and Anthony, 2021; Olivera et al., 2017; Pawlikowski et al., 2018; Peplau, 1988;). The complex relationship between theory and practice can also be seen reflected in assessment practices which encourage students to demonstrate their understanding of both scientific and humanistic principles of nursing (Richards & Pilcher, 2018). Even within relatively closely aligned subject areas such as nursing and midwifery, differences have been identified in the extent to which more or less positivistic conceptualisations of knowledge are applied to assessment. Gimenez (2012, p.416) observes for example, how nursing tends to adopt an 'absolute' attitude to academic writing conventions such as *impersonality* whereas midwifery regards this as a more 'relative concept' (Gimenez, 2012, p.416). Often referred to as the science versus art debate, some studies have sought to examine the ratio of science-influenced practice to the use of caring skills (Pawlikowski et al., 2018) or to determine whether nursing should be considered as more 'applied' than theoretical (Grace & Zumstein-Shaha, 2019; Rizzo Parse, 2015), while other studies have emphasised the complementary relationship between science and art (Kaya, 2023; Motter et al. 2021, Oliveira et al., 2017, Peplau, 1988). The uncertainty surrounding the disciplinary status of nursing and other health-related subjects combining theory and practice, can be seen in recent calls for nursing to be recategorized as a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subject, or even for an entirely

new category to be created—STEMPATHY—to reflect its unique hybrid nature (Davidson, 2020; Oerther, 2018).

Attempts to classify the status and identity of occupations or professions that draw on both scientific and practical knowledge in this way are not new. Over three decades ago, Schön (1983, 1991) was already exploring distinctions between what he termed 'major professions' (e.g., health) and 'minor professions' (e.g., social work) based on the extent to which they drew on scientific knowledge. He recognised the complex and often unstable place occupied by professionals who sit between the research or theory and the 'messy...muddling through' (p.43) realties of practice. Like Peplau (1988) who earlier characterised nurses as 'working scientists' (p.12)—testing theory in practice— Schön believed professionals were engaged in a dynamic dialogue between the theory and practice often resulting in a reframing of knowledge and its application in professional settings. The influence of Schön's early calls for a new epistemology of practice can be seen in current debates about the status and value placed on 'different ways of knowing' (Kaya, 2023, p.39). For those working in health care professions, the framing of knowledge presents a considerable challenge (Rizzo Parse, 2015) and the implications of this can also be seen reverberating through the lived experiences of individuals attempting to deal with the potential disconnect between theoretical and practical knowledge (McClendon 2005; McIntosh, 2003; Watson, 2018).

Linguistic features of identity in the disciplines

The way in which knowledge is characterised and understood in different subject areas appears to have a significant effect on the shaping of writer identity or voice (Gimenez, 2011; Hyland,2001b; Ivanič and Camps,2001; Stock Eik-Nes,2016)

suggesting that knowledge and skills cannot be ‘de-disciplined’ (Jones, 2009, p.85). Research in this area therefore reflects many variations in writing conventions across (and within) the disciplines (e.g., Flottum, 2012, Gimenez, 2012; Jones, 2009; Silver 2012, Shotesbury, 2006). It also reveals an extensive range of linguistic and rhetorical features associated with voice including referencing, stance, reader engagement and modality (Stock and Eik-Nes 2016). Research has highlighted the way in which voice cannot only be heard more explicitly through for example, effective use of argument (Hyland 2010) and engagement with the reader (Hyland, 2005), but also through more subtle strategies such as alignment (/nonalignment) with other writers (Hutchings, 2014) and even through grammatical choices (Ahearn,2001). However, a recurring theme for investigation is the use of personal pronouns in writing (e.g., Li and Deng 2019; Hyland 2001b, 2002a, 2002b; Ivanič and Camps, 2001 and Tang and John, 1999). This particular linguistic feature is regarded by some as one of the most obvious and significant ways in which a writer can convey a sense of their own identity (Tang & John, 1999, Hyland 2002b). For example, in his 2001b study, Hyland examines 240 published research articles across eight disciplines ranging from physics and biology to sociology and philosophy. He identifies considerably less use of first-person pronouns (e.g., I , me, my,) in the so-called hard disciplines concluding that these subjects are more ‘universalistic’ (pp. 215—6), and that the role of the writer is therefore less important. By contrast, Hyland suggests that the more ‘particular’ (p.216) and less easily measurable nature of the soft sciences creates a requirement for greater authorial presence. Whilst this may still reflect a general pattern of writing within the sciences, more recent research (e.g., Heard, 2022) suggests that there are some signs of a move towards more active forms of writing within the sciences, which points to

perhaps the need for a reframing of disciplinary distinctions to allow for a more dynamic and fluid interpretation (Shapin, 2022).

Hyland also draws attention to the many different uses of 'I', for example, first person pronoun use does not always represent a claim or assertion made by the writer. Often it is used in more practical ways to indicate the structure of writing or to explain a process that the writer has followed (Hyland, 2002a). In fact, other studies have noted the reluctance of less experienced L1 and L2 writers to use 'I' to make claims because of the higher risk associated with this strategy (Hyland, 2002b; Tang and John, 1999). However, as Hyland himself (2002b, p.1107) concedes such unwillingness may be due to 'recommendations from style manuals' which caution against the use of 'I'. As a result, the mere presence of personal pronouns in writing may not necessarily equate to an increase in authorial presence or identity – therefore requiring a more subtle investigation of the impact of pronoun use on writer identity (Tang & John, 1999).

Although literature relating to pronoun use in Health and Social Care related subjects is somewhat limited, Gimenez (2008, p.161), notes how nursing and midwifery students are encouraged to 'project an impersonal voice and avoid the first-person singular'. He observes in a later 2012 study how nursing and midwifery view impersonality in a similar way but subtle variations in the epistemology of their subjects means that for nursing it is more 'absolute' even in reflective writing (p.416) whereas in midwifery it is more of a 'relative concept' (416). The frequent requirement for nursing and midwifery students to reflect on practice using third person is noted by Gimenez (2011) in his study skills guide for nursing and midwifery students where he reminds students (p.76) to avoid personal pronouns because they

distract attention from the writer's experience. Although he acknowledges this disciplinary convention for impersonal language, he also recognises the potential challenges of this for a writer's sense of identity and ownership in his 2008 study. This is summed up by one of his participants who explains...'it's like talking about somebody else…as if you hadn't been there' (Gimenez, 2008, p.160). Fulbrook (2003) also expresses his concern about the way in which nursing texts fail to celebrate 'I' or the personal knowledge that individuals bring to their practice. Other style guides, however, display a less nuanced epistemologically based approach to writing advice. For example, Tanguay, Hanratty and Martin (2020, p.65) in their guide for Nursing, Health and Social Work students observe how, 'some elements of the essay will require more of a focus on your own experiences (using *I*) and some more on the literature (avoiding personal pronouns like *I/we* by using third person and passive voice'.

Whilst concerns about writer identity in academic writing more generally are not new and have indeed been expressed over the years (e.g., Cameron, 2012; Hyland, 2005; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps,200; Winter, 2003), the sheer variety of HSC text types (Gimenez, 2011; Tanguay et al. 2020), the conflicting advice about writing style (Cameron, 2012; Hyland, 2002b) and the possible impact of such inconsistencies on HSC student writers remains less well understood. In summary, the literature reveals multiple ways in which voice can be made visible in texts (e.g., stance, reader engagement, reference use, modality choices, etc.), and numerous variations amongst the disciplines in terms of how these different rhetorical devices may be deployed. However, a consistent indicator of voice still seems to be linked to the presence and use of personal pronouns in academic writing because of the way it explicitly brings the writer into the text. This paper therefore seeks to extend

understanding of writer identity in health and social care related subjects by addressing the following research questions:

1.How are first-person and third-person structures used in HSC writing?
2.What does pronoun use reveal about the epistemology of HSC subjects?
3.How does first or third person use (more generally) shape students' experiences of writer identity?
4.What are the implications for students, lecturers, the discipline as a whole?

METHODOLOGY

Forming part of a broader research project into student-writer experiences within Health and Social Care-related subjects, this paper combines a small-scale corpora analysis (Anthony, 2017) of pronoun use with a phenomenological approach (Vagle 2014) which interprets student attitudes to first and third-person pronoun use in their writing. An overall phenomenological approach suits the project because it allows for an exploration of 'how things are experienced' (Vagle, 2014, p.2) by student writers as they shift between accounts of theoretical knowledge and personal experience in hybrid-style assignments (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a). It is also appropriate because of the emphasis it places on the inseparable nature of language and meaning (Vagle, 2014)—both written and spoken examples of language used by students are analysed and interpreted in this research to better understand the meanings that they attach to writing practices within their discipline. An exploratory case study design (Yin, 2009) is adopted in order to examine the situated experiences of six students from a university in England including undergraduates and postgraduates from the disciplines of Adult Nursing; Speech and Language Therapy, Social Work and Clinical Psychology, all of which sit within the School of

Health and Social Care. Self-selection sampling was used in order to attract participants who had a particular interest in the subject of writing about theory and practice and who were willing to share their insights (Gaganpreet, 2017). As a result, the study seeks to situate findings within the context of individual experiences and frames itself as 'illustrative rather than representative' (Ivanic & Camps, 2001, p.8).

An online Qualtrics survey was used as an exploratory instrument to outline the scope and content of the study and as a method of remotely filtering out students who chose not to progress to the interview stage (Table 4.3.1 below). The online survey (Appendix 1[12]) was divided into three sections, A *Theory and Practice–B Identity and C Agency* and participants were invited to respond to a total of 97 statements relating to each theme, an extract of which can be seen below in Table 4.3.2. The questions were designed to establish participant attitudes towards the links between theory and practice and the potential impact their perceptions might have on the framing of theory and practice in writing. In particular, the survey encouraged participants to reflect on the practice of shifting between third and first-person structures in hybrid-style essays and to consider the impact of this disciplinary requirement. Responses to the online survey provided an effective starting point for a more nuanced discussion during interview about the practices of combining third person accounts of theory with first and even third person accounts of experiences and the possible linguistic and conceptual challenges that this might entail.

[12]As noted previously Appendix 1 corresponds to Appendix C.

Table 4.3.1: Data Collection Overview

	Online Surveys	**Pre-interview online briefing**	**Semi-structured online Interviews**
Number completed	10	10	6
Duration	15-20 mins	20 mins	60 mins per participant
Number of questions	97	Informal discussion	Approx. 25—30

Table 4.3.2: Extract from section B of online survey - Identity Part 1: Your Experience of university

Academic writing is very different from the kind of writing we are required to do in every-day life. The following statements aim to explore your experience of academic writing.	Agree/ disagree/ don't know
6. I prefer using first person (e.g., 'I'/'my') when I am writing, rather than more impersonal or formal language.	
7. Sometimes it is difficult to switch from theoretical writing (3rd person) to reflective writing (1st person) in the same essay.	
8. It feels like I have to be two different people in the same essay, one formal and one more personal.	
9. I think carefully about who is going to read my essay, so that I can create a particular impression of myself in my writing.	
10. I feel comfortable expressing an opinion in my academic work.	

A number of strategies were used in the design of survey statements to help put participants at their ease (Brace & Bolton, 2022). For example, everyday language was consciously adopted to avoid confusion over technical terms or jargon. A careful sequencing of statements from broader to more specific topics (Richards, 2003) was also employed to ensure that previous statements were creating a 'frame of reference' (Brace & Bolton, 2022, p.146) that would help participants to engage with ideas and to understand their relevance. To establish a stronger sense of context (Sue and Ritter,2012)– each subsection of the survey began with a couple of sentences (See Table 4.3.2) that broadly summarised the main theme to be covered, highlighting the particular aim of the section, for example 'to explore your experience of academic writing'. If participants felt they could neither 'agree' nor 'disagree' with statements a further 'don't know' category was added to capture any uncertainty with a view to exploring any such areas during interviews.

On completion of the survey, participants were invited to attend a short online briefing session before moving on to the semi-structured interview phase of the research which encouraged respondents to elaborate on themes raised in the survey (Dornyei, 2007). A funnelling technique (Brace & Bolton) was used when designing the interview guide (Appendix 2[13]) to ensure participants were reminded of context and broader issues before drilling down into some of the more specific questions relating to their experiences of writing. Although a guide was used, the approach was flexible to ensure that participants were able to explore any interesting tangents. Time was also left at the end of each interview for participants to add any further comments. The approach to coding interview data (see table 4.3.3 below) incorporated both a detailed thematic analysis and a more holistic, instinctive view of significant findings (Dornyei,2007; Simons, 2009;). Transcripts were initially read to establish instinctive researcher reactions which were captured in free writing notes (Appendix 3[14]). Then they were reread several times to begin the identification of candidate codes and possible themes in the margins (Appendix 4[15]) before creating an initial list of codes and themes (Appendix 5[16]) and then a final reduced list (Appendix 6[17]). Thematic analysis of interview data was well suited to the phenomenological stance of the study because it facilitated an inductive approach to the interpretation of participant comments, in other words a gradual identification of key themes occurred during this iterative process (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

[13] Appendix 2 corresponds to Appendix B.
[14] Appendix 3 corresponds to Appendix I.
[15] Appendix 4 corresponds to Appendix F.
[16] Appendix 5 corresponds to Appendix G.
[17] Appendix 6 corresponds to Appendix H.

Table 4.3.3: Coding Process

Stage	Coding Process (Burnard et al 2008; Dornyei, 2007; Flood, 2010; Simons 2009)
Stage 1	Holistic reading of each transcript and free writing technique used to capture initial emerging themes (Appendices F & I).
Stage 2	Rigorous thematic analysis of each transcript – key themes and sub themes identified followed by further review and reduction to core themes (Appendices G).
Stage 3	Key themes grouped and coded numerically/alphabetically (Appendix H).
Stage 4	Participant quotes cross referenced to coded themes (Appendix J)
Stage 5	Coded themes and initial free-write responses used to interpret participant contributions in relation to research questions.

Sampling of student writing

Students were invited to provide samples of assignments that combined theory and practice and that shifted between first and third person (Appendix 7[18]). Choices were therefore quite individual – sometimes prompted by reading statements in the online survey or by discussions during interview. One participant told me how she had been thinking of three assignments in particular as we were talking and wanted them to be included in the study because they demonstrated such a range of pronoun usage. The process of gathering samples was therefore highly personalised (Table 4.3.4 below) with some participants choosing to submit one or more pieces of writing in order to highlight the way in which their approaches to pronoun-use varied between different text types and genres (Appendix 7[19]). For example, Kit and Kelly wanted to include first-person reflective pieces (samples 4 and 11) alongside more theory-based largely third-person assignments (samples 3, 9 and 10) to show the contrast. Jessie on the other hand was eager to share a formal third-person reflection (sample 8) and two other formal assignments (samples 6 and 7) that contained a combination of first and third person to demonstrate how reflections were also sometimes written in third person. Although writing guidelines from departments were not made available, participants shared anecdotally how they had been advised often by individual lecturers on appropriate pronoun use for

[18] Appendix 7 corresponds to Appendix D.
[19] Appendix 7 corresponds to Appendix D.

particular assignments. Some respondents also noted that they had often discussed this topic with classmates in order to check whether first, third or a combination of approaches might be appropriate.

Table 4.3.4: overview of number and type of assignments provided by respondents.

Participant	Writing sample number	Type of assignment	Course	level	Word count
Ash	1	Case study	Adult Nursing	5	2000
Riley	2	Review of theory	Adult Nursing	5	2000
Kit	3	Case study	Speech and Language Therapy	7	3000
Kit	4	Reflection	Speech and Language Therapy	7	500
Frankie	5	Case study	Speech and Language Therapy	7	3000
Jessie	6	Reflective report	Social Work	7	6595
Jessie	7	Critical incident analysis report	Social Work	7	3294
Jessie	8	Analytical reflection on planned activity	Social Work	7	2170
Kelly	9	Secondary Data Analysis	Clinical Psychology Doctorate	8	4814
Kelly	10	Systematic review	Clinical Psychology Doctorate	8	4979
Kelly	11	Formative reflection	Clinical Psychology Doctorate	8	1372

Approach to textual analysis

In order to capture data relating to both the varied linguistic features of writer identity and participant perceptions of their own identity as writers, the study combined a small-scale corpora analysis (Anthony, 2017) with a more interpretive assessment of respondents' comments gathered during interviews. Using the AntConc corpus analysis tool (Lawrence Anthony's Website, 2024) all of the texts provided were initially analysed to identify and rank the occurrence and frequency of personal pronouns (e.g., I, me,) and indefinite third-person noun use (e.g., the author; the researcher, the practitioner) in order to explore variations in practices. This initial surface-level analysis provided the basis for a more delicate (manual) examination of

different types of pronoun use (Hyland, 2002; Tang & John 1999), specifically 'I' and third person nouns mentioned above. Drawing largely on taxonomies created by both Hyland and Tang and John, this study adopted five categories (Table 4.3.5) of personal-pronoun use. The first four categories were adapted directly from Hyland, Tang and Johns and incorporated descriptive, text-structuring and critical and stance-making functions of pronouns. As these original taxonomies did not extend to the use of personal pronouns in reflective or professional development contexts, a fifth category was added to address this gap (see Table 4.3.5 below).

Table 4.3.5: functions of pronoun use

1. Explaining what was done (e.g., *I interviewed five students*).
2. Structuring the discourse (e.g., *First, I will introduce key concepts and then…*)
3. Showing a result (e.g., *My findings show that most students agreed…*)
4. Making a claim (e.g., *I believe two issues have contributed to this problem…*)
5. Reflecting on professional/personal development (*e.g., I was able to identify some of my interpersonal flaws*)

Source: Hyland (2002a); Tang and Johns (1999)

Using AntConc's (Lawrence Anthony's Website, 2024) 'key word in context' (KWIC) function (Table 4.3.6 below) the pronoun 'I' and third-person nouns (e.g. author/practitioner) were examined with a view to categorising their function within the text (Table 4.3.7 below).

Table 4.3.6: extract from KWIC analysis

	File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
23	LP2.docx	the child. 4.4 Respect By repeating the question again later, the	practitioner	ensured the child had the opportunity to reconsider their
24	LP2.docx	values held by the practitioner. This unease translated into the	practitioner	adopting a cautious and passive tone in the initial
25	LP2.docx	full attention to the emotion communicated by the child, the	practitioner	aimed to relieve some of the sense of vulnerability
26	LP2.docx	did present a barrier to communication between the child and	practitioner,	as it created uncertainty for the practitioner in ascertaining
27	LP2.docx	a person does, to which another person assigns meaning. The	practitioner	assigned feelings of unease and tension to the body
28	LP2.docx	to aid their communication (Wilson, 2016, Rix et al., 2019). Had the	practitioner	been able to overcome barriers preventing a face to

Table 4.3.7: Function of I / third person forms

Participant	Extract (line no.?)	Descriptive (what was done)	Structuring discourse	Showing a result	Making a claim	Reflecting on personal /professional development
Ash	I described the experience...	x				
Ash	I was able to identify some of my interpersonal flaws.					x
Riley	I am hesitant to participate in difficult conversations..					x
Kit	I have conducted similar conversations...	x				
Kit	As a metaphor, I consider this placement similar to wearing a new pair of glasses.					x
Jessie	Although passive communication can be helpful, which **the practitioner** was trying to achieve, it can also...					x

In order to gauge the ratio of overall first-person to third-person usage across assignments, a further analysis was carried out. This involved manually reviewing writing samples and recording incidences of third, first and third-first combinations in introductions, main bodies and conclusions. It provided an approximate guide to patterns of first- and third-person usage across different assignment types and a sense of where shifts between formal and more personal accounts tended to occur within the internal structure of assignments. Finally, to add a personal, experiential dimension to the findings derived from the corpora analysis, participant's comments from interviews about first and third person use and other related themes (e.g., epistemology of practice; perceptions of writer identity) were also collated (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS

As already noted, participants were self-selecting and chose to submit examples of work that they felt in some way represented issues concerning the use of first and

third person (Appendix 7[20]). Although, the samples came from different courses and levels and represent a range of assignment types and wordcounts, they were derived from students in the School of Health and Social Care and to that extent all represent ways of writing about theory and practice. Overall, the results from the corpora analysis point to a number of key patterns, namely, considerable variations in pronoun use across assignments, in the functions of first-person pronouns and in the ratio of first to third person structures used in texts. Similarly, results from online survey and interviews highlighted a range of important themes including participants' experiences of using first and third pronouns; of navigating different ways of knowing in their subject (e.g., reconciling theory with practice) and of writer identity more generally. This section begins with a review of findings from the writing analysis itself before moving on to consider results gleaned from the online survey and the semi structured interviews.

Writing analysis results

The corpora analysis :Personal pronoun types and frequency of use

Table 4.3.8 (below) shows a considerable range of first and third-person structures adopted in the writing samples and significant differences in the frequency of forms used. However, nine of the eleven assignments submitted contained examples of first-person 'I' to a greater or lesser extent. In addition, patterns of *first person-only*, *third person-only* and *first-person and third person combined* (Table 4.3.9 below) also varied considerably. In most samples where theory and practice were linked, (e.g. samples one, two, three and five) first-person usage was minimal and represented a brief deviation from third-person structures. Sample 7 (Critical incident analysis report-Social Work) stood out as an exception in that it contained

[20] Appendix 7 corresponds to Appendix D.

far more instances of 'I' and 'my' than other examples linking theory and practice. Samples four, six and eleven which had a more reflective focus displayed much higher occurrences overall of first person. Table 4.3.9 below also shows the incidences of third person noun-use such as 'the author', 'the researcher' or 'the practitioner'. Three out of the eleven samples (six, ten and eleven) revealed some limited use of 'the author' and 'the researcher' while use of 'the practitioner' was restricted to three of the samples (six, seven and eight) from the subject area of Social Work. Two of these texts (seven and eight) revealed particularly high usage of these forms. In terms of the proportion of first-person only, third person only and first and third combined across the eleven sample texts (Table 4.3.9 below) only four samples were consistently either *all first person* or *all third person*. To varying degrees, all the other assignments therefore contained a combination of first and third-person forms.

Table 4.3.8: Type and frequency of pronoun use

Name; Sample number; Subject; Level	Assignment type	Wordcount	I Freq.	My Freq.	Myself Freq.	Me Freq.	We Freq.	Our Freq.	Us Freq.	'The author' Freq.	'The researcher' Freq.	'The practitioner' Freq.
Ash; 1; Adult Nursing; (L5)	Case study	2000	6	7	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0
Riley; 2; Adult Nursing; (L5)	Review of theory	2000	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kit; 3; Speech and Language Therapy; (L7)	Case study	3000	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kit; 4; Speech and Language Therapy; (L7)	Reflection	500	23	24	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
Frankie; 5; Speech and Language Therapy; (L7)	Case study	3000	2	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0
Jessie; 6; Social Work; (L7)	Reflective Report	6595	66	166	3	16	18	31	9	1	0	2
Jessie; 7; Social Work; (L7)	Critical incident analysis report	3294	39	11	1	3	7	8	4	0	0	56
Jessie; 8; Social Work; (L7)	Analytical reflection on planned activity	2170	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	34
Kelly; 9; Clinical Psychology Doctorate (L8)	Secondary data analysis	4814	12	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	0
Kelly; 10; Clinical Psychology Doctorate (L8)	Systematic Review	4979	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Kelly; 11; Clinical Psychology Doctorate (L8)	Formative Reflection	1372	25	3	1	10	3	1	0	0	0	0

Table 4.3.9: Incidences of first person only, third person only and combined pronoun use

Participant	Subject	Assignment type	Introduction	Main body	Conclusion
Ash	Adult Nursing	Case study	3rd person	Mix of 3rd and 1st person	Mix of 3rd and 1st person
Riley	Adult Nursing	Review of theory	No introduction	Mix of 3rd and 1st person	No conclusion
Kit	Speech and Language Therapy	Case study	3rd person	3rd person	Mix of 3rd and 1st person
Kit	Speech and Language Therapy	Reflection	1st person	1st person	1st person
Frankie	Speech and Language Therapy	Case study	3rd person	Mix of 3rd and 1st person	3rd person
Jessie	Social Work	Reflective report	Mix of 3rd and 1st person	Mix of 3rd and 1st person	Mix of 3rd and 1st person
Jessie	Social Work	Critical incident analysis	3rd person	Mix of 3rd and 1st person	3rd person
Jessie	Social Work	Analytical reflectin on pl	3rd person	3rd person	3rd person
Kelly	Clinical Psychology	Secondary data analysis	3rd person	3rd person	1st person
Kelly	Clinical Psychology	Systematic review	3rd person	3rd person	3rd person
Kelly	Clinical Psychology	Formative reflection	1st person	1st person	1st person

The function of personal pronouns

In line with other similar studies (e.g., Hyland 2001b, 2002a, 2002b), a more detailed analysis of pronoun function focused specifically on uses of 'I' in the samples provided. Where first-person 'I' was used either in a purely descriptive way (e.g., 'During placement I observed one child') or to reflect specifically on personal/professional development (e.g., 'I was able to form a plan of action plan'; 'I identified opportunities for development') the function was usually clear. However, attempts to categorise other uses of 'I' (e.g., 'making claims' 'showing results') using the adapted frameworks of Hyland (2002a) and Tang & Johns (1999), proved less straight forward as language relating to theory, practice and more subjective reflective elements of professional development often defied attempts to classify them within the scope of the framework used. For example, Jessie writes:

> 'I have well developed skills in multi-tasking, prioritising and organisational efficiency, successfully combining part-time study, managing my setting and a busy family life over the past few years—achieving balance between competing practical needs and personal desires (Wright, 2013; Daly, 2014)',

Here, she is both making a claim about her ability to multitask in a busy professional, academic and personal context whilst at the same time citing 'Wright, 2013' and 'Daly, 2014' to evidence her reading on the subject. Third-person nouns such as 'the practitioner' occasionally replaced 'I' in some samples (e.g**., '**The practitioner demonstrated elements of appropriate counselling...(Egan, 1982)') and although

superficially more formal and objective looking, they similarly often blurred distinctions between description, reflection and theoretical claims. Once again, in this example the writer makes a claim about their ability to use 'appropriate counselling' techniques and then backs it up with a reference to Egan,1992. From the data collected, it would seem that Hyland's (2002a) and Tang & Johns' (1999a) frameworks are less well suited to the analysis of writing from hybrid practice-based subjects. Even with the addition of a fifth category ('Reflecting on personal and professional development') it soon became clear that HSC writing, infused as it is with both theoretical and experiential elements, requires a more delicate framework for analysis that reflects this complex more ambiguous epistemology.

Online survey: Indicative results

Online survey results provided a sense of general attitudes to first and third person use at the start of the project from 10 participants, six of whom went on to participate in all areas of the study. As can be seen from table 4.3.10 below, participants (10/10) had a clear sense of the kinds of assignments that might require them to use first person pronouns and were generally clear (7/10) about when to use them. However, most participants (7/10) found it difficult to switch between first and third person in the same assignment and 6/10 expressed a preference for adopting third person structures rather than first person. Moving between first and third prompted 7/10 participants to agree that they felt like they had to be two different people in their assignments, one formal and one more personal and participants were divided (5 agreed, 5 disagreed) on the question of whether they felt comfortable expressing an opinion in academic writing. With regards to the relationship they had with their audience 7/10 agreed that they thought carefully about their readers and presented themselves accordingly. Finally, despite what in hindsight was a slightly ambiguous

statement, only half of participants were clear about what is meant by academic identity or voice. Overall, the responses indicated a clear understanding that differing conventions to pronoun use applied to various assignment types, a general feeling that switching between first and third can be difficult and a sense that combining first and third had implications for writer identity or voice.

Table 4.3.10: Attitudes to first- and third-person usage

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Didn't know
My use of 'I', 'me' and 'my' in essays depends on the type of assignment	10	0	0
Sometimes it is difficult to switch from theoretical writing (3rd person) to reflective writing (1st person) in the same essay.	7	2	1
I prefer using first person (e.g., 'I'/'my') when I am writing, rather than more impersonal or formal language.	1	6	3
I feel confused about when it is okay to use 'I', 'me' and 'my', in my academic work.	3	7	0
It feels like I have to be two different people in the same essay, one formal and one more personal.	7	2	1
I feel comfortable expressing an opinion in my academic work.	5	5	0
I think carefully about who is going to read my essay, so that I can create a particular impression of myself in my writing.	7	3	0
I have heard the expression 'academic voice/identity', but I am not sure what it means	4	5	1

The interviews

Results from interviews drew attention to a range of important themes—most relevant to the research questions were those relating to experiences of shifting between first and third person pronouns; use of third person to discuss experience; navigating different ways of knowing in their subject (e.g., reconciling theory with practice) and issues relating to writer identity more generally. Interview questions (Appendix 2[21]) were personalised based on online survey responses and were used to invite participants to expand on their experiences of linking theory and practice in

[21] Appendix 2 corresponds to Appendix B.

assignments. These themes will be explored in greater detail in the next section, but an overview of results is provided below.

Shifting between third and first person

With the exception of Kit and Kelly, the two most experienced writers in the case study, all other participants felt that switching between first and third person was awkward for different reasons (Table 4.3.11). Participants reported difficulties in terms of style (Riley, Frankie); the suddenness of the transition (Ash); the difference in purpose and tone of third and first (Ash and Jessie) and also the potentially inappropriate use of third person when talking about sensitive, human aspects of care (Frankie).

Table 4.3.11: Extract from comments about switching between third and first person.

Participant	Reactions to changing from third to first person
Ash	'…it's like flipping a switch there is no gradual shift'
Ash	'writing in third person paragraph ends, new paragraph begins first person'
Riley	'Just using the word 'I' in a formal essay is so weird ...I just turned it in and cringed'
Frankie	'…it sort of suddenly switches from feeling like you're writing an academic piece of work to I'm writing a diary or something'
Frankie	'uncomfortable'
Frankie	'...it just seems so ridiculous that we feel the need to go and use this cold third person tone when we are talking about such personal and yeah but human things'
Jessie	'trying to switch to that sort of straight-faced less sort of intuitive voice that's quite analytical and it feels cold and impersonal, so it's very difficult when you're trying to reflect on something that you were emotionally involved in' 'jumpy...sort of blocky'

Different ways of knowing

Often as an indirect result of discussions about switching between first and third person, participants reflected on how third and first-person forms required them to think differently. As can be seen in the comments below (Table 4.3.12), there was a

sense of two separate kinds of thinking that were associated with third and first person.

Table 4.3.12: Extract from comments about different ways of knowing (epistemology)

Participant	Different ways of knowing (epistemology)
Ash	'the 2 forms of writing require a different form of thinking…'
Riley	it is just that those worlds have always been so separate that when I write from first person point of view I almost feel like I've dumbed myself down if that makes any sense…'
Frankie	I think it definitely has a change in the way I start thinking... it suddenly feels a lot more informal and…I worry that I'm not sounding professional
Jessie	'...it's almost switching between the two sort of you know elements of your thinking'

While Riley and Frankie appear to be concerned that their *first person thinking* may be less professional or credible, Ash and Jessie's comments point to deeper epistemological questions about different ways of knowing (theoretical and practical/personal) and how these might sit together in subjects that combine theory and practice. These themes will be examined more closely in the discussion section.

Writer identity

When discussing the requirements to refer to both theory and practice using a range of different first and third-person forms, participants often reflected on the impact of this on their identity or voice as a writer (Table 4.3.13 below). Jessie and Riley both reported a definite split between their first and third person 'voices' or identities. For Kelly, writer identity was a subtle, indirect process of conveying a sense of what she cared about through her choices of sources and examples. Frankie on the other hand was eager to develop a style that felt more like her.

Table 4.3.13: Extracts from comments about writer identity

Participant	Sense of identity
Riley	'we were drilled into us like third person is the only way to write' 'It's just that those worlds [1st and 3rd] have always been so separate.
Kelly	'…even if I don't outwardly get to say this is my opinion these are my reflections, the evidence that I will use to back up one side or the other will be things that I've looked for that are important to me... something that I care about' 'I'll try to bring in research that speaks to me'
Jessie	'…so, it's almost like two sorts of voices…'
Jessie	'Sometimes certainly yes your voice feels very constrained in terms of your writing style…'
Frankie	'…given the choice …it might be nice to try and develop a style of writing that feels…is more like myself'

DISCUSSION

The discussion considers participants' experiences of using first and third-person forms to write about theory and practice. It draws on their own comments to explore not only the surface-level, linguistic issues surrounding frequent switches between first and third person (Ryan, 2011), but also examines deeper issues relating to diverse ways of knowing or epistemology and possible implications for writer identity and teaching practices. When asked about their experiences of switching between first and third person forms, most participants experienced some difficulty (Bowcott & Addyman 2014a; Ryan, 2011). The nature of the shift was not always the same—sometimes it occurred *within* assignments which were predominantly written in third person but required an occasional element of reflection or when larger elements of first-person case study information were being used to support a predominantly third person analysis. However, in other cases, the shift was being experienced *between* assignments as students moved from one genre to another that required a different pattern of pronoun use. Ash described the *in-essay* transitions from largely third person to occasional first-person reflections as a sudden jolt, like 'flipping a switch'. Frankie also commented on the fact that it felt 'uncomfortable' because it '...suddenly

switches from feeling like you're writing an academic piece of work to I'm writing a diary or something'.

Similarly, Jessie describes the transition as 'jumpy...sort of blocky'. The sense of awkwardness seems to echo the experiences of Ivanič (1998) students as they also navigated the frequent moves between accounts of theory and experience. However, the physicality of the adjectives chosen by participants to describe the transition (e.g., 'jarring', 'jumpy', 'uncomfortable') seems to point to something deeper than just linguistic inconvenience. Frankie sums this up when she says 'it just seems so ridiculous that we feel the need to go and use this cold third person tone when we are talking about such personal and yeah but human things' . In trying to rationalise the difficulty of the shift Jessie speculates that it is to do with the switch to a 'straight-faced less sort of intuitive voice that's quite analytical and it feels cold and impersonal' which is difficult when 'you're trying to reflect on something that you were emotionally involved in'. There may be rhetorical and linguistic challenges associated with transitions from third to first person (Ryan, 2011) but there also seem to be difficulties for participants in making sense of the positivistic attitudes to personal knowledge that third person accounts of practice seem to embody (Fulbrook, 2003; Mitchell, 2017). Indeed, this tension between formal third person language and potentially emotionally charged accounts of practice seems to echo broader debates in the wider healthcare sector concerning the disciplinary identity of health-related subjects (Kaya, 2023; Motter, Hassler & Anthony, 2021).

Feelings of frustration about the overemphasis on theory and the undervaluing of personal knowledge (Fulbrook, 2003) seem quite clear in Jessie and Frankie's comments. They appear to echo notions of a disconnection between theory and

practice (MacIntosh, 2003; McClendon, 2005; Watson, 2018), and a call for greater embracing of personal knowledge and use of 'I' in academic writing (Cameron, 2012; Fulbrook, 2003; Mitchell, 2017). The reluctance to use first person (Fulbrook, 2003) can be seen in most of the samples in this research where theory and practice were being discussed. Participants were highly sensitive to the need to restrain their use of 'I' and often quite personally affected (Mitchell et al.,2020) by adverse feedback regarding pronoun use when they felt they had been following the guidance. It would, however, be an oversimplification to suggest that every shift between third and first triggered a sense of dissonance (McClendon, 2005) because the functions of third and first are so diverse. Although Hyland's study (2002a) points to the varied uses of 'I' (e.g. making a claim, structuring discourse, describing methods) this research shows how in HSC texts, first person usage is even more nuanced manifesting in descriptive accounts of case studies, in limited asides within hybrid assignments, in professional reflections on development as well as in more personally reflective writing. It also reveals occasional inversions of common conventions where for example, third person can sometimes be a requirement of more reflective writing texts (Mitchell, 2017). This extensive range of possible conventions regarding pronoun use places considerable pressure on students to maintain high levels of rhetorical vigilance as they move from one text type and one assessor to another.

As indicated above, pronoun usage may provide a window into deeper issues relating to the complex epistemology of hybrid disciplines that draw on both scientific and experiential knowledge (Friedrichs & Schaub, 2011; Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018; Taylor et al. 2010). Jessie notes how '…it's not technically challenging to switch from you know 'I' to the 'the author'[BUT] it's quite time consuming…because it's almost

switching between the two sort of you know elements of your thinking'. Ash echoes this sentiment when he observes '…the 2 forms of writing require a different form of thinking…'. These comments seem to support notions of different characterisations of knowledge and the shaping of voice (Gimenez, 2011; Hyland,2001b; Ivanič & Camps,2001; Potgieter & Smit, 2009; Stock & Eik-Nes,2016). This highlights the very real challenges of articulating the epistemology of theory and practice (Schön, 1983, 1991) in a disciplinary context of deep uncertainty and often conflicting views about disciplinary status (Davidson, 2020; Oerther, 2018; Friedrichs & Schaub, 2011).

Where some participants seemed to struggle most was when writing about sensitive human concerns in the third person. They were often exploring issues relating to patients/clients that they knew well and had worked with for some time. For example, in her *critical incident analysis report* (Table 4.3.8 p.172) Jessie analyses three critical incidents, one involving a parent, another concerning a child, colleague and parent, and finally one with another young child. In each case Jessie provides a detailed first-person account of the incidents which although completely anonymised often contained extremely sensitive information. Having set the scene in this very personal way, Jessie then goes on to analyse each critical incident using the formal third person noun alternative of 'the practitioner' with numerous references to theory to explore issues arising and subsequent decisions made. Similar transitions between the sensitive world of practice and world of academia can be seen in other assignments. In her *case study*, (Table 4.3.8 p.172) Frankie analyses a detailed but generic case study of a 4-year-old child called 'Angus' and compares the case with actual children of a similar age that she has observed in placement. In this assignment Frankie adopts an almost entirely third person stance except for one or

two asides where she is directly referring to what she observed during practice. For Ash, in his *case study*, the brief was to take a real-life case from practice and to analyse it in relation to aspects of 'communication, partnership, safety and risk, pharmacology and self-evaluation'. During our interview, Ash briefly mentioned his concern for this patient because of the sensitive nature of his case and the extreme pain he was experiencing. In his essay, Ash was required to largely discuss the case in third person with occasional first-person pronouns used at the end as part of his 'self-evaluation'.

The disciplinary requirement to use third person in more reflective writing seemed to jar particularly with participants – summed up by Frankie's earlier comments (p.179) regarding 'the cold third person'. Writing from a nursing and feminist perspective, Mitchell (2017) raises the question about the degree to which 'I' or practical/personal knowledge is allowed to be heard. She maintains that personal experience is an essential part of caring professions arguing that 'the continued valuing of an objective, colourless academic voice has consequences for student writers and the faculty who teach them' (p.1). By refusing to accept 'I', Fulbrook (2003) also suggests that personal knowledge is not being celebrated. Of course, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that all first-person utterances are inherently personal and that third-person forms embody complete objectivity (Mitchell, 2017). Additionally, it is not necessarily the case that all student writers wish to adopt a first-person approach in their writing, in fact the indicative findings from the online survey in this research suggested (Table 4.3.10 p.175) that 6/10 participants preferred to write in third person. However, participants did clearly feel a tension when switching between first and third person forms and when using third person to writing about their experiences.

Of the writing samples analysed in this study, the only ones that seemed to deviate from this general pattern of third person privileging first person accounts were those relating to Social Work. The subject matter in the three essays submitted (Table 4.3.9 p.173) ranged from evaluations of the writer's leadership skill, and reflections on a child-led teaching session to a reflective analysis of three critical incidents involving parents, colleagues, and children. In these samples, occurrences of first person 'I' were often higher, as were uses of third person noun forms such as 'The practitioner' (2/3). Of all the writing samples considered, these seemed to offer a more integrated picture of theory, practice and reflection. Although difficult to generalise from these limited examples, perhaps the relatively new status of Social Work as an academic subject (Friedrichs & Schaub 2011, Schon, 1983,1991; Social Care Institute of Excellence, 2004; Taylor et al., 2010) and therefore its less fixed disciplinary identity, allows for a re-framing of the science-practice relationship. These writing samples also seemed to be the most problematic when attempting to categorise personal pronoun usage (Hyland, 2002a; Tang & John, 1999) because of the complex functions performed by first and third person. Where theory and practice begin to coalesce in this way, a more delicately calibrated instrument is needed to interpret the often-overlapping functions of pronoun use. While these scripts appeared to embrace more practical knowledge, the writer still seemed to be adversely affected by her experiences of switching between theory and practice (Ivanič, 1998). Although a small case study, it was observable that levels of experience both professional and academic amongst participants seemed to have a bearing on the way in which they coped with the effects of switching between theory and practice. Those with more experience (Murray, 2018) tended to take it in their

stride while less experienced participants appeared to struggle more with the transition.

During interview discussions, participants were invited to comment on their attitudes to pronoun use and the connection between first and third person forms and theoretical and practical knowledge. As discussions progressed, a sense of individual writer identity began to emerge, revealing the complex and situated nature of their developing voices (Matsuda, 2015; Robbins, 2016; Stock & Eik-Ness, 2016). This section explores some of the many variables involved in shaping attitudes to pronoun use and writer identity at university (Ivanic, 1998; Kolb, 1984, MacIntosh,2003), such as levels of academic/professional experience; issues around personal and professional identity formation; and even participants' experiences of writing for pleasure (e.g., writing poetry/journals/short stories).

Levels of experience, both academic and professional, varied considerably amongst the participants. For example, Kit, Frankie and Jessie had only just started their masters' courses and whilst quite confident writers were in the early stages of developing a sense of their professional identity (MacIntosh, 2003; Murray 2018). Riley and Ash on the other hand, both second year undergraduate nursing students seemed to be further along in developing their professional identities, through study and experiences gained from placement, but were still developing their skills as academic writers. Within the group, Kelly, the most experienced participant both professionally and academically, displayed the greatest confidence in all aspects of self-representation (Hyland, 2010) whether through pronoun-use or other means. She explained how the power relation between herself and her audience (Ede & Lunsford, 1996; Hyland, 2002; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001) had evened out

over the years; in other words, she now saw her readers more as *colleagues* than *assessors*. She seemed to have a clear view about her own writer identity, focusing more on evidencing her position/stance (Hyland, 2005, 2010) than worrying about what her readers thought about her writing. She observed how '…even if I don't outwardly get to say this is my opinion these are my reflections, the evidence that I will use to back up one side or the other will be...something that I care about'. For Kelly, rather than her use of pronouns, it was her choice of sources and evidence that conveyed a sense of who she was a writer (Hutchings, 2014). She seemed to fully understand and accept the constraints of academic writing as long as she could convey something of herself, even if indirectly (Cameron, 2012; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001). During the interview she establishes a clear link between changes in her development and as a writer, suggesting that the two go hand in hand. In other words, years of experience seem to have helped her rationalise the gaps between theory and practices.

For other participants, the tensions surrounding writer identity seem to be more pronounced and often connected with the difficulties of reconciling theory and practice (MacIntosh, 2003; McClendon, 2005; Watson, 2018). For example, Jessie observes how 'it's almost like two sorts of voices…' which she struggles to harmonise. This perhaps points to the challenges of creating one unified voice in subjects that are rooted in two separate epistemologies (Kaya, 2023; Motter, Hassler & Anthony, 2021) and to the potentially negative effects on writer identity of privileging science over more personal ways of knowing (e.g., Fulbrook, 2003; Mitchell, 2017). Although Jessie's academic approach to this kind of hybrid writing is accomplished and professional, the requirement to project such a distanced and formal voice when writing about very real human issues makes her feel as though

her identity is being ‘constrained’ (Gimenez, 2008, Mitchell, 2017). Similarly, Frankie expresses a sense of not being able to be herself and struggles with impersonal nature of academic writing observing how it ‘might be nice to try and develop a style of writing that feels...is more like myself’.

Although Kit has difficulty reconciling theory and practice in her everyday professional setting (McClendon, 2005; Watson, 2018) she has no problems, as a writer, switching between first and third person where required. Her previous experiences as a student and as a teacher herself meant that she was well versed in meeting marking criteria and in giving the reader exactly what she thought they wanted to hear (Hyland, 2001a, 2005). In other words, her approach was highly strategic (Cameron, 2012; Faranda, Clarke & Clarke, 2021) and she was happy to comply with any conventions (e.g., pronoun use, referencing) that would improve her grades. Ash also experienced a disconnect between theory and practice, but like Kit displayed a strategic approach to his writing, observing how it was a ‘means to an end’. In fact, he stressed his concerns about the over academisation of nursing (Middleton, 2016) questioning the emphasis on research when he felt that practice and the vocational aspects of nursing were more relevant (McClendon, 2005; Mitchell, 2017; Watson, 2018). The evidence from this research suggests that perceptions about writer identity and levels of confidence in achieving an authentic voice are intrinsically linked to levels of professional and academic experience as well as more strategic attitudes to assessment.

Three of the participants in the study (Riley, Kit and Frankie) enjoyed writing for pleasure which also seemed to impact on their attitudes to writer identity. Riley observed how she had a ‘different persona for each kind of writing’. In other words,

she had a very clear sense of her first-person creative writer identity and struggled when she had to combine third person and first person in academic essays. She noted how it felt like she was mixing 'oil and water' when two very separate personas (Freeman, 2013) were forced to meet in hybrid style assignments. Unlike other participants who wanted to express themselves more personally, Riley favoured the formality of third person, preferring the theoretical side of her subject to what she referred to as the more 'airy-fairy' softer skills. For Kelsey, writing journals had been a '...big part of [her] identity' since she was a child and like Riley, she considered her creative and academic writing identities to be 'separate...very different from one another'. However, she struggled with her third-person academic voice (Gimenez, 2008; Lea & Street, 1998) and was eager, instead, to create her own academic style - one using 'I' that she felt would be 'more open and accessible'. In this ambition, she seemed to reflect the attitudes of those seeking greater use and valuing of personal knowledge (Cameron, 2012; Fulbrook, 2003). Finally, Kit who enjoyed writing poetry in her spare time acknowledged that she would naturally prefer to express herself through her poems and that she found academic writing 'artificial', but her drive to obtain good grades meant she was happy to adapt to any writing style required (Cameron, 2012; Faranda et al., 2021). Whilst experiences of writing for pleasure clearly influenced these participants' attitudes to writer identity, they were not the only variables shaping their voices, thereby highlighting the complex, often intersecting variables that influence the formation of writer identity (Ivanič, 1998).

Implications for teaching

Given the diverse range of practices relating to pronoun use in hybrid styles assignments students need more support in understanding the different text types

and expectations that they are likely to encounter at university (Gimenez, 2011; Tanguay et al, 2020). The data from this study suggest that whilst participants were acutely aware of differing attitudes to pronoun use and eager to adopt the correct approach (Cameron, 2012) there was a degree of frustration at the inconsistency across different assignments. Greater support is needed in developing students' understanding of different genres and in the appropriate use of personal pronouns (Hyland, 2001b). Other practical measures that would support this kind of development are recommended by Laurence Anthony (Anthony, 2017) who endorses the practice of 'data-driven learning' (DDL) to encourage students to analyse their own writing using corpus analysis techniques. However, beyond the more superficial level of text and language, it may be important and beneficial for students to address some deeper epistemological issues that this research has highlighted. As pronoun usage is also linked to different types of theoretical and more personal or tacit knowledge it may be helpful for students to explore ways in which theory and practice are characterised in writing. This could take the form of discussions that specifically address the value placed on different ways of knowing and the possible challenges to professional, personal and academic identity that students may face when combining theoretical knowledge with more personal accounts of working with patients and clients. Although changes in assessment practices over the years have aimed to blend theory and practice in patchwork-style assignments (Winter, 2003) perhaps other alternative genres that celebrate different ways of knowing could also be explored (e.g. creative writing, poetry, dance) to provide students with other ways of expressing themselves (Cronin & Hawthorne, 2017; Fulbrook, 2003; Mitchell, 2017; Whitehead, 2002).

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined health and social care students' use of and attitudes to first- and third-person language structures in hybrid style assignments to extend understanding of issues associated with combining theory and practice in academic writing. The study has revealed a significant diversity in first and third person use across four different subject areas, all grouped within the School of Health and Social Care. Participants were often high scoring in their assignments and diligent in finding out about assessor expectations but were clearly affected by their experiences of varying conventions regarding pronoun use. Their attitudes were often dependent on levels of professional and academic experience, reader expectations, and even their knowledge of other creative writing genres. Whilst not wishing to over-generalize, the main impression from the majority of writing samples, with the exception of those from Social Work, suggests students are encouraged to privilege third person over first person forms. This would therefore seem to reflect an on-going leaning towards more positivistic conceptualisations of knowledge that favour hard scientific facts over the softer humanistic skills needed in health care settings. Whilst students were often able to overcome the linguistic challenges of this kind of writing, the transitions between first-person accounts of experience, third-person accounts of theory, and even third-person accounts of experience frequently raised deeper epistemological issues concerning the value of different types of knowledge. Other factors (e.g., levels of experience, strategic approaches to learning, reader expectations; familiarity with other writing genres etc.) all played a part in shaping participants' individual unique responses to issues concerning pronoun-use and writer identity more generally. However, it could be said that less experienced students (professionally and/or academically) often seemed to be more

adversely affected both linguistically and personally by their experiences of trying to reconcile accounts of theory and practice in their writing.

This has obvious and important implications for the way in which Health and Social Care disciplines choose to frame themselves epistemologically not only in their published output but also in their undergraduate and post graduate degree programmes. Helping students to understand the complex epistemology of their subjects and to situate themselves within their academic discourse may be a way of addressing some of the clear challenges associated with hybrid style academic writing. Further research into the creation of an analytical writing framework specifically designed for hybrid subjects that combine theory and practice would help to extend understanding in this area. Finally, although a key indicator of writer authority, pronoun use is only one of many rhetorical devices used to establish voice. Further research into modality and the way in which it reveals the nature of the writer's relationship to knowledge would also help to extend understanding in subject areas that encompass both theoretical and more practical ways of knowing.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Summary of the three papers

This chapter discusses the main themes and findings from the three papers that form the basis of this research. As discussed in Chapter 1, the overall aim of this study was to investigate student experiences of linking theory and practice in hybrid style HSC assignments and to consider implications for writer identity formation. This overall aim was broken down into distinct sets of research questions that the three individual research papers sought to address and answer and each paper therefore makes a unique, but interconnected contribution in the following ways.

Paper one explores the common requirement within Health and Social Care assignments to link theory to practice. It observes how hybrid-style assignments containing third person references to theory and first-person accounts of practice have been a popular genre within these disciplines since the 1990's (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a). It reviews the advantages of this kind of Academic Reflective Writing (ARW) which is believed to contribute to the development of key professional competencies (Scully, 2011) as well as supporting the personal growth of individual practitioners (Craft, 2005). However, despite the widely documented benefits of ARW, attention is also drawn, within this first paper, to the challenges students may face when attempting to combine accounts of theory and practice. For example, some student writers struggle with this kind of writing when their experiences fail to align perfectly with theory but marking criteria require them to establish a clear link between the two (Hilsdon, 2005). Furthermore, students may experience difficulties when switching between accounts of theory and professional practice (Ivanič, 1998) and when having to employ formal third person structures to reflect on experience (Gimenez, 2008; Lea & Street, 1998; Mitchell, 2017).

This first paper also highlights challenges associated with the framing of the theory-practice relationship in hybrid style writing, and the potential conceptual, linguistic and identity related issues that may arise from this. It draws attention to a common theme within the sector that theory and practice are out of alignment with each other and that various interventions are required to narrow the gap between principles and real-life practices. Recommendations include the use of simulation sessions (Mahmoud, 2014), internship programmes (Shoghi et al. 2019) lecturer-practitioner mediators (Carson & Carnwell, 2007) and also reflective writing (De Swardt et al. 2012). The desire to reduce and even eliminate the divide between theory and practice that the literature reflects is explored in this first paper and linked to the underlying belief that theory and practice should align, and that practice should flow directly from theory (Polkinghorne, 2004). These views are contrasted with alternative characterisations of the theory-practice relationship which focus more on the interactions between researchers and practitioners. For example, the work of Schön (1983,1991) is highlighted for his framing of the theory practice relationship as a two-way exchange between researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders rather than a one-way top-down imposition of theory onto practice.

The contributions of other researchers (e.g., Gallagher, 2004; Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011; Ousey and Gallagher, 2007) are also highlighted in paper one because they challenge the 'theory-practice *gap*' conceptualisation arguing that the language of 'gaps', 'bridges' and 'divides' is misleading and threatens to mask the much more complex and nuanced dynamic between theory and practice. Instead of focusing on notions of narrowing the gap, these alternative theorisations emphasise the many factors that affect the interplay between theory and practice such as the

availability of resources, the reactions of individual practitioners and other stakeholders to change (Stark et al. 2000) and even the impact of practitioners' own 'tacit knowledge' (Schön, 1983,1991, p.49) on the process of implementing theory into health care settings. In other words, these conceptualisations of the theory-practice relationship view it as a complex process of translation, negotiation and even interpretation of the way in which research eventually becomes practice (Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011, Woolfe, 2008).

The research in paper one considers the impact different framings of the theory-practice relationship have on the way student writers experience it and characterise it in their writing. For example, if they see themselves as passive receivers of new information (Polkinghorne, 2004) or agentive implementers even creators of knowledge (Reed, 2006), this may significantly affect their experience of the intersection between theory and practice and therefore the way they write about it in their assignments. Findings from paper one, which used a case study design to explore the experiences of six Health and Social Care students, provided insights into the complexities of writing about theory and practice. It revealed how some participants who were just beginning their programmes or perhaps moving into their second year often appeared to be frustrated by the lack of alignment between what they were learning and what they were seeing on placement. Some attributed the mismatch to a lack of resources and time while one more experienced participant believed that the sheer diversity of practitioners meant theory would always be subject to interpretation in the practice setting.

Where discrepancies between theory and practice existed, students often adopted a strategic criterion driven approach to writing, not wishing to be marked down for

failing to successfully link practice and theory (Hilsdon, 2005). Paper one also highlights practical issues that student writers' experiences when trying to 'fit' literature to their own professional experiences. Several questioned the quality of the 'fit' often weighing authenticity of 'match' against the need to address key marking criteria. For one participant, this was a lengthy searching and decision-making process, to establish the closest fit between the student's experience of practice and the assignment criteria. For others this process was more strategic, trying to the establish the best 'ballpark area' (Kit) they could in terms of a link between the literature and their own practice. Other problems with linking literature also included lack of available evidence, as well as difficulties of reconciling (in writing) time gaps between actual practice and learning about theories. Simply remembering details of practice accurately sometimes hindered the linking process, as participants struggled to recall the fine detail of placements carried out weeks earlier.

Students also reported difficulties in switching between first and third person—the suddenness of the transition from formalised accounts of theories to discussions about real-life cases with whom participants often had a strong professional even emotional connection felt quite jarring and uncomfortable. Whilst they noted the linguistic difficulty of this frequent switching, their strong reactions seemed to relate more to the uneasy juxtaposition of theoretical and caring aspects of their professional identity. Some participants felt their identities were constrained by third person (Fulbrook, 2003; Gimenez, 2008; Mitchell, 2017) and that such formal language could not do justice to the relationship they had with their patients and clients. Another participant was very aware of the many aspects of her professional identity and struggled to find a unifying voice for them all in her writing.

Insights gained from paper one suggested that a greater focus on the underlying conceptualisation of the theory practice relationship and the way that student writers position themselves within this dynamic would aide them in their writing. It offered a number of recommendations including the need for discussions between lecturers and student writers about the complexities of 'linking' literature and practice in order to develop coping strategies when and if theory and practice failed to align perfectly. It also recommended that lecturers explore with students the impact of different characterisations of theory and practice on both professional and writer identity formation. In conclusion, paper one's unique contribution to the overall thesis has been to highlight the often oversimplified, unproblematised notion of 'linking' theory and practice in hybrid style assignments, revealing the complex and multi-layered nature of this common assessment requirement.

Paper two explores the experiences of Health and Social Care student writers from the perspective of their development as professionals, with a specific focus on the requirement for them to develop a professional identity in preparation for their eventual entry into the sector. It highlights the ways in which HSC students are coping not only with issues that other non-vocational students have to face (e.g. becoming accustomed to the Higher Education environment and creating an academic identity) but are also simultaneously establishing themselves as working professionals in different placement settings. As in paper one the focus is on student experiences of combining theory and practice in writing (Addyman and Bowman 2014b, Ivanič, 1998) but this time their experiences are examined through the lens of professional identity formation theories revealing a complex overlap between different aspects of identity and the challenges this presents for student writers

(Ivanič, 1998). HSC student writers are often, therefore, uniquely trying to reconcile and unify different aspects of personal, academic and emergent professional identities which adds an additional challenge to the already difficult task of developing a sense of writer identity at university.

Paper two therefore explores the often-contested notion of professional identity formation (PIF) in order to better understand factors affecting HSC student writers. It reveals how the literature in this area diverges considerably in relation to the key defining features of professional identity (Fitzgerald, 2020, Sarraf-Yazdi et al., 2021) with varying definitions of the most important characteristics. For the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (2020) the identity development process is both individual and collective, influenced by colleagues, patients, educators and the passage of time. A more granular definition is offered by MacIntosh (2003) who outlines three stages of professional identity formation, covering the typical experiences of those just joining the profession, those who are beginning to master the basics and those professionals with years of experience. She suggests that PIF is an iterative process and that being aware of different stages will be particularly helpful to those transitioning from training to the workplace. Paper two also explores the role of time and experience in this process thereby demonstrating links between PIF and theories of Experiential Learning (EL) (Kolb, 1984) which emphasise the way in which knowledge changes through adaptations to the environment and through a process of learning from others (Murray, 2018). With exposure to positive work experiences, supportive colleagues and ongoing education (Academy of Royal Medical Colleges, 2020) it is hoped that over time professionals will develop a strong sense of their professional identity. This second paper reveals the importance of PIF in the overall development of HSC students as professionals and as writers, but it

also draws attention to challenging aspects of developing a professional persona such as the often-damaging effects of imposter phenomenon (Aubeeluck et al. 2026) on graduate nurses, as well as the difficulties of managing complex multi-faceted identities in the workplace (Atewologun et al., 2016).

Paper two explores ways in which different aspects of professional and personal identity may intersect in professional health-related settings and the knock-on effect that this may have on student writers. It provides an overview of studies that examine issues of identity intersection which point to real-life implications for practitioners. For example, Sarraf-Yazdi et al. (2021) draw attention to the need to support medical students in reconciling different aspects of identity in order to maximise performance. Other studies have similarly reported an overlap between personal and professional identities (e.g. Fitzgerald, 2020) as well as between different professional identities (Sims, 2011). The effects on professional identity formation of moving between different roles and organisations (Caza, Moss & Vough,2018) is also explored by some researchers who emphasise the precarious nature of professional landscapes and the likelihood that professionals may experience a kind of 'identity limbo' (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016, p.49) at various stages of their careers.

Paper two therefore argues that HSC student writers face the extraordinary additional challenge of having to navigate and reconcile multiple identities as writers, at university. It sets this extra challenge against the backdrop of the already highly contested nature of the academic identity or voice at university. It emphasises the way in which definitions of writer identity, like those of professional identity, are often highly contested (Matsuda, 2015) reflecting a vast array of possible linguistic and

rhetorical features associated with voice (Stock & Eik-Ness, 2016). While some notions of voice emphasise the unique nature of individual writers' identity, others focus on the requirement to adapt voice to different text types and expectations of the academy (Matsuda, 2016). Although academic writing tends to encourage the development of a less personal voice (Cameron, 2012), the literature points to numerous subtle ways (e.g. argument, referencing, grammar choices) in which writers can convey something of their authorial identity (e.g. Ahearn, 2001; Hutchings, 2014; Hyland, 2010) whilst complying with disciplinary writing conventions (Hyland, 2010). Paper two reveals how research into the subject of writer identity amongst healthcare students is somewhat limited, but Gimenez (2008) notably recognises the requirement for nursing and midwifery students to 'project an impersonal voice' (p.160) observing the possible negative impact of this kind of restriction on writers' sense of identity. Other commentators such as Fulbrook (2003) and Mitchell (2017) have also drawn attention to the limitations that third-person writing can have on practitioners who invest so much personal knowledge into their daily practice.

Paper two uses a case study design to explore a small group of HSC students' experiences of professional identity formation and its impact on their overall sense of voice. An online survey was employed to establish students' initial attitudes to PIF and was followed by in-depth interviews which sought to elicit deeper insights into students' perceptions of different aspects of identity. Results revealed a range of challenges that less experienced student practitioners (in particular) faced in developing a sense of professional identity and in dealing with the frequent overlap between personal and work-based identities. Some participants recounted their struggles in moving from one well-formed sense of professional identity to a

completely new one. Others felt that personal and professional identities inevitably overlapped in occupations that drew so much on caring and empathetic aspects of their identities (Griffiths, Speed, Horne & Keeley, 2012; Richards & Pilcher, 2018). The data also pointed to the importance of *experience* in establishing a clearer sense of professional identity and the relationship between theory and practice as well as a more coherent voice in writing. This was exemplified by the most experienced (academically and clinically) member of the case study who not only had a strong understanding of her own professional identity but also an accomplished and confident sense of her own voice as a writer. Paper two also emphasised the way in which other factors shaped individual voices including levels of metacognitive knowledge (Ushioda, 2011a), strategic learning approaches (Cameron, 2012), knowledge of rhetorical devices (e.g. referencing) associated with voice (Hutchings, 2014); understanding of reader expectations (Hyland, 2001a) and even experiences of other more creative forms of writing (English, 2015; Molinari, 2022). .

Insights from this second paper therefore reveal how intersecting aspects of professional, personal and academic identities impacted on HSC students' overall sense of who they were as practitioners and subsequently on how they viewed themselves as writers. Findings pointed to the importance of *experience* in managing different challenges associated with PIF (e.g. the theory-practice gap) and in developing greater confidence as writers. Implications for practice included the need for a greater focus on issues of navigating multiple identities amongst HSC students. Opportunities to embed discussions about the challenges of managing new and intersecting identities into the curriculum (Cruess et al. 2019) were also recommended with a view to easing issues around identity transition and to providing

a space where discussions about reconciling aspects of identity in writing could be held. In conclusion, therefore, paper two provided Insights into unique professional identity-related challenges faced by students who are moving between the worlds of academia and practice.

Paper three shifts the attention onto an analysis of writing practices within HSC programmes, using assignments submitted by participants to better understand hybrid writing conventions and the impact of specific linguistic practices on student writers. This final paper is contextualised within the extensive body of literature relating to linguistic and rhetorical features of voice in academic writing (Stock & Eik-Ness, 2016). Despite the lack of agreement on what constitutes voice in academic texts, and the extent to which writers should intrude into their own writing (Hutchings, 2014) personal pronoun use continues to be a recurring theme in the literature (Li & Deng, 2019; Hewings & Coffin, 2007; Hyland, 2001b) and this final paper therefore focuses on the use of pronouns in hybrid-style writing. For Health and Social Care students who are required to establish links between theory and practice in their university assignments (Bowman & Addyman, 2014b), pronoun use is often more of a concern because they are frequently encouraged to switch between first and third person structures when discussing the connections between theory and their own experiences of practice in placements. As healthcare students are often mature and adjusting to the challenges of life at university (Goppe & Deane, 2013; Taylor & House, 2010) the requirements of hybrid style assignments to combine elements of theory and experiences may pose unique linguistic and conceptual challenges for student writers (Ivanič, 1998; Ryan, 2011). Consequently, this final paper explores conventions surrounding pronoun use in HSC writing through an analysis of online survey responses, student assignments and an interpretation of comments made by

participants during interviews. It discusses the challenges that this kind of writing poses for student writer identity (Gimenez, 2008) and also examines links between pronoun use and the characterisation of knowledge in subjects spanning both theoretical and practical components.

The paper begins by situating writing practices within the broader context of factors believed to influence different discourse requirements (Ivanič & Camps, 2001), such as the reader-writer relationship (Matsuda, 2025); power relations between students and the academy (Ivanič, 1998) and even the effects of changing time frames on the process of academic writing (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). However, it focuses particular attention on the impact of disciplinary conventions on writer identity (Hyland, 2002a; Jones, 2009) and how students need to understand the ways in which knowledge is conceptualised in their subject area in order to formulate an appropriate voice (Jones, 2009). It reviews traditional disciplinary distinctions and how these have tended to focus on the characteristics of so-called hard and soft disciplines where the hard sciences (e.g. biology, medicine) usually agree on key concepts and methods and softer sciences (e.g. psychology, sociology) are less likely to align on these core issues (Dang, 2018). It contrasts these traditional disciplinary distinctions with the unique identity and status-related challenges facing more recently academized subjects such as Nursing, Speech Therapy and Social Work where disciplinary and epistemological distinctions are much less clear (Friedrichs & Schaub, 2011). These subject areas are often naturally more interdisciplinary in their ways of working thereby increasing the sense of disciplinary identity ambiguity (Friedrichs and Schaub, 2011; Northrup et al. 2004). Paper three points to the ways in which health and social care related subjects' embrace of science and technology in ever greater degrees, is changing the traditional perceptions of roles and core

knowledge needed to work in these areas (Davidson, 2019; Griffiths et al., 2012) and the subsequent impact this may may be having on writing practices.

Paper three goes on to explore how the less clearly defined disciplinary identity of health and social care related subjects may affect attitudes to writing conventions within academic programmes, using an analysis of pronoun use and frequency (Hyland, 2002b) as a way of better understanding writing practices in these subject areas. Whilst considerable research into pronoun use exists in more traditional disciplines (Hyland, 2002b) revealing significantly greater uptake in less scientifically rooted subjects, there is much less research focused on health-related subjects. An exception to this is the contribution to understanding made by Gimenez, (2008) in his study of nursing and midwifery students where he observes the requirement for both nursing and midwifery students to adopt a largely impersonal voice in their writing. He highlights the subtle disciplinary variations that exist even between these apparently closely related subjects, observing how subtle variations in epistemology shape attitudes to writing conventions and voice (2012). Fulbrook (2003) also comments on the use of third person structures in nursing assignments, arguing strongly that such practices fail to acknowledge the importance of more personal forms of knowledge. He champions the cause for more use of 'I' in assignments in order to validate the personal knowledge and experiences that practitioners hold.

Paper three's findings point to a considerable range of pronoun usage in hybrid style writing. Initial survey results revealed a clear sense amongst participants of the need to combine first and third person in certain assignments, but also a feeling that moving between first and third was not always straight forward and that third person accounts of experience were particularly challenging. The analysis of eleven

assignments showed a considerable range of approaches to pronoun use across texts and a general tendency towards privileging third person structures in hybrid assignments that contained both discussions of theory and accounts of practice. The precise functions of first-person pronouns (Hyland, 2002a; Tang & John, 1999) were often hard to categorise in hybrid assignments where reflective writing and discussions of theoretical principles often overlapped. Interview comments pointed to the awkward juxtaposition of first and third person structures and the shift in thinking that was needed to move from impersonal to more personal forms of expression. At a deeper level students' comments about this uncomfortable alignment seemed to echo debates concerning the epistemological ambiguity of health-related subjects, in other words whether hard scientific knowledge should be privileged over personal knowledge (Fulbrook, 2003; Rizo Parse, 2015). This final paper also revealed that the level of academic and clinical experience held by participants (Murray, 2018) was another important factor affecting attitudes to writer identity. For example, less experienced participants displayed greater uncertainty about their voice compared with the most experienced clinician and academic in the case study who had developed numerous strategies for confidently conveying a sense of her academic identity. This third study also revealed how other intersecting factors such as strategic approaches to study and even experiences of more creative forms of writing affected the formation of writer voice (English, 2015).

Findings from paper three therefore pointed to a number of possible implications for future practice. An explicit focus on the ambiguities surrounding different types of knowledge within healthcare related subjects and the way in which they are valued was recommended to help students reconcile the theoretical and practical aspects of their courses. A further focus on the framing of theory and practice in writing and

more specifically the unequal use of third and first person in writing and what this means for student writer identity was also suggested. From a methodological perspective, this study revealed the need for a bespoke analytical writing framework that would offer a more delicate means of categorising and interpreting pronoun use in texts that combine theoretical and more reflective writing. Finally, further research into the possible diversification of assessment practice to incorporate more creative text types was recommended to provide students with alternative ways of authentically expressing different aspects of their professional and personal identities. To sum up, the overall contribution of paper three sheds light on the variety of practices surrounding the use and function of first and third person in hybrid style assignments and draws attention to the surprising impact that shifting between first and third person had on student writers.

Discussion of broader themes

Taken together these individual papers address key questions posed by this research project and this section turns to a broader discussion of findings in relation to Health and Social Care students' overall perceptions of the theory-practice relationship and their experiences of articulating this in hybrid-style assignments. The discussion begins with an examination of the findings regarding conceptualisations of the theory-practice relationship and disciplinary framings of knowledge in shaping writer experiences. Insights concerning the effects of professional identity formation on a developing sense of overall writer identity will then be explored with a particular focus on the role of *experience* in knowledge and identity development. Finally, results relating to the linguistic and rhetorical representations of both theory and practice and the implications for writer identity will be discussed showing how insights from this research sheds light on the unique experiences of HSC student writers at university.

Theory and practice

A key question addressed by this thesis related to students' conceptualisation of the theory-practice relationship and how this affected their approaches to writing assignments that frequently shift between third person references to theory and first-person reflections on practice (Bowman & Addyman, 2014b). Often referred to as hybrid-style texts, these assignments are a common feature of Health and Social Care assessment at university requiring students to link theoretical and practical knowledge (Gimenez, 2011). The most important finding from this research showed how this linking process is far from straight forward and in fact involves multiple layers of complex decision making. Behind the seemingly uncontroversial requirement to *link* theory and practice lie profound questions concerning the 'true' nature of the theory-practice relationship; complex attitudes to knowledge in HSC disciplines, and many practical questions for students about how to navigate these issues. Whilst paper one discussed the theory practice relationship in detail, the implications of these findings reverberate across the entire research project and this section uses participants' responses and voices to explore the broader significance of these findings.

Initial attitudes to the theory-practice relationship gleaned from survey responses presented a mixed picture with 70% of participants agreeing that clear links existed between theory and practice, while 80% expressed difficulty in writing about theory and practice because of a lack of alignment between the two. This ambiguous response was further explored in interviews where participants spoke at length about their own experiences of trying to reconcile classroom-based teaching with real-life practice and their observations of others trying to do the same. Those participants

who progressed to the interview stage all acknowledged differences between theory and practice (Carson & Carnwell, 2007) but individual reactions often revealed different conceptualisations of the precise nature of the relationship. For example, Ash summed up his and Riley's feelings when he said, 'the picture they paint in uni isn't quite the reality you face in real healthcare environments'. He and Riley both seemed to feel that practice *should* mirror theory (Polkinghorne, 2004) and attributed the lack of alignment to staffing shortages and time pressures in professional settings (Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011). Their comments implied that with the right kind of intervention or improvements, gaps between theory and practice could be narrowed (Carson & Carnwell, 2007; Shoghi et al. 2019). For Kit and Kelly, on the other hand, the theory practice relationship was not envisaged as two elements previously aligned that had somehow drifted apart (Gallagher, 2004) but rather as two completely separate entities (Schön, 1983,1991) as summed up by Kit in the following way:

> 'They're different things…I don't know how it would be possible to combine them, because you know…theory is two dimensional…but practice is you know 3D or even 4D …with the water coming at you in the cinema...they're different dimensions'

Here she conveys a strong sense of the fundamental differences between theory and practice challenging notions of any clear top-down linear relationship between them (Schön, 1983,1991). Findings therefore reveal deeply polarised interpretations of the theory-practice relationship and highlight the impact that different framings of this dynamic can have not only on the way students characterise it but also on how they see themselves in relation to it. For example, viewed from a technical perspective (Schön, 1983,1991) practice should spring from proven scientific principles with a clear emphasis on the *application* of theory in practice settings (Polkinghorne, 2004). This conceptualisation or assumption of a clear and logical relationship between theory and practice potentially places writers in the position of

having to claim unequivocal links when their experience actually suggests otherwise (Craft, 2005; Hilsdon, 2005). When facing this dilemma one participant, Kit, expressed her feelings of disappointment in herself, saying 'I feel like I have failed in this because…you know my experience was not that of the theory…'. Another participant (Frankie) felt considerable pressure to establish a firm link between theory and practice and believed her lack of experience meant that she could not challenge the theory. Her fear of being marked down for questioning the literature came across when she commented 'I don't feel like have a leg to stand on...if that's what the literature says that's what it must be'. Insights from the data therefore suggest that student writers may feel unable to write authentically about their experiences if this particular framing of theory and practice is assumed and perhaps more troublingly may feel personally responsible if their practice fails to match up to the theory.

Although the underpinning notion that practice *should* match theory does appear to pervade much of the literature regarding the theory-practice gap in the Health Care Sector (Carson & Carnwell, 2007; Scully, 2011), findings from this research point to the potential benefits of framing the relationship in alternative ways. For example, Schön's (1983,1991) interpretation of theory and practice is highlighted in this research because it moves away from notions of the passive practitioner receiving knowledge and instead presents professionals as agentive collaborators who bring their own 'tacit knowledge' to the dialogue (Schön, 1983,1991, p.49). Schön's theory therefore encourages a more practitioner-centred view of the way in which theory becomes practice, and this perspective has been extended by other studies which shed light on the often-complex process of turning theory into practice (Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011; Stark et al., 2000; Titler, 2008; Woolfe, 2008). From this

perspective the translation or application of theory involves different organisations and individuals, and the eventual implementation may be shaped, negotiated, even interpreted by different agentive intermediaries (Ousey & Gallagher, 2004; Robinson & Dearmon, 2013) including the practitioner (Reed, 2006).

Findings from this research suggest therefore that the conceptualisation and framing of the theory-practice relationship may significantly affect student writers' perceptions of it, their role within it and ultimately their approaches to writing about it. The significance of this can perhaps be demonstrated by revisiting one of the most striking practical examples of the theory practice relationship in this research which was recounted by Ash:

> 'I believe it was palliative care and the use of pink sponges…I think in the lecture they said pink sponges are being phased out, because of the risk of chewing and swallowing the sponge…but when I went on my placement no one I spoke to had any idea about that…'

If viewed from the technically based position that practice should mirror theory (Polkinghorne, 2003) this example looks like a failure of application and students might feel conflicted about how to present it (Craft, 2005; Hilsdon, 2005). However, if the same example were discussed in relation to theories of knowledge translation (Greenhalgh & Wieringa, 2011; Schön, 1983, 1991; Stark et al., 2000) this may open up the possibility for extensive critical debate surrounding the process of knowledge implementation and even the role of the student practitioner in bringing their understanding of recent developments to the practice environment.

Another important and related finding from this research concerns students' experiences of selecting suitable literature to support their discussions about theory and practice. As already discussed, participants in this study sometimes struggled to match theory to practice in hybrid style assignments (Bowman & Addyman, 2014b;

Gimenez, 2008) because of a perceived misalignment between taught principles and experiences in placements. Data from this research revealed the often complex and intricate decision-making processes that participants faced when selecting suitable evidence. This process was often described by students in terms of finding the best *fit* – in other words they were trying to find the closest *match* between literature and their experience. Comments from Jessie illustrated the potential complexities of this task when she said:

> 'I'm either trying to make it fit something I don't think it fits very well and you're trying to make those links and that your heart is saying actually it doesn't really fit and…that's not right, but you know your head is saying but I need to do this assignment and find a case to fit the theory to it'

Jessie seemed to sum up the tensions between a genuine desire to find sources that authentically reflected her experiences of practice (Craft, 2005; Dyment & O'Connell; Hilsdon, 2005) and the more instrumental requirement to address the assignment criteria (Cameron, 2012). Following on from discussions in the previous section about the possible imperfect alignment between theory and practice (Ousey & Gallagher, 2007) this sheds light on a process of compromise that students may feel obliged to enter into – seeking to be true to themselves but also needing to find good quality acceptable evidence to support their work (Ormstad, et al., 2021). In response to this dilemma, some participants adopted strategic approaches (Cameron, 2012; Faranda et al.,2020) to find the best possible match. Kit commented that 'you generally find something in the right ball-park area…something must fit…, so I will just go and look for it'. She seemed to acknowledge that a perfect match may not be achievable and aims instead for a strategic fit. Students were sensitive to issues of authenticity but often felt they had to prioritize marking criteria, particularly given the intensive nature of programmes (Bond, 2020). An additional finding that provided further insights into this decision-making process relates to the impact of *time* (Lemke, 2000) on writing about theory and *past* examples of practice.

This manifested itself firstly in a practical way with some students reporting problems of trying to match past events (where details had become rather hazy) with literature in their current assignments. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly it emerged from discussions with one participant that he was struggling to accurately capture, in writing, the precise interaction or sequence between theoretical input and placement practice. Ash observed how:

> 'trying to incorporate…theories that you are just learning about now…to an event that happened in the past…it's a bit weird because it is all after the fact…I can't say, I learned this and this because I'm only learning it now…so it kind of changes how you write it'

This insight adds a further layer of complexity to the process of selecting literature because it draws attention to *when* knowledge is gained in a cycle of learning (Murray, 2018). Like Jessie's earlier remarks regarding her dilemmas over choosing sources, Ash's comment appeared to spring from a concern about authenticity of representation. He seems uncomfortable with the idea of suggesting he had knowledge of a particular theory when the learning had in fact occurred at a later time (Lemke, 2000) after the practice. This finding points to the complexity of authentically conveying elements of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018) in hybrid assignments which require students to bring together knowledge and experiences from different contexts and across time frames (Gimenez, 2008). Further implications of these temporal shifts were highlighted by Jessie who felt that her perceptions of theories could change over time and therefore the connections she made between theory and practice may only have reflected a snapshot of her understanding (Lemke, 2000). She and Kelly also both believed that theory was open to interpretation by individual practitioners, challenging the idea of an unequivocal, universal link between theory and practice, and promoting instead notions of professionals as agentive negotiators and even co-creators of knowledge (Reed, 2006; Robinson & Dearmon, 2013 Schön 1983,1991).

Student comments about the nature of the theory-practice relationship and the challenges they face in linking practice and evidence sit against the backdrop of broader debates within healthcare disciplines about the characterisation of different kinds of knowledge (Krishnan, 2009). During interviews participants highlighted something of a cognitive shift they experienced when moving between writing about theoretical and practical knowledge. Ash expressed this in the following way 'the 2 forms of writing require a different form of thinking…' This was echoed by Jessie when she said '...it's almost switching between the two sort of you know elements of your thinking'. Both participants seemed to feel a distinctive shift in their thinking processes when making these transitions and were eager to establish the appropriate balance between theoretical and practical content. In fact, this concern was echoed by all students who were careful to determine from assignment briefs exactly what proportion of theoretical and practical knowledge might be required. This was clearly in large part due to a desire to fulfil assignment criteria (Cameron, 2012), however concerns also seemed to echo elements of a broader debate within healthcare, (nursing in particular) concerning the precise disciplinary identity of subjects that are both theoretical and applied (Kaya, 2023; Motter, Hassler & Anthony, 2021; Oliveira, Dendasck & Oliveira, 2017; Pawlikowski, Rico & Van Sell, 2018; Peplau, 1988). Much of the literature in this area debates the extent to which health related disciplines should be characterised as science based (Pawlikowski et al. 2018) or more a combination of scientific and humanistic or caring skills (Kaya, 2023; Motter et al. 2021, Oliveira et al., 2017, Peplau, 1988). Such is the scale of the debate that some have even argued for a new designation of 'STEMPATHY' for nursing that recognises both its strong interdisciplinary science base and its dependence on humanistic caring skills (Davidson, 2019; Oerther, 2018).

Findings from this research also highlight the potential uncertainty over disciplinary status or identity amongst quite recently academized healthcare related subjects such as nursing, Speech Therapy and Social Work (Friedrichs & Schaub, 2011; Taylor, Irvine, Bradbury Jones & Mckenna, 2010). The relative newness of these disciplines combined with their interdisciplinary approaches to work may contribute to a less clearly defined professional and academic identity (Friedrichs and Schaub (2011; Northrup, Tschanz & Biasio, 2004). This sense of ambiguity is further exacerbated by a public perception of such roles which often prioritises humanistic and caring aspects of the role over science and qualifications (Griffiths et al. 2012). Gimenez (2012) also noted how subtle differences in epistemology between nursing and midwifery for example, could lead to equally subtle variations in the way in which disciplines encourage their students to frame different kinds of knowledge. In the case of nursing there is a greater emphasis on scientific knowledge whereas midwifery is more open to diverse ways of knowing (Gimenez, 2012).

Taken together, I believe these key findings relating to the perception of the theory-practice relationship, the challenges of establishing clear connections between practice and evidence and broader debates surrounding ambiguous disciplinary identity offer significant insights into often nuanced and challenging decision-making processes for HSC student writers when linking theory and practice. This discussion now turns its attention to other findings regarding professional identity formation and the acquisition of experience and the part they play in the overall development of writer identity.

Professional identity formation

A key finding from this research relates to the impact that professional identity formation has on experiences of writing and on the creation of voice. Whilst all university students may be navigating the challenges of developing an academic identity at university (Hyland, 2002b), Health and Social Care students are frequently in the early stages of forming new professional identities as well. With one notable exception, most participants in this research had either just started their Masters' programmes or were second year undergraduates and therefore still adjusting to their new professional identities. Whilst most reported occasional feelings of imposter phenomenon (Aubeeluck et al., 2016) as they entered unfamiliar professional settings for the first time, for some this was complicated by the challenges of moving from one professional identity to another (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). For example, Kit explained how she had just left a career in teaching to become a speech and language therapist and that she was finding it difficult to let go of her very familiar *teacher self* and to assume a much desired but still elusive sense of identity as a speech and language therapist (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018). Jessie was struggling with a slightly different aspect of professional identity transition, acknowledging that she had a bit of a 'chip on [her] shoulder' about the fact she had previously been a childminder and was moving into the area of Social Work. This meant, as she explained, that she felt rather self-conscious because of the perceived lower status of her previous role.

These experiences reflected well-documented challenges in the literature associated with transitions between professional identities (Brown et al.,2022; Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016), including a sense of loss (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018) when relinquishing a familiar and protective persona (Giles, 2020). Kit, Jessie, Frankie and Riley were all

very conscious of their status as newcomers to their respective professions and Jessie in particular had an acute sense of the professional journey she was on and how eventually she would stop being a '*student* social worker' or a '*newly qualified* social worker' and she would 'just be a social worker'. Part of a growing sense of professional identity formation (Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 2020; Fitzgerald, 2020; MacIntosh, 2003) also seemed to include an awareness of overlap between different aspects of identity. Ash observed how difficult it was sometimes to separate professional and personal identities because, as he explained, 'nursing engages you at such a personal level in terms of your emotions and personal qualities like compassion and things like that, it's very difficult to…separate the two things'. The tension between wanting to maintain a clear separation between work and homelife and the importance of compassion or empathy (Kaya, 2023; Motter et al. 2021, Oliveira et al., 2017, Peplau, 1988; Richards & Pilcher, 2018) are highlighted in Ash's words. Similarly, Kit voiced concerns about the overlap between her professional and personal identities and expressed her sense of vulnerability at not yet having developed a sufficiently robust and protective professional persona (Giles, 2020).

The early stages of professional development that most students in this project seemed to be experiencing, were sharply contrasted by one participant who possessed both many years of clinical and academic experience. In interview discussions, Kelly reflected (below) on the importance of her constantly developing professional experience (Murray, 2018) and clinical knowledge and the inevitable connection (as she saw it) with changes in her writing.

> ‘you’re learning all the time…we’re kind of working out who you want to be as a clinician and, naturally as you change, the way that you write changes with you’

Kelly’s comment seemed to highlight multiple issues – the importance of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Murray, 2018), the fluid and constant process of professional identity formation (Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 2020; Fitzgerald, 2020; MacIntosh, 2003) and perhaps most significantly for this research the link between professional experience and writing development (Allen et al. 1989; Mitchell et al. 2020). Kelly expanded on this latter point when she explained how her years of experience had made her feel more confident and authentic as a writer (Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001). In other words, she had mastered the art of observing academic and disciplinary conventions while simultaneously being able to convey something of her own identity (Hyland, 2010; Hutchings, 2014; Ivanič & Camps, 2001). She had also learned a great deal from writing professional texts in particular writing sensitive letters to her clients (Francis & Robertson, 2023). Such was her own confidence and assuredness as a writer that she no longer feared feedback from her lecturers because she saw them more as equals (Hyland, 2002c) and so had a changed sense of the power dynamics between herself and her readers (Ivanič, 1998). She also took a more philosophical view of the theory-practice relationship, believing that practice could not mirror theory because clinicians always place their own interpretation on theoretical principles (Schön 1983,1991).

The significance of these insights into different aspects and stages of professional identity formation is the potential impact they may have on the way students think about knowledge, theory and practice, their own role as practitioners, their relationship with their readers (2002b) and ultimately their own sense of identities (Ivanič, 1998). Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the less experienced participants were more

cautious about linking theory and practice (MacIntosh, 2003) about challenging the literature (Craft, 2005; Hilsdon, 2005) and generally eager to give markers what they were looking for (Cameron, 2012). There was also a sense amongst some participants of struggling to combine the different aspects of their professional identities in their writing. Jessie was very aware of competing voices or 'accents' as she was writing and sometimes struggled to present a unified sense of herself (Alvesson, 2010; Atewologun, 2016). Participants' experiences of moving between third and first person and using third person to write about their experiences also seemed to generate feelings of uncertainty amongst less experienced practitioners, raising questions about the representation of different aspects of their role (Richards & Pilcher, 2018). This particular issue will be explored in more detail in the next section of this chapter which discusses key findings from the analysis of student assignments.

Writing about theory and practice: Disciplinary practices and student experiences. Results from the analysis of writing samples submitted by participants revealed three significant findings. These related to considerable variations in practices concerning first and third person, the often-negative impact on students of shifting between impersonal references to theory and more personal accounts of professional practice and the challenges of using third person to discuss aspects of experience. Overall findings regarding pronoun use within the samples analysed presented a complex picture of practices which tended to diverge from more traditional characterisations of either the harder or softer sciences (Hyland, 2001b), revealing less rigid and more diverse patterns of usage (Heard, 2022; Hyland & Jiang, 2017). As participants chose samples of writing which had particular significance for them in relation to pronoun use, the examples spanned a wide range of assignment types, including

case studies, critical incident analysis and formative reflections. Some participants were prompted to share pieces because they had been the focus of some controversy (e.g. use of first person had reduced their mark) or because they wanted me to see the variation of requirements that existed (e.g. an analytical reflective report written entirely in third person). This meant that the samples offered a unique and often personal insight into the ways students wrote about theory and practice on their courses.

Where first and third person were combined in essays, it was possible to identify a tendency in Adult Nursing, Speech and Language Therapy and Clinical Psychology scripts for a restrained use of personal pronouns (e.g. I, my, me). In other words, assignments generally privileged third person with smaller pockets of first person to briefly exemplify links to practice (Fulbrook, 3003). However, this pattern of controlled pronoun use was sharply contrasted by two Social Work assignments where ‘I’ and ‘my’ were used extensively and often combined with significant use of third person alternatives such as ‘the practitioner’. This research acknowledges the many variables highlighted by other studies that can affect pronoun use such as the rhetorical requirements of different text types (Tanguay et al. 2020); advice of style guides (Cameron, 2012; Hyland, 2002b); student uncertainties about conventions and conflicting advice from lecturers (Hyland 2002b); the personal preferences of student writers (Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001) and even notions of elitism that discourage the use of ‘I’(Cameron, 2012). However, against this already complex backdrop, findings from this research suggest that the unique and more recently formed and forming epistemological positions and status of health care related subjects may also affect writing practices.

As discussed earlier, the complex debates surrounding the applied or theoretical status of nursing, for example, (Rizzo Parse, 2015) and whether it is more epistemologically rooted in science or in art (e.g., Kaya, 2023; Motter, Hassler & Anthony, 2021; Olivera et al., 2017; Pawlikowski et al., 2018; Peplau, 1988) may also play a part in the considerable variation in approaches to pronoun use. The extent to which disciplines and individual lecturers assign value to theoretical and applied elements of subjects may result in significant writing variations within and between health-related subjects (Becher and Trowler, 2001). In this respect findings concur with Gimenez (2012) who highlights the often-subtle epistemological variations that exist between closely aligned subjects (e.g. midwifery and social work). However, findings from this research also suggest that the relative newness of health-related disciplines perhaps gives rise to a degree of epistemological anxiety which is reflected in the range of conventions and also perhaps in the tension experienced by students as they endeavour to adopt the correct approaches in their writing (Cameron, 2012; Fulbrook, 2003). Participants in this study were often very concerned about losing marks due to 'incorrect' pronoun use and highly sensitive to negative feedback about this issue (Mitchell et al., 2020). The often-considerable tension that this subject appeared to generate seemed disproportionate in the context of the overall essay requirements and marking criteria. An additional and tentative finding from this research is therefore that broader disciplinary anxieties about the epistemological roots of their subjects may be surfacing in hybrid style assignments (Bowman & Addyman, 2014a). As students anxiously debate whether to use 'I' or not in their essays, perhaps they are unwittingly channelling more profound sector-wide questions about the value of personal ways of knowing versus more scientifically based knowledge (Reed, 2006; Schön 1983,1991).

Another key finding from this research relates to the effects on student writers of using and switching between first and third person in hybrid-style essays. Results from both the initial survey and later interviews revealed that most student writers found this transition challenging. The main reasons for this appeared to be the shift in thinking processes needed to move from first to third and the difficulties posed by using third person when writing about emotionally charged events. Results therefore provide insights into the precise challenges faced by HSC students when navigating the complex functions of first and third person forms.

Like the earlier studies of Hyland (2002a) and Tang and Johns (1999) this research identified numerous functions of 'I' in samples from HSC students. However, a key finding from this study relates to the often-complex uses of 'I' in hybrid-style writing that combines references to theory and professional experience. It soon became apparent that the framework for analysis that had been based on elements from both Hyland and Tang and John's studies, with an additional category relating to 'personal and professional development', was insufficiently nuanced to capture the complexities of first-person pronoun use in hybrid-style HSC texts. Instances of purely descriptive and broadly reflective uses of 'I' were easy to identify, but on closer analysis, the reflective uses of 'I' often merged subjective claims about personal/professional achievements with references to theory. As well as the difficulties of categorising different uses of 'I' in some of the samples, it was also interesting to note how third person structures, more usually associated with discussions surrounding theory, could also, on occasions, be a requirement for exploring individual practice and reflections (Gimenez, 2008; Mitchell, 2017). Consequently, findings not only highlight a wide variety of pronoun patterns across assignments, but also often unique and complex functions associated with first

person ‘I’ and third person structures. In fact, participants related how they had been drawn to this research because of its focus on these issues.

One of the findings that echoed across this study was the *jarring* sensation that some participants seemed to experience in transitioning from first to third in hybrid style assignments. Ash summed this up when he referred to it as being similar to ‘flipping a switch’, in other words the suddenness of the change and the lack of any ‘gradual shift’ seemed to affect writers. This could indeed partly be due to the linguistic challenges of moving between first and third personal structures (Ryan, 2011), but participant reactions often appeared to reflect something deeper than a surface language issue . In fact, when discussing their attitudes, four of the participants linked the shift between third and first to *different ways of thinking*. This seems to reflect the debates that Schön (1983,1991) initiated three decades ago and that continue to resonate through the literature relating to the nature of knowledge in health professions (Pawlikowski et al., 2018). The physical quality of practice versus the cooler cognitive nature of theory was summed up by Kit when she said, ‘theory is two dimensional, but practice is 3D or even 4D’. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly why participants seemed to experience *a* jarring sensation as they moved from first to third but findings from across this research tentatively point to a number of possible factors. Firstly, the disconnect that some participants reported between theory and practice (Mahmoud, 2014) and the varying characterisations of this dynamic (Gallagher, 2004) may play a part in this. Also, the epistemological *handbrake turn* that occurs when students shift from thinking intellectually about theory to accessing factual memories of physically and emotionally charged real-life experiences (Van Manen & Li, 2002) could also be contributing to this jarring sensation. Finally, the format of the hybrid-style assignment itself and the way it frequently privileges third

person over first (Carel & Kidd, 2014; Fulbrook, 2003) may also be a factor. In other words, if writers are predominantly encouraged to value scientific or theoretical knowledge over personal knowing (Carel & Kidd, 2014; Reed, 2006; Schön, 1983, 1991) it is perhaps unsurprising that when the two occasionally meet on the page there may be an awkward moment as science briefly gives way to experience.

Another finding from this research relates to negative experiences of using third person to write about more reflective and personal elements of practice experienced by some participants (Gimenez, 2008; Lea & Street, 1998; Mitchell, 2017). This was summed up by Frankie when she said,'...it just seems so ridiculous that we feel the need to go and use this cold third person tone when we are talking about such personal and yeah but human things'. Of course, a key aim of reflective writing more generally is to step back from incidents (Tanquay et al., 2020) in order to view them objectively. However, the occasional requirement within assignments to use third person to reflect on practice prompted strong feelings amongst some participants. One explained the difficulties of using third person to talk about an incident that she had been emotionally invested in. Another explained how using third person in this way had made her passionate about wanting (at some point in the future) to write a book, adopting a more natural style that would make it accessible for those both inside and outside the profession (Molinari, 2022).

The negative reaction of some students to the overly rigid nature of reflective models (Wood, 2018) and in this specific instance to the requirement to avoid first person forms (Gimenez, 2008) highlights the challenges of accurately representing (in writing) disciplinary knowledge that combines both science and empathy (Davidson, 2019; Richards & Pilcher, 2018). Using third person in this way seems to exemplify

positivistic Deweyan (1933) principles of applying scientific approaches to the analysis of experience, and participants' resistance to this once again raises broader questions about attitudes to knowledge within health-related disciplines (Kaya, 2023; Motter et al. 2021, Oliveira et al., 2017, Peplau, 1988). Although similar in some ways to the earlier findings regarding the jarring sensation experienced when *moving between* third and first person, participant reactions to using third person to write about experience differed slightly, but significantly. There was a sense of concern, even sadness, that poignant experiences were being reduced, as they saw it, to such cold emotionless language. Perhaps, even more than the juxtaposition of third and first, the imposition of third person on personal often emotional experiences symbolises the struggle between science and personal or empathetic ways of knowing. The final part of this discussion will focus on findings concerning the impact of writing practices on participants' own sense of identity.

Individual writer identity

Findings from this study show how participant responses to writing practices and conventions were often uniquely personal. Like the students in Gimenez's (2008) research some participants felt conventions were constraining. For Frankie the formality of academic writing did not fit with her own sense of writing identity, and she was eager to develop a more natural style using first person pronouns. Similarly, Kit felt that academic writing was 'artificial' and did not reflect her more naturally creative writing identity (Molinari, 2022). She was very aware of the need to assess written work (Cameron, 2012) and was a highly strategic student (Faranda et al. 2021) but would have preferred to express her thoughts and reflections about practice as a poem (Cronin & Hawthorne, 2018; English, 2011). Like, Kit, Riley also enjoyed creative writing and had a very strong sense of the separation between writing for

university and writing for fun. Having been schooled in the USA she noted how she was very uncomfortable using 'I' in academic essays, for two reasons. Firstly, her previous schooling had emphasised the formal, third-person nature of academic writing and secondly, her 'first-person persona' was very much part of her creative writing (for fun), and she wanted to keep the two separate. In fact, she explained how combining first and third person in hybrid assignments felt like 'oil and water' and made her .'cringe' because it felt so unacademic and as though her previous education was being devalued (Hyland, 2002b, 2005; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996).

Ash also appeared to prefer his third-person voice but seemed less personally affected by issues around writer identity generally, adopting a more strategic approach to his studies (Cameron, 2012). By contrast, for Jessie, issues of voice seemed to revolve predominantly around assimilating different parts of her professional identity (Sims, 2011). She described the various aspects of her role as being like 'a daughter and a mother and a sister and a wife'. With echoes of Bakhtin's (1981) multi-voiced theory of language, Jessie explained how each part of her role was like a different 'accent' which she sometimes struggled to combine into one unified voice or identity. Finally, Kelly seemed to be most at ease with her academic writer identity. As previously noted, her combined clinical and academic experiences, meant that she viewed her lecturers more as equals (Hyland, 2002c) and was therefore less concerned about writing what she thought they wanted to see (Cameron, 2012) and more comfortable establishing a strong professional and authorial voice. She had reconciled the theory-practice relationship as one where theory only provided a starting point that could be interpreted in many different ways. She felt her knowledge base gave her freedom to confidently express her identity

through well-supported arguments and in particular through her choices of evidence (Hyland, 2010; Hutchings, 2014).

Taken together, findings from this research point to the multilayered challenges that HSC students face when writing about theory and practice in hybrid-style assignments. These findings provide new perspectives on the way in which conceptualisations of the nature of theory and its translation into practice may affect students' fundamental perceptions of this relationship, their role within it and their approaches to writing about it. These findings also point to the complexities of negotiating different aspects of professional identities in writing and the extra responsibility this places on HSC student writers at university. Finally, insights from this research shed light on a significant range of language practices used in hybrid style writing, specifically third and first-person forms, and their effects on student writers. Overall, therefore, these findings make visible the perhaps overlooked challenges and complexities of linking theory and practice in HSC assignments at university.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUTRUE DIRECTIONS

This thesis set out to examine the experiences of Health and Social Care student writers at university with a particular focus on their perceptions of the common assessment requirement within health-related programmes to link theory and practice. The individual papers at the heart of this thesis, addressed three interconnected questions relating, firstly to the nature of the theory practice relationship, secondly to the role of professional identity formation in shaping voice and finally to the impact on students of writing practices in hybrid-style assignments that combine first and third person structures. By exploring participants' attitudes to these questions, the individual papers have contributed to an overall thesis which provides insights into a number of important issues. These include the complex conceptualisations and often contested nature of the relationship between theory and practice; intricate attitudes to the framing of knowledge within HSC disciplines; the practical and conceptual difficulties of linking real-life practice to literature; the impact of professional development formation and theoretical and experiential knowledge acquisition on writer development and finally, the varied writing practices associated with hybrid-style assignments, with a particular focus on participants' perceptions of switching between first and third person and writing impersonally about emotionally-charged experiences. This final chapter therefore begins with a summary of key findings and then moves on to provide an overview of methodological, theoretical and practical contributions of the overall thesis, recommendations for future research and finally some closing remarks on the significance of this research.

Summary of key findings

One of the principal research questions motivating this project related to students' perceptions of the theory-practice relationship and how, as writers, they reconciled any discrepancies between classroom based learning and practical experiences on placement. The results reveal how participants (especially those less experienced) often felt that theory and practice failed to match up and that this led to particular challenges in their writing. This sense of disconnection between theory and practice was vividly summed up by Kit when she said:

> 'They're different things…I don't know how it would be possible to combine them, because you know…theory is two dimensional…but practice is you know 3D or even 4D …with the water coming at you in the cinema...they're different dimensions'

As well as this perception of a fundamental mismatch between theory and practice, research carried out revealed other practical challenges associated with linking theory and practice such as finding good quality literature that closely reflected practical experiences and difficulties when linking past experiences with more recently learned theory. There were also challenges, particularly for less experienced practitioners, when writing about practices that did not perfectly reflect theoretical principles. All of these findings shed light on the realities of linking theory and practice and therefore add to our understanding of student writer experiences. However, one of the most significant contributions of this research is to highlight ways in which the underlying conceptualisation of theory and practice impacts not only on the way students write about this relationship, but also how they see themselves in relation to it.

Depending on the particular framing of theory and practice, for example as a top-down application of knowledge; a dialogue between researchers and practitioners or

as a complex process of translation and even interpretation, this will have a significant impact on the way students feel and write about the relationship. All participants acknowledged some degree of misalignment between theory and practice, but it was their reaction to this phenomenon that revealed deeper assumptions about the nature of the relationship and ultimately the value placed on different ways of knowing. For some the 'gap', as they saw it, between theory and practice was highly negative and meant that they were often disappointed when their experience failed to match the input they had received from lectures. The ripple effect of this particular conceptualisation of theory and practice was that some participants felt they could not be entirely transparent about their own experiences of practice in case it negatively affected their marks. It also meant that they sometimes struggled to find what they believed ought to be a perfect fit between experience and literature, requiring them instead to adopt more strategic criteria driven approaches. This significant finding reveals the power of underpinning conceptualisations of theory and practice to affect students' perceptions of this fundamental relationship and their place within it. A key contribution of this research therefore has been to establish a link between challenges experienced by writers when combining theory and practice in assignments and the profoundly complex question of the how the theory-practice relationship should or could be conceptualised.

Another question this research sought to address relates to the way professional identity formation and in particular, the acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge over time, affects the development of voice amongst HSC student writers. Key findings revealed the many practical and identity-related challenges associated with professional identity formation and the overall impact this had on participants' development as professionals and as writers. Results pointed to the

very real challenges students faced when trying to establish themselves in new professional areas. Participants spoke of their difficulties in transitioning from one profession to another and of feelings of imposter phenomenon and of not fitting in. Findings also revealed the overlapping nature of professional and personal lives and the difficulties this raised for participants as they attempted to keep their personal and professional personas separate. There was a sense amongst some participants of the immersive nature of placements and the impact this was having on their growing sense of professional identity. For some their professional role was complex and multifaceted. This was summed up by Jessie when she described different aspects of her professional identity as being like 'a daughter and a mother and a sister and a wife'. She spoke of the challenges that these multiple identities posed for her as a writer as she attempted to combine these different 'accents' into one unified voice.

As well as enhancing our understanding of the pressures on HSC students as they move between university and placements, this research has highlighted the importance of experience or practice in the development of knowledge and writing confidence. Uniquely, the participants represented different stages of professional and academic development. Some were extremely accomplished academically but had only just started their professional programmes while others were more experienced practitioners but less confident as writers. By contrast, one participant was both an experienced practitioner and an accomplished writer and spoke passionately about the connection, as she saw it, between experience and an ability to develop a genuine and confident voice as a writer. She believed strongly that as she changed as a professional, so her writing changed with her.

These findings therefore point to the additional challenges that HSC student writers face when trying to establish a sense of academic voice at university. They are not just learning about disciplinary academic writing conventions in the classroom, they are immersed in new professional environments, dealing with multiple practical, professional and personal challenges. It seems inevitable, therefore, that this complex and ongoing process of professional identity formation is inextricably linked to students' experiences of writing and their own sense of identity as student writers. Another significant contribution of this research therefore is to make more visible the impact of placements and professional identity formation on HSC writers and to draw attention to the challenges of navigating multiple identities or 'accents' when writing about theory and practice.

Another key question that motivated this research concerned the use of particular third and first-person structures in hybrid style writing, how these forms affected student writers and what they potentially said about underlying epistemological assumptions within the field of Health and Social Care related subjects. Key findings revealed that first- and third-person usage varied considerably from assignment to assignment and sometimes from lecturer to lecturer, that student writers often found it hard to move between first and third person in the same assignment and that they frequently struggled to write about emotionally charged events using third person structures. Although precise practices of pronoun use varied significantly, results also pointed to the general privileging of third person over first person in hybrid style assignments. A surprising discovery from this research is the strength of participant feelings when switching between first and third person which was variously described as 'jarring' like 'flicking a switch' and like trying to combine 'oil and water'. Reactions to using third person to write about difficult professional experiences were

even stronger and summed up by Frankie when she said,'...it just seems so ridiculous that we feel the need to go and use this cold third person tone when we are talking about such personal and yeah but human things'.

Clearly participants found these common rhetorical practices challenging and it could be argued that the linguistic difficulties alone might concern student writers. However, important findings from this research point to another possible cause and that is the relationship between linguistic conventions and complex disciplinary epistemological positions. This research draws attention to the varying attitudes that exist within HSC subjects to different types of practical and theoretical knowledge. A combination of factors including the relative newness of some HSC fields within the academy, together with their inter-disciplinary approaches to working and their distinctive position as both theoretical and applied subjects leads to complex, often ambiguous, epistemological positions that may affect writing practices and student experiences. Findings highlight unusually strong feelings experienced by writers when switching between first person references to real-life practice and third-person accounts of theory or when required to write about emotive professional incidents using third person. In fact, such responses often appeared disproportionate in relation to possible linguistic and rhetorical issues but perhaps less surprising, when viewed from a different perspective.

A major contribution from this research therefore is to raise questions about the possible impact on student writers of the privileging of theory over practice in hybrid-style assignments with the underlying implications that this may have for the devaluing of personal knowledge and experience. The jarring feeling that students feel when moving from third to first person may therefore have a number of different

causes. Linguistic difficulties may be part of it, but this thesis argues that the entirely different epistemological positions or 'different ways of thinking' associated with theory and experience (echoing broader science versus arts debates in the wider sector) may help to explain the depth of student feelings. It is perhaps unsurprising that student writers experience a jolt when they move from discussions of 'two dimensional' theory to the immersive perhaps emotionally intense recollections of 'three or four dimensional practice'. The sense of indignation over using third person to discuss episodes from practice may also be more easily understood if viewed from an epistemological position. What participants seemed to be reacting to was the depersonalisation and marginalisation of clients' experiences as well as the undervaluing of practitioners' relationships with their clients. The conflation of impersonal language and often emotionally charged reflections may therefore symbolize deeper epistemological tensions within the wider discipline regarding attitudes to more personal ways of knowing. To sum up, as well as highlighting the more superficial challenges of varying practices regarding third and first-person forms, a major contribution of this research has been to draw attention to possible links between language forms and deeper more complex issues of epistemic asymmetry within Health and Social Care disciplines.

Taken together, findings from this research point to many factors that affect the overall shaping of individual writer identity including levels of professional and academic experience; strategic criteria driven approaches; rhetorical practices within HSC disciplines; and even competing identities as creative writers. However, the major contribution of this research project has been to shed light on deeper underlying issues relating to the effects of different conceptualisations of the theory-practice relationship and the impact of complex epistemological assumptions on

writing conventions and on students' own experiences of writing about theory and practice.

Methodological contributions including limitations

Before considering the broader methodological contributions of this thesis, a brief overview of the limitations of the research project will be provided. While this study provides valuable insights into aspects of HSC student writer, it is limited by a number of factors. These relate to commonly perceived limitations of phenomenological approaches and case study research design which will be discussed briefly but also relate to some specific issues concerning the design of analytical frameworks for hybrid style/reflective writing.

Firstly, in relation to criticisms frequently levelled at phenomenological research approaches and a case study methodology (Flyvbjerg, 2006), there are potential risks in overstating the findings from small scale research projects that rely so heavily on insights provided by relatively small numbers of participants. Furthermore, there is the additional risk that the researcher's interpretation of insights may inadvertently reflect their own individual biases and value judgements. In relation to the typically smaller sample sizes used in interpretivist research, I would like to make a case for the uniquely valuable nature of the case study in this project. Those that responded to the invitation to participate were particularly drawn to issues surrounding third- and first-person usage and the difficulties of reconciling theory, practice and identity in their writing. Together they represented different subject areas as well as varying levels of professional and academic experience and had uniquely personal stories to tell about linking theory and practice in assignments.

As half the group also pursued creative writing activities, they possessed an extraordinary facility to articulate complex, often abstract concepts relating to writing, language and identity. They were therefore uniquely positioned to put into words issues concerning hybrid writing that other student writers may also have experienced but perhaps were less able to express. In that sense, I viewed the participants in many ways as representatives or spokespersons for their peers who brought disproportionate levels of insight and knowledge to this study.

With regards to concerns about interpretation of data, a number of approaches have been employed to mitigate potential issues (see pp.83-86). These have included the rigorous analysis of data from interviews, surveys and writing samples and the constant ethical reflections throughout the study on the possible impact of my own positionality on issues explored. Perhaps one of the most important ethical safeguards behind this research has been my total commitment to honouring the extraordinary participant insights by interpreting them as honestly and authentically as I can. Finally, there were a number of limitations in the analytical framework used to explore functions of personal pronouns in hybrid-style assignments. Although efforts were made to adapt the existing theoretical frameworks of Hyland (2002a) and Tang and John (1999) and to add an additional reflective category, this proved to be insufficiently delicate to capture complex patterns of pronoun use in HSC writing. What emerged from the research was that the range of pronoun use in assignments differed considerably from more common rhetorical practices in non-health related subject areas. This research therefore highlights the need to design a bespoke framework which takes into account the particular issues (e.g. conceptualisations of theory-practice, epistemological debates) that may affect writing practices in health-

related subject areas. The creation of such a tailored framework would greatly facilitate further research into writing practices within health-related subjects.

Turning to the positive methodological contributions of this research, it is possible to identify a number of ways in which the phenomenological approaches adopted across the studies have helped to uncover significant and often unique insights into HSC students' experiences of writing about theory and practice. By taking a phenomenological approach the focus was on *how* different participants experienced or lived (Vagle, 2014) the phenomenon of *linking* theory and practice. This approach, therefore, allowed for a slowing down of the research process in order see exactly what it meant to *link* theory to practice. The aim of phenomenological approaches is generally to 'look at what we usually look through' (Sokolowski, 2000 cited in Vagle, 2014, p.80) and I feel this was successfully achieved by homing in on the perhaps overlooked phenomenon of *linking* theory and practice and by magnifying issues associated with this common assessment requirement. This research project also benefitted from the naturally inductive nature of phenomenological research approaches. For example, in-depth interviews raised issues (e.g. the importance of professional identity formation) that might not have been anticipated to form a major part of the research but subsequently became central to understanding participants' experiences of theory, practice and identity formation (Fitzgerald, 2020; Sarraf-Yazdi et al. 2021; Mitchell et al. 2020). Therefore, without the openness of approach that phenomenology affords, key issues may have been missed.

Finally, the nuanced nature of insights gathered from participants regarding their experiences of linking theory and practices also indirectly reflected back on lecturers

and on Academic Skills/EAP tutors like me. For example, understanding how different participants lived their experience of writing about theory and practice has enabled me to look at my position through an entirely new lens. Part of my role is to help students to develop an understanding of the way discourse works in their disciplines. In order to achieve this, I also need to have an insider's perspective on writing practices shaped by underpinning epistemological assumptions and the value placed on specific kinds of knowledge. However, given the often-marginalised position of EAP tutors operating on the edges of the disciplines (Ding & Bruce, 2017; Fitzpatriick, Costley & Tavakoli, 2022) it raises significant questions about the extent to which professionals in my ambiguous role can offer meaningful support needed by students. EAP tutors are often characterised as a 'butler' in the service of the disciplines (Raimes, 1991, cited in Ding & Bruce, 2017, p.9) rather than contributors to the academic field of study, thereby limiting their influence over matters of student writers' experiences within the disciplines. Ironically, therefore, the ambiguous, outsider position of my own role may hinder my capacity to support students in their quest to become insiders in their own communities of discourse. In conclusion, the phenomenological design of this study contributed significantly to the unique nature of insights gathered about students' experiences of combining theory and practice with implications for my own role and those of subject lecturers.

Theoretical contributions

Before exploring the practical implications of findings from this research project, this section considers the theoretical contributions of the overall thesis. As noted in the previous discussions regarding methodology, the openness afforded by the phenomenological design of the project leant itself to an inductive theoretical

approach. In other words, my own preconceptions about possible theoretical perspectives to employ were bracketed (Vagle, 2014) in order to allow for an open, fresh and unhindered analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. In reality this meant that I was open to new theoretical perspectives that might be suggested during the process of the research. Because writer identity was from the onset of the project an important issue to explore, the extensive (and contested) body of literature that exists on this subject provided an essential lens through which to consider issues relating to writer identity amongst HSC student writers. However, what emerged from the survey and the interview data was the extent to which issues concerning professional identity formation and sector perspectives on the relationship between theory and practice and epistemological positions were also central to understanding HSC student writers' experiences. Whilst the more general literature relating to writer identity offered insightful theories regarding the often constructed, multilayered, unequal and contested nature of writer identity, the decision to include theoretical perspectives relating to theory and practice, workplace identities and epistemological assumptions added a more delicate finely calibrated lens through which to examine and interpret HSC student writers' experiences.

I believe that this unique synthesis of theoretical perspectives created a space for voices to be presented in a more rounded and professionally contextualised way that helped to shed light on real issues relating to writing in HSC subjects. My thesis is therefore making a case for a more holistic theoretical view of writers in the discipline that takes into account the fast-paced highs and lows of working in different and challenging placement settings and the difficulties of capturing complex experiences of practice and theory in hybrid-style assignments. In particular the identity work perspectives that have been drawn upon in this thesis lend insights into the realities

of managing multiple work identities as well as dealing with emotionally complex feelings about belonging in the ever-changing landscape of the health-related professions. In conclusion, I believe my particular synthesis of theoretical approaches provides not only an analysis of relevant abstract theories about the nature of theory, practice, identity and epistemology but also a deeply personal and more humanistic lens through which to understand HSC student writer experiences.

Implications for practice and research

Findings from this research have longer-term implications for debates within the field of Health and Social Care concerning attitudes to the conceptualisation of the theory practice relationship and the framing of knowledge more broadly, however this section will focus on the more immediate implications for teaching and learning practices at the level of the disciplines. It therefore offers a number of practical suggestions in relation to course design and assessment with specific reference to the framing of theory and practice; the interconnected development of professional/writer identity and writing practices associated with linking theory and experience. Although this section focuses largely on recommendations for *lecturers* involved in setting hybrid style assignments, these are the kind of conversations I would welcome having with lecturer colleagues in my capacity as an EAP/Academic Skills Tutor (Fitzpatrick, Costley & Tavakoli, 2022). I am, of course, very sensitive to the limitations of my own role, as noted earlier (p.14 & p.237), and realise such collaborations may require considerable shifts in the way academic writing support is viewed (Ding & Bruce, 2017; Fitzpatriick, Costley & Tavakoli, 2022). However, in the meantime, I take comfort from knowing that significant insights gained from this research project have already brought invaluable new perspectives to my own role

working with students in group settings and on a one-to-one basis and will therefore have a major impact on my own practices. I also hope that through dissemination of findings from this research that I may begin to build stronger relationships with lecturer colleagues, thereby creating a space for ongoing discussions about writing practices raised in this research. This section now turns to consider a number of possible practical implications from this research beginning with approaches to characterisations of the theory practice relationship.

This research suggests that the conceptualisation or framing of the theory-practice dynamic may impact not only student perceptions of this relationship and their role within it, but also their attitudes to writing about it in hybrid-style assignments. Particularly amongst less experienced student practitioner writers, the notion that there should be an unequivocal and direct link between theoretical input and practice often presented a dilemma when writing assignments. In other words, if participants had experienced a mismatch between theory and practice, they could either acknowledge it and perhaps (as they saw it) risk a lower grade, or they could present the expected link in their assignment and manage the potential feelings of disappointment (e.g. failures in own practice), dissonance (e.g. theory and practice misalignment) and maybe even a sense of the undervaluing of their personal knowledge.

A key recommendation emerging from the work in this thesis would therefore be to explore possible framings of the theory practice relationship with students as part of their course input and to rehearse with them the implications of each possible conceptualisation. For example, if theory and practice are characterised as elements that should align, it may be helpful to anticipate how students should react

when gaps appear in this relationship allowing time to consider the possible personal, professional and academic implications of this. Each conceptualisation of the relationship (e.g. science-based; dialogic, complimentary) is likely to have different implications for student practitioners in terms of the way they see themselves and their roles, the degree of agency they have as practitioners; the extent to which they are involved in the implementation and even creation of knowledge and ultimately in the way they characterise theory and practice in their writing. By exploring possible framings in this way, it is hoped that student writers may feel more able to manage and rationalise any discrepancies between theory and practice as practitioners and therefore and most significantly for this research as writers as well. This may help to address surface anxieties about how to write acceptably in terms of assignment criteria but more significantly perhaps it would encourage discussions about attitudes to theoretical and practical or personal knowledge and how student writers might achieve a satisfactory balance between meeting criteria and being true to themselves and their patients/clients.

As student experiences of placements may be comparatively short, offering only a snapshot in time of the knowledge creation and implementation cycle, another recommendation from this research would be (if it is not already a feature of programmes) a greater focus on the *knowledge translation or interpretation process* itself. In other words, by exploring with students the complexities of 'applying' knowledge in practice, it would allow for valuable discussions concerning the journey of new ideas and innovations from research to practical settings. This would encourage discussions about the framing of knowledge (e.g. top-down linear models vs. constructed and embodied or tacit characterizations) providing an opportunity to explore the implication of different framings of knowledge in terms of their integration

into practice. With an improved awareness of the many intermediaries involved in this process and the challenges of multiple interpretations of new knowledge, it may help student-practitioners to develop a more realistic picture of the cyclical nature of the theory-practice relationship. As a result, students may be able to view any so-called gaps in practice from a more informed position about the realities of making changes in professional settings. What student writers perceive as a gap between theory and practice may indeed be part of a longer protracted complex process of change requiring co-operation from and negotiation with multiple intermediaries. It is not suggested that this will account for all discrepancies between theory and practice, but it may help to provide student writers with more tools to rationalise this complex relationship.

Having established the groundwork in terms of possible characterizations of the theory practice relationship and rehearsed the implications of different stances, another recommendation from this research would be to discuss the implications that this more nuanced view of the theory practice dynamic may have for the practical issues of linking experiences to literature. For example, it might be possible to reassure students that the links or 'fit' between literature and experience are unlikely to be perfect. Due to the complexities of the research-practice feedback loop, some literature may not even yet be available to report on the effectiveness of more recent innovations in practice, and available literature may contain particular interpretations of data or author stances that require some unpicking. The findings from this research suggest that it would be helpful to debunk the notion of a 'perfect fit' between literature and experience and instead to promote the idea of thoughtful, authentic alignments between experience and literature which may include discussions of divergence as well as convergence between research and practice.

Furthermore, as findings from this research suggested that participants often struggled to link past experience with more recently learned theory, another recommendation would be to discuss with student-writers the implications of this. For example, on a practical level, it may help students to maintain informal personal journals about events from practice so that they have a clear record of details to consult later on. The more complex issue of discussing past experience in relation to recently learnt theory, may require some discussion with lecturers about the framing of time shifts within experiential learning. Helping students to explore possible approaches to representing learning that has occurred in a non-linear way (i.e. practice before theory) may once again alleviate certain writer anxieties about the authentic representation of learning across time.

Moving onto consider the implication of findings for writing practices, this study highlights specific challenges experienced by student writers when shifting between first and third person and also when required to adopt third person structures to discuss more affective elements of professional practice. A recommendation from this research would therefore be to include in the briefing of hybrid-style assignments a clear emphasis on use of third and first person as well as the possibility for discussion of student experiences of writing in first and third person. From a practical point of view, student writers would welcome a clear indication of when and where to use first and third to allay fears about losing marks. However, and perhaps more importantly an open discussion about the way students *feel* when writing in first and third would allow for an airing of multiple issues including practical and linguistic challenges; identity-related concerns, as well as any strong personal reactions to particular rhetorical practices such as using third person to reflect on practice. This kind of open discussion could provide a safe place to discuss more personal,

practice and identity related issues, as well as touching upon some deeper epistemological questions surrounding the value placed on science-based formal knowledge versus informal, personal or tacit knowledge. Particularly for newer student-practitioners, opportunities to explore the connections between writing practices and the complex debates they embody may help to address multiple anxieties relating to both practice and writing.

Another related recommendation would be that individual lecturers shared with their students a sense of their own epistemological leanings. For example, it may help students to know where lecturers stand on the personal knowledge versus science debate and how individual stances may subtly affect lecturers' expectations of pronoun use in hybrid assignments. A greater awareness of epistemological variations amongst lecturers, as well as in the broader discipline and ultimately within the wider sector may help students to make sense of different attitudes to theoretical and practical knowledge and how these might affect writing practices and expectations. By situating hybrid assignments within broader debates about theory, practice and attitudes to knowledge, it is hoped that students will begin to develop a sense of their own roles within the theory-practice relationship. Crucially, such discussions may also allow for deeper examination of the way in which student practitioners frame themselves as either agentive co-creators and negotiators of knowledge or more passive receivers of knowledge and how these framings may change over time. Further exploration of the implications of these positions in relation to professional identity and ultimately writer identity may help to support student practitioners as they navigate the complexities of the theory-practice dynamic. By rehearsing the possible implications of different perspectives in this way, students (particularly those less experienced) may feel less anxious about the

way they present theory and practice in their writing and may also cope better with any perceived undervaluing of personal knowledge and experience.

A related recommendation would be to experiment on occasions, with separating (in writing) the representation of different ways of knowing. Whilst the hybrid style assignment is a well-established and valuable feature of many health-related assessment programmes, this research suggests that students often struggle to switch between formal science-based thinking and more reflective or experience-oriented writing. Although the negotiation of this complex relationship sits at the very heart of health-related subjects and is therefore an essential task, this research suggests that an occasional freeing from the difficulties of linking theory and practice might represent a welcome release. For some participants, even reflective writing (e.g. following reflective models) felt restrictive and did not give them the freedom to express their feelings about practice more honestly. This thesis suggests therefore that a useful distinction could be made between assignments that combine theory and reflection on practice and more empathetic or pathic writing. As some participants were confused about the formal nature of reflective writing with its surprisingly positivist origins, opportunities to write more freely about emotional responses to practice (with no links to theory), may provide some students with a welcome alternative. This kind of pathic expression (Van Manen & Li, 2002) could take multiple forms such as journals, poems, paintings, but the underlying essence of it would be, if desired by the student, to express feelings about practice in an open and transparent way. This research recommends that such accounts may be shared but would not benefit from being formally assessed as this would interfere with the integrity of the exercise.

Another suggestion emerging from this research would be to experiment with unassessed small group-based opportunities to *discuss* rather than write about reflections on practice. As one participant who had experience of such activities noted, this kind of approach provided a safe space to talk about anomalies between theory and practice and was more in keeping with the notion of fluid on-going reflections on practice. Rather than pinning down a reflection, in writing, which may only represent a single moment in the evolution of the reflective process, speaking about it instead, in a supportive environment may allow issues and questions to breathe, with the additional advantage of receiving real time supportive feedback and guidance from classmates and teaching staff.

Another key finding from this study relates to the role of professional identity formation in the overall writing experiences and shaping of voice amongst health and social care students at university. Unlike their contemporaries on non-vocational programmes HSC students are simultaneously developing professional and academic identities which this study suggests adds not only a complicating practical dimension to the student experience but also affects writing development and identity. Recommendations from this research therefore point to a number of possible practical implications including a greater focus within degree programmes on 1) *how* to create a new professional identity from scratch, 2) the effects of previous professional identities on this process, 3) what to expect at different stages of the professional identity process, 4) dealing with imposter syndrome; 5) how to manage multiple overlapping identities (personal, professional, academic) in reality and in writing, 6) understanding the relationship between experience (practical knowledge acquisition) and confidence in practice and in writing, 7) the role of time (or lack of it) in the development of knowledge and confidence and finally, 8) the

connection between a developing sense of professional identity and the ability to write with greater confidence.

What this research highlights is the close link between professional identity formation and writer identity development. Given the compressed nature of courses or as one participant called it 'the academic bullet train' this research suggests that a closer examination of the reality of the professional identity formation process and how and where it might intersect with writing development and voice creation would benefit student writers. This would offer opportunities to discuss the real and multifaceted challenges associated with professional identity development, thereby, once again, hopefully allaying anxieties that student practitioners may be experiencing. As some participants seemed to experience placements as immersive roller coaster events, it may be helpful to situate them in the broader context of ongoing professional identity development as well as allowing students to develop a more realistic sense of their simultaneous and interconnected development as writers.

Recommendations for future research

This research has helped to extend understanding about students' experiences of linking theory and practice whilst at the same time drawing attention to other interesting and potentially valuable areas for future research. Although the scope of this thesis did not extend to gathering data from teaching staff, future projects might usefully focus on lecturer perceptions of hybrid style writing. This would provide invaluable insights into individual and disciplinary attitudes to some of the questions explored in this study. Additionally, if any recommendations made in this research were implemented by teaching staff (e.g. discussions about theory-practice

conceptualisations, attitudes to knowledge, experiments with pathic writing or spoken reflections) a further follow-up project to gauge impact would help to advance understanding of student writer experiences.

Final thoughts

This research project was borne out of my own experiences of working closely with Health and Social Care students in a professional capacity as an Academic Skills Tutor. Listening to the kind of challenges students faced when trying to link theory and practice and the tensions surrounding pronoun use in these hybrid-style assignments prompted this research. Health-related programmes are often designed with the specific goal of providing theoretical classroom-based input as well opportunities to work in different placements as a way of equipping graduates for their future roles in professional settings. It is therefore logical that programmes should seek to measure students' developing understanding of the relationship between theory and practice by setting assignments that require them to explore links between theory and their own experiences of placement. However, what this research has revealed is perhaps the surprisingly multilayered practical, conceptual, linguistic, epistemological and identity-related challenges that these assignments embody. Indeed, the hybrid essay could be viewed as a microcosm of numerous debates relating to the relationship between theory and practice, attitudes to theoretical and practical knowledge, the nature of professional and writer identity formation and finally the use of first versus third person forms in writing that links theory and practice. The more detailed challenges associated with these issues have been explored in separate articles but what they point to collectively is a uniquely complex task for student writers.

Almost four decades ago, Bartholomae (1986, p.4) observed how every time a student sat down to write, they had to 'invent the university', in other words they had to learn the language of a particular discipline, the way it thinks and arrives at conclusions. Based on this thesis, I would like to propose that Health and Social Care students may not only be inventing the university when they sit down to write but also *inventing the profession*. To that extent, I hope my research sheds light on the hidden challenges facing Health and Social Care students when writing about links between theory and practice and that this study lays the groundwork for further exploration of writing practices within health-related subjects at university.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A (CARD SORT STATEMENT IDEAS)

1. **Key themes**: ***interpretation of 'identity'***; *fixed vs. fluid sense of identity; possibility of changes to ID over time; sense of hoped-for future selves*.

CARD SORT STATEMENTS (AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE)	THEMES/LITERATURE
I have a strong sense of my own identity or who I am.	Interpretation of concept/construct: stable vs. Fluid/fragmented, unfinished (Hall and Du Gay, 1996, Holland et al 1998)
I see my identity as something stable and fixed.	Interpretation of concept/construct: stable vs. fluid /fragmented, unfinished (Hall and Du Gay, 1996)
I see my identity as something fluid, constantly changing over time, as a work in progress.	Interpretation of concept/construct: stable vs. fluid/fragmented, unfinished (Hall and Du Gay, 1996)
My sense of who I am today is very different from how it was in the past.	Time changes sense of identity (Holland et al 1998)
My sense of identity is often shaped by the people around me.	Identities are constructed through social interaction (Haugh, 2008)
Other people often impact on the way I see myself.	Identities are constructed through social interaction(Haugh, 2008)
If I am in different geographical places, my sense of who I am often changes.	Intercultural identity (Pitts, 2009, Holland et al 1998)
If I am in a different work or educational context, my sense of who I am often changes.	Identities are constructed through social interaction and positioning (Haugh, 2008, Holland et al 1998)
If I am in a different social or cultural context, my sense of identity often changes	Identities are constructed through social interaction(Haugh, 2008; Holland et al 1998)
I have a strong sense of the person I want to be in the future (e.g. professionally, personally, culturally etc.).	Future self (Ushioda, 2011)
Who I want to be in the future, is part of who I am today.	Current self and Future self can co-exist (Ushioda, 2011)

2. Key themes: ***Identity at university***; *development of HE identity; transition into HE; multiple conflicting identity issues; strategic approach to developing temporary HE identity vs. lasting changes/evolution of identity*

CARD SORT STATEMENTS (AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE)	THEMES/LITERATURE
I feel I have changed a lot since I came to university.	Identity at University / development of HE identity (Gale and Parker, 2012)
I feel the change to my sense of identity is positive/empowering/liberating.	Identity at University / development of HE identity (Gale and Parker, 2012)
I feel the change to my sense of identity is challenging and disconcerting.	Challenges to identity (Hyland, 2002; Ivanic 1998, Rahimian, 2015))
My previous life/educational experiences have prepared me for these changes.	Previous experiences that affect transition (Ivanic, 1998)
Being encouraged to voice opinions and discuss issues at university is changing my sense of who I am.	Identities evolve (Ushioda, 2011)
There is a tension between my work-self, my home-self and my more recent university-self.	Multiple conflicting identities (Taylor, 2010)
After an initial feeling of conflicting identities, my university-self (or HE identity) is feeling more natural now.	Multiple conflicting identities ONLY during transition (Ivanic, 1998)
I like the HE identity that I now have and want to become even more involved in the academic community.	Active pursuit of new aspect of identity / future self (Ushioda, 2011)
Being a good student and developing an effective HE identity is an end in itself.	Active pursuit of new aspect of identity / future self (Ushioda, 2011)
Being a good student and developing an effective HE identity is simply a means to an end; my professional goals (and identity) are more important.	Tactical adoption of short-term identity (Ivanic, 1998?)
I feel the university environment empowers and enables me to be who I am and who I want to be.	Impact of university-wide culture on students/ transitional identities (Gale and Parker, 2012)

I feel as though I don't quite fit in to the university environment	Impact of university-wide culture on students/ transitional identities (Gale and Parker, 2012)
At first, I felt like a bit of an outsider at university, but now I feel more at home here.	Impact of university-wide culture on students/ transitional identities (Gale and Parker, 2012)

3.Key themes: *Identity as student-writer at university**; importance, or not, of being who you are in ac. writing; tactical changes to voice/identity to achieve grades; challenges to identity; imposter syndrome; impact on individuals sense of self.***

CARD SORT STATEMENTS (AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE)	THEMES/SOURCES
It is important that my academic writing conveys something of my identity or who I am (e.g. personal beliefs, cultural history etc.).	Desire to express identity in writing (Gimenez, 2008; Hyland 2002) 'Ac writing is an act of identity' Hyland
I feel I can write a really good essay and still be myself.	Confident to write as self (Gimenez, 2008; Hyland 2002)
I wish I could feel more like me when I am writing, but I feel I have to be different in order to meet the criteria.	Sense of pressure to suppress identity to conform to academy(Gimenez, 2008; Cadman 1997; Hyland 2002)
I sound like the real me in some parts of my essay, but not others.	Sense of 'self as author' (Ivanic 1998) can vary within an assignment.
I don't feel I should have to become someone else in order to get a good mark.	Resistance to dominant conventions of academy/unequal power relations (Cadman, 1997)
I am comfortable using 'I' or 'my' or 'me' in essays.	Use of pronouns is 'most visible manifestation of…authorial identity' (Hyland 2002) [Me: but not without problems!]
Using impersonal language (e.g. 3rd person) makes me feel invisible in/separate from my own writing.	Loss of identity (Gimenez, 2008; Ivanic 1998)
Using impersonal language (e.g. 3rd person) gives me greater freedom to explore ideas and to express opinions in other ways.	Author invisibility provides 'cover' to disguise writer's opinions OR provides vehicle to question / probe? (Hyland 2002)
Assignments in my department often ask me to write about theory and to reflect on practice simultaneously.	Healthcare students often required to write reflectively and or to combine theory and reflections on practice (Gimenez, 2011)
Sometimes it is difficult to switch from theoretical writing (3rd person) to reflective writing (1st person) in the same essay.	Linguistic code switching (Gumperz, 1982, Gimenez 2011)
It feels like I have to be two different people in the same essay, one impersonal and one more personal.	Difficulties of managing different identities in one text (autobiographical self + discoursal self+ self as author) (Ivanic, 1998)
When I write reflectively, I feel I can be more like the real me.	Reflective writing feels more like the 'real me' (Ivanic, 1998)
I think carefully about who is going to read my essay, so that I can create an impression of myself (in my writing) that I think they will like.	Strategic use of writing identity to suit marker (Ivanic 1998)
Depending on who is marking my work, I may try to change the way I sound.	Strategic use of writing identity to suit marker (Ivanic, 1998)
I feel a bit phoney when I am writing an essay, as if I am trying to be someone I am not.	Sense of tokenism/ imposter syndrome (natural stage of learning new skill?) (Ivanic, 1998)
I used to feel a bit phoney, but now I am more comfortable with my academic writing identity.	As skills increase imposter syndrome decreases…identities evolve (Ivanic, 1998; Hall and du Gay,1996; Ushioda, 2011)
I feel comfortable establishing my position or expressing my opinion in most assignments.	Happy to 'intrude' into one's own writing (Hyland 2002)
I only feel comfortable expressing my opinion when I have a really good understanding of a subject or I believe in it.	Sense of 'ownership' / 'self as author' is contingent upon other factors (Ivanic, 1998)
I only feel comfortable establishing my position or expressing an opinion in certain types of assignments.	Sense of 'ownership' / 'self as author' is contingent upon other factors (Ivanic, 1998)
I prefer not to give my opinion in essays–I would rather rely on the opinions of experts.	Not confident to express stance (Hyland, 2002)
I feel my experience of writing reports, case notes etc. at work is helpful in my academic writing.	Value placed on other writing skills (e.g. work-based genres) (Gimenez ?)
I think academic writing should be impersonal, and not contain elements of my identity or who I am.	Mixed messages about nature of academic writing (Hyland 2002)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE (EXAMPLE)

INTERVIEW 1 QUESTIONS BASED ON SURVEY RESPONSES

JESSIE

Getting started

1. *Why is the research important? As you know…*
2. *Why are THEY important? Your direct experience and insights will be incredibly helpful to me..*
3. *Everything you say today will be confidential...I will transcribe it and remove any personal details.*
4. *If I use a quotation, I will be careful that that quote does not identify you in any way!*
5. *Are you still happy to continue and for me to record the interview?*
6. *I would really like to hear your experiences about…*

SECTION A THEORY AND PRACTICE

Part 1: Your understanding of Theory and Practice

- You said that reflective practice helps you to make sense of the relationship between theory and practice…in what way?
- You said that when you reflect on the relationship between what you are learning at uni and what you experience in HC settings you **couldn't** see clear links between theory and practice…say more?
- You said that linking theories to everyday practice is sometimes challenging …say more?

Part 2: Your sense of professional identity

- You said that you didn't have a clear sense of identity as healthcare professional... say more?
- You also said prof identity complex and how prof ID and personal boundaries often overlap...say more?
- You said your experience of being a student is changing your professional sense of identity…how so?
- You said opinions of others (family, friends, patients) affect the way you see different aspects of your identity...in what way?

Part 3: Your sense of control/influence (agency) over professional issues

- You said you felt that uni was making you feel as though you were taking control of prof development and was empowering you BUT also said
- that sometimes1) communication issues at work 2) relationships with colleagues 3) factors outside your control negatively affected the way you work...say more?
- Also, sometimes you have a sense of powerlessness...say more?

Part 4: Your experiences of writing about T&P (CH to focus on this section-significant responses)

- You said you found writing about theory challenging and not that comfortable with writing about own experiences…what is it about each type of writing that is challenging?
- You said you liked exploring links between theory and practice, but find switching between 3rd and 1st person difficult to do? Is it the technical aspect? Or the moving between different writer identities?
- You said you don't always feel you can be yourself when writing about reality of everyday practice. .in what way?
- When writing about T & P you said, you tried to imagine what your reader wanted to hear…?
- You said you would like to feel more like you. .instead of creating a version of yourself for essays
- You said you didn't know whether you could be entirely honest about realities of professional practice in your essays

SECTION B: IDENTITY

Part 1: Your experience of university ()

- You said that you have changed a lot at uni and that it is an empowering change…say more
- Also you said that being encouraged to voice opinions and discuss issues is changing you

Part 2: Your experience of academic writing

- You said it is difficult to switch between 1st and 3rd …say more
- You said you feel like you have to be 2 people, one formal and one more personal...say more
- You said you think carefully about who is going to read your essay so that you can create a particular impression of yourself…in what way?
- You said you don't feel comfortable expressing an opinion in your academic work...why?

Part 3: Your personal sense of identity

- You said you see your personal identity as something fluid, constantly changing, a work in progress...say more
- And that different physical location/different work/educational context might affect the way you see yourself
- But you have a strong sense of who you want to be in the future (prof/pers/cult)...say more
- And that person is part of who you are today...say more

SECTION C: AGENCY

Part 1a and 1b: Factors affecting your progress at university

- You said you were firmly focused on goal of achieving qual but that availability of resources often affects your ability to make progress...say more
- you said your sense of determination (/agency) ISN'T always stable / unaffected by changing circumstances...say more
- You said that gaining experience of essay writing has increased your sense of effectiveness as a writer...say more
- And that the more you know about essay writing makes you feel empowered and that you can make progress...say more...

Part 2: Your experience of writing at university (expressing an opinion/voice/position)

- You said you feel confused about when it is okay to use I me...say more
- You said you have heard of academic voice, but are not sure what it is...say more

Finally, is there anything you would like to add that you feel we have missed or you were hoping to discuss?

Thank you.

APPENDIX C

ONLINE SURVEY STATEMENTS

Dear participant(s),

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. The following activity aims to explore your perceptions of issues relating to ***theory and practice, identity and agency in healthcare***.

The activity is divided into 3 sections (see below) and simply requires you to respond: 'agree', 'disagree' or 'not sure' to a number of statements.

Section A: Theory and Practice

This section aims to explore your perception of the ***relationship between theory and practice in healthcare*** by considering:
Part 1: Your understanding of theory and practice
Part 2: Your sense of professional identity
Part 3: Your sense of control/influence over professional issues
Part 4: Your experiences of writing about theory and practice

Section B: Identity

This section aims to explore the concept of ***identity*** by considering:
Part 1: Your experience of university
Part 2: Your experience of academic writing
Part 3: Your personal sense of identity

Section C: Agency

This section aims to explore the concept of ***agency*** by considering:
Part 1a: Factors affecting your progress at university
Part 1b: Factors affecting your progress at university(cont'd)
Part 2: Your experience of writing at university

Section A: Theory and Practice

Part 1: Your understanding of theory and Practice

As a healthcare student, you are encouraged to relate the theory of healthcare to the reality of everyday practice. The following statements aim to explore your understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. Studying at university and working in a professional setting at the same time is helping me to develop my practice and to progress my career.	
2. I think that expert theoretical knowledge is an essential part of being a good healthcare professional.	
3. Qualities such as kindness, compassion and empathy are as important as theoretical knowledge.	
4. The relationship between what I am learning at university and the reality of everyday practice is complex.	
5. Reflective practice is helping me to make sense of the relationship between theory and practice.	
6. I am naturally reflective, and I am used to reflecting on my practice.	
7. Linking healthcare theories to my everyday practice is sometimes challenging.	
8. When I reflect on the relationship between what I am learning at university and what I experience in healthcare settings, I can generally see clear links between theory and my practice.	
9. It is inevitable that there will be differences between what I study and the real world of healthcare.	
10. My colleagues/peers and I often talk about the gap between how healthcare should be in theory and how it really is.	

Part 2: Your sense of professional Identity

As a healthcare student, you may have to juggle different roles and responsibilities. The following statements aim to explore your sense of identity as a healthcare professional and as a student.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE/
1. I have a clear sense of my identity as a healthcare professional.	
2. I feel that my professional identity is complex.	
3. Professional identities and personal boundaries in healthcare often overlap.	
4. My experience of being a student is changing my sense of identity as a healthcare professional.	
5. I find it hard to reconcile the differences between my student (theoretical) identity and my professional (real-life) healthcare identity.	
6. The opinions of others (e.g. family, friends, patients etc.) also affect how I see different aspects of my identity.	
7. I don't give much thought to issues of identity—I am just interested in getting the job done.	
8. I think patients are more interested in how kind and compassionate I am, than if I have a degree or not.	

Part 3: Your sense of control/influence over professional issues

As a healthcare professional, you may have experienced different factors at work that have helped and/or hindered your progress. The following statements aim to explore your sense of control/influence (i.e. agency) over different factors.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. Studying at university makes me feel as though I am taking control of my professional development.	
2. I feel as though I am proactively achieving my professional goals.	
3. I feel as though what I am learning at university is making me feel more empowered at work in my professional setting.	
4. I feel that factors outside my control often affect my ability to be effective at work.	
5. Communication issues at work sometimes affect my ability to feel focused and proactive.	
6. Sometimes relationships with work colleagues negatively affect the way I work.	
7. Sometimes personal and domestic issues negatively impact on my ability to feel effective at work.	
8. Sometimes the lack of resources at work affects my ability to make progress.	
9. Sometimes I have a sense of powerlessness at work.	
10. Despite the challenges at work, I generally remain focused and feel in control of things.	

Part 4: Your experiences of writing about theory and practice

As a healthcare student, you will often be required to explore the links between theory and practice in your essays. The following statements aim to explore your experiences of linking theory to real-life practice in your writing.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. I find writing about the theory of healthcare challenging.	
2. I am more comfortable writing about my own experiences of working in healthcare settings.	
3. I like exploring the links between theory and practice, but I find switching between formal (3rd person) and informal (1st person) writing styles difficult to do.	
4. Sometimes it is difficult to write about theory and practice when the theory doesn't always seem to match the reality.	
5. I don't always feel I can be myself when I write about the reality of everyday practice.	
6. When I write about theory and practice, I always try to imagine what the reader (my lecturer) would like to hear.	
7. When I am writing reflectively about my practice, I feel I am freer to be myself than when I am writing about theory.	
8. I would like to sound more like me when I am writing, but I feel I have to create a different version of myself for essays.	
9. I feel I can be entirely honest about the realities of professional practice in my essays.	
10. I don't always have a sense of control over what I am writing.	

Section B: Identity

Part 1: Your experience of university

When students start at university, they often experience a period of adjustment (Gale and Parker, 2012). The following statements aim to explore your experience of being a university student.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. I feel I have changed a lot since I came to university.	
2. I feel the change to my sense of identity is empowering.	
3. The change to my sense of identity unsettles me.	
4. My previous life/educational experiences have prepared me for these changes.	
5. Being encouraged to voice opinions and discuss issues at university is changing my sense of who I am.	
6. There is a tension between my work-self, my home-self and my university-self.	
7. I like my university identity and I want to become even more involved in the academic community.	
8. Being a good student and developing an effective student identity is simply a means to an end—my professional goals (and identity) are more important.	
9. I feel the university environment empowers and enables me to be who I am and who I want to be.	
10. At first, university was a totally unfamiliar environment, but now I feel more at home here.	

Part 2: Your experience of academic writing

Academic writing is very different from the kind of writing we are required to do in every-day life. The following statements aim to explore your experience of academic writing.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. Learning to write academic essays has been like learning a new language.	
2. Incorporating the ideas of others into my work and referencing them correctly is one of the biggest challenges.	
3. When I am writing academic essays, it doesn't sound like me.	
4. When I write academically, I feel my identity (or the real me) has to change in some way.	
5. I feel I can be myself in some parts of my writing (e.g. reflection on practice), but not in others (e.g. writing about theory).	
6. I prefer using first person (e.g. 'I'/'my') when I am writing, rather than more impersonal or formal language.	
7. Sometimes it is difficult to switch from theoretical writing (3rd person) to reflective writing (1st person) in the same essay.	
8. It feels like I have to be two different people in the same essay, one formal and one more personal.	
9. I think carefully about who is going to read my essay, so that I can create a particular impression of myself in my writing.	
10. I feel comfortable expressing my opinion in my academic work.	

Part 3: Your personal sense of identity

The notion of identity is complex and open to many different interpretations (Holland et al. 1998). The following statements aim to explore your perceptions of your own identity.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. I have a strong sense of my own identity (who I am).	
2. I see my identity as something stable and fixed.	
3. I see my identity as something fluid, constantly changing over time, as a work in progress.	
4. My sense of who I am today is very different from how it was in the past.	
5. Other people often impact on the way I see myself.	
6. If I am in a different physical location (e.g. country/town), my sense of who I am often changes.	
7. If I am in a different work or educational context, my sense of who I am often changes.	
8. If I am in a different social or cultural context, my sense of identity often changes.	
9. I have a strong sense of the person I want to be in the future (e.g. professionally, personally, culturally etc.).	
10. Who I want to be in the future, is part of who I am today.	

Section C: Agency

Part 1 a: Factors affecting your progress at university

The ability of students to achieve their goals may be influenced by a number of different factors (Ahearn, 2001). The following statements (Part 1 (a) and (b)) aim to explore your own experiences of factors that may have helped or hindered your progress at university.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. I feel I am in control of progress I make in my studies.	
2. I feel that I am firmly focused on the goal of achieving my qualification.	
3. My previous experiences of learning have prepared me well for studying at university in the UK.	
4. Factors outside my control often affect my ability to make progress and achieve my goals (e.g. work commitments; childcare issues, financial concerns)	
5. The availability of resources (e.g. books, journals, internet connection, e-books etc.) often affects my ability to make progress with my studies.	
6. Sometimes less visible factors (e.g. my mental/physical health, sense of well-being, motivation, weather, time of year) affect my ability to make progress with my studies.	
7. The availability of certain friends/peers/lecturers affects my ability to make progress with my studies.	
8. Comparing my progress with that of my peers has a negative effect on my motivation.	
9. The teaching style of different lecturers affects my sense of determination to succeed.	
10. My sense of determination has always been quite stable, unaffected by changing circumstances around me.	

Part 1 b: Factors affecting your progress at university (cont'd)

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. My sense of determination varies a lot over time (e.g. years/weeks/days/hours etc.).	
2. My lack of knowledge about academic writing has affected my progress.	
3. Gaining experience of essay writing (learning the rules) has increased my sense of effectiveness as a writer.	
4. The more I know about how to write essays, the more empowered I feel and the more progress I make.	
5. Understanding my own strengths and limitations as a student helps me to take responsibility for my learning.	
6. A good understanding of different types of writing task (e.g. structure/purpose etc.) helps me to develop effective learning strategies.	
7. My positive mindset helps me to be an effective student.	
8. My belief in myself helps me to be an effective student.	
9. To be effective, my work-life-study strategy has to be methodically planned.	
10. To be effective, my work-life-study strategy has to be very flexible—learning for me is sometimes more spontaneous.	

Part 2: Your experience of writing at university

Student writers may use a number of strategies to establish their own *academic voice* or *position* in their writing. The following statements aim to explore your experiences of academic writing.

STATEMENTS	AGREE/DISAGREE/NOT SURE
1. My use of 'I', 'me' and 'my' in essays depends on the type of assignment.	
2. I feel confused about when it is okay to use 'I', 'me' and 'my', in my academic work.	
3. I am confident about referencing my essays.	
4. I feel confident about presenting the views of other writers in my writing.	
5. By agreeing or disagreeing with authors, I can begin to establish my own position (or voice) as a student writer.	
6. Paraphrasing and summarising authors' words helps me to show the reader (my lecturer) what I understand and what I think.	
7. If I am particularly interested in (or knowledgeable about) a topic, I feel more in control of my writing.	
8. I have heard the expression 'academic voice/identity', but I am not sure what it means.	
9. I tend **not** to feel in control when I am writing academic essays.	
10. Since I started at university, I have gained confidence in writing.	

APPENDIX D

(Extracts from writing samples)

Ash (1): *Case study* (Example of small element of reflection on practice using 'I'/'my' at the end of an assignment)

Care provision can be improved through the analysis of one's own interpersonal qualities and issues according to Currid & Pennington (2010). While providing care to the patient, particularly while performing dressing changes and mobilisation, they often and loudly vocalised the pain they were experiencing. As one of the individuals caring for the patient, this was sometimes very distressing and difficult to handle. My experience of this distress, which I looked back on at a later point, can be linked to the concept of resilience. In the context of nursing, resilience is defined by Caldeira & Timmins (2016) as the ability to cope with and adapt to adversity by utilising personal or social resources. Henshall, Davey & Jackson (2020) further explain that resilience can change dynamically, particularly for nursing students who experience complex patient interactions for the first time. Through these interactions, resilience is engaged and the challenging experiences faced will encourage reflection and reinforcement of coping skills; this development of resilience also facilitates the acquisition of compassion and empathy skills (Henshall, Davey & Jackson 2020).

Riley (2): *Review of theory* (Example of linking and reflecting on practice with minimal use of 'I'/'my' in otherwise third person essay)

Practitioners should face the recipient directly, maintain eye contact, and be mindful of their body language, but not at the expense of staying relaxed (Bottomley and Pryimachuk 2019). This physical openness demonstrates honesty and empathy, imperative qualities for nurses engaging in difficult conversations with patients and their families. Displaying genuine empathy helps create a safe space for grief, resulting in a therapeutic relationship between the patient, their family, and the practitioner (Grant and Goodman 2018). Once they have understood and reacted to the bad news, the nurse should summarize the conversation, answer any remaining questions, and explain what's next. This could be referring them onward to a specialist, providing any relevant written resources, or organizing a follow-up meeting in conjunction with continued support and empathy from the practitioner (McEwen and Kraszewski 2010).

My experience with breaking bad news is limited. Like many others, I am hesitant to participate in difficult conversations because of the emotional impact they have on everyone involved. I chose nursing in the interest of helping people but telling patients the worst news they might receive in their entire life inherently opposes that aspiration. When engaged in those challenging conversations, distancing myself emotionally seems innate, but an empathic involvement in the patient and their health journey is key in a relationship-based practice. Awareness and regulation of my own feelings can promote a positive emotional investment in my patient during those vulnerable moments.

Kit (3): *Case Study* (participant highlighted text blue and yellow to show me how theory and practice were linked in her essay and to demonstrate minimal use of 'I' 'my')

Angus may be struggling to retain the grapheme-phoneme correspondences or *pairing* of sounds (phonemes) to letter shapes, taught as part of systematic synthetic phonics (National Literacy Trust, 2017). As per motor skill development, gender variation in reading success has been a factor of considerable research, with some studies suggesting reasons for male underperformance include hormones (Leon *et al.*, 2014), preferences of learning style (Beech, 2010) and poor motivation attributed to unnatural language and a lack of meaning in beginner texts (Baumann *et al.*, 2007; Clark, 2014). Placement observations of gender-based proficiency in retention of phonics as well as word blending were inconsistent with the above studies; some of the most confident readers were male and some of the least were female. It is again important to caution against gender stereotyping and consider Angus as an individual. For the time being, Angus' progress is not a significant cause for concern and close monitoring by educational staff will indicate if and when further support may be necessary.

Reflection

This case has illuminated the importance of considering patients holistically, treating them as unique individuals and applying caution to generalisations (in this case of gender) even if assertions are supported within an evidence base. I have found it challenging to view Angus' profile through a therapy lens, because my education background would naturally lead me to recommend appropriate interventions, which is not the purpose of this assignment. From this learning process, I will take forward the skill of critical comparison of patient profiles with reference to clinical relevance, drawing upon foundation learning of development theories, reflections from placements and the skill of synthesising evidence which, in some cases, is inconclusive or discordant with practice.

Kit (4) *Personal reflection* (this extract is from a short entirely reflective piece written entirely in first person. Kit wanted me to see this because of the contrast between this and her other essay)

Now What

Equipped with the insights from my reading and self-study, I feel comfortable acknowledging that shifts in professional identity are a process, not an action. Also, I understand that the time taken to adjust to an alternative professional practice does not equate to failure.

As a metaphor, I consider this placement similar to the wearing of a new pair of glasses. Rather than seeing through an educational lens, I am instead looking through a SLT lens. With this in mind, I can use my transferable skills as a foundation that underpins my professional practice, with room to accommodate my developing clinical skills.

Frankie (5): *Case study* (Frankie wanted me to see this because it contained only two uses of personal pronouns which she highlighted in yellow. She was eager for me to know that the minimal uses of 'I' had been commented on negatively in feedback)

Angus needs to have his attention focussed to follow instructions, indicating that he must stop an activity to listen. According Reynell's levels of attention, children from the age of 4 are usually able to pay attention to instructions without stopping what they are doing. Angus's attention appears to be 'single channelled'; a stage typical of 2–3-year-olds (1977, cited in Elks and McLachlan, 2009). This could show that his attention skills are slightly underdeveloped. As attention control is a cognitive skill, this could also indicate a delay in his cognition (Rezazadeh et al 2011; Zelazo et al, 2021).

However, Angus' ability to kick a football with his friends – an activity that requires attention to multiple things at once, such as running, kicking, and awareness of others – may reveal a higher level of attention control during activities that he enjoys. During placement, I observed one child of a similar age who often struggled to pay attention during activities that involved sitting still. However, she was very capable of following instructions and switching her attention in activities she enjoyed.

Jessie (6): *Reflective Report* (Jessie was eager to share with me three assignments because of the range of pronoun usage within them. There was extensive use of personal pronouns in the first and second one but the final example was written entirely in third person using 'the practitioner')

Fayol (1841-1925) defined management as the process of forecasting, planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling (Pettinger, 2007). Effective management involves communicating, coordinating and accomplishing actions, through organisation, coordination and motivation of people, in pursuit of organisational objectives (Cole and Kelly, 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2017; Clegg et al., 2019). As a manager, I simultaneously pursue multiple objectives, such as providing a high-quality service, maintaining business sustainability and profitability appendix 7, complying with statutory requirements and continually improving performance in my setting. These objectives are achieved through a range of management activities, such as administration, financial control, workforce development, planning, reflection and analysis, adherence to statutory frameworks and providing high quality experiences for service users. When planning CPD, I take into account multiple considerations appendix 18, such as impact on practice and benefits for children, value for money (Bubb and Earley, 2007), ramifications of attendance, and benefit to practitioner (see 6.3, 6.4).

Jessie (7): *Critical incident analysis report*

I needed to communicate to parent Z that we were unable to continue to accommodate a one-day attendance pattern for one of their two children, B, who had reduced their attendance at our setting from originally three, down to two, then recently down to one day attendance per week. This was due to business sustainability and the financial necessity to take on a full-time attendance child, which was currently blocked on one day by child B's inflexible, fixed single-day attendance pattern. I chose to email parent Z, as in the past all contractual changes and official notifications between us had been via email. Also, there was a lot of information which I needed to convey, and since child B had dropped to one day per week attendance, the opportunities to speak with parent Z at either end of the day were very limited, due to their drop-off and pick-up being particularly busy times of the day.

The practitioner utilised semi-formal, written communication. The use of formal, rather than 'chatty' language, indicated the content of the communication was important (Wood, 2016) and was indicated as a culturally-appropriate choice of tone, based on previous correspondence between the practitioner and parent. Also, as indicated, the possibility of having a productive conversation in person was limited, time pressure and the busy environment of the setting presenting barriers to effective communication. To effectively discuss the situation, both sender and receiver needed uninterrupted and unpressured time to send the correct message and comprehend the information received. Email is an asynchronous method of communication (Thompson, 2019) so was used to overcome this potential barrier, as both parties could engage with communications at a time convenient to them. Editing and carefully selecting the words contained in the emails before sending allows for the right tone to be conveyed (Stack, 2011; Tripathy, 2018), thus written communication was expedient over oral communication.

Jessie(8): *Analytical reflection on planned activity*

The practitioner maintained a high level of conversational interaction with E, extending sentences and introducing new, appropriate vocabulary (appendix 3.4, 3.7). The practitioner allowed P the space and time to explore the resources with more commentary and minimal questioning, giving P time to think and respond if desired (appendix 3.8). Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the practitioner modelled the correct use of language through the conversation, in this way taking the role of a more knowledgeable other (MKO), highlighting the importance of sociocultural influences on cognitive development (Schoen, 2011; McLeod, 2020). The role of the MKO was also taken by E (appendix 3.9) when they understood that P was not able to unlock the padlock, and demonstrated the method to them. The interaction exemplifies Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, where P was capable of developing a skill with help from E.

Kelly (9): *Secondary data analysis* (Kelly was eager to share three assignments with me. The first contained a small element of reflection on practice at the end in an otherwise formal third person essay. The second was written entirely in third person and the last example was a formative reflection on a consultation written more informally in first person)

During this SDA I developed my skills in analysis of quantitative data; I had not previously conducted a binary logistic regression which was a great challenge for me. I struggled to identify the type of analysis that I would need and noticed myself becoming frustrated with the process. Whilst I do not feel like an expert, I certainly feel like I now have a better understanding about the usefulness of this type of analysis and how to perform it. Another skill that I feel I have developed is the process of finding a large data set and narrowing down a specific area of investigation. I was initially intimidated by this, however used the guidance of my personal tutor to tease out what I was interested in and what the data could address. By completing this assignment, I feel more confident in my ability to break down large pieces of data for analysis and think about how the clinical field might benefit from investigating data that, at first glance, may not appear to be of use.

Kelly (10): *Systematic review*

Psychopathy has increasingly become a topic of interest both within and outside of clinical settings. Due to this increased interest, researchers have attempted to identify predictors of psychopathy, including traumatic experiences. There is a wealth of existing research utilising Hare's (2003) PCL-R to explore the link between abuse and psychopathy within varying demographics, including the general public and individuals with a criminal history, and people from different cultural backgrounds and in different age groups. For example, Craparo, Schimmenti, & Caretti (2013) reported that higher levels of childhood relational trauma were found among participants who scored highly on the PCL-R. Farina et al (2018) also found that psychopathy is significantly correlated with trauma for both male and female juvenile offenders. Whilst current research is vast, it has identified the need to better understand the relationships between abuse and the facets of psychopathy as outlined by Hare (2003), rather than psychopathy as a whole.

Kelly (11): *Formative Reflection*

I found during my interview with the sisters that although I was initially quite worried about making sure I included systemic ideas, once the conversation started the questions came quite naturally. I like the fact that systemic questioning and ideas feels as though they are largely without limits, as long as the interviewer is considerate of the needs of the people in the room. It also felt more like a conversation and less like I was playing "20 questions", which can sometimes be the case for me with other modalities. It felt as though the sisters did not feel like I was prying or being overly "nosey", but that instead they were opening up a lot of ideas within the interview themselves – rather than me asking. It is a different experience for me interviewing more than one person in the room, and I recognise that I will need to develop my skills in carefully interrupting people in order to stay on a certain point or explore further as this is new to me. Additionally, the idea of introducing the thoughts and feelings of those not in the room by asking the sisters to predict and express things for them was quite new to me. However I found this to be quite powerful, in that it opened up channels of empathy and understanding that may not have happened by just asking what they thought and felt. I also

APPENDIX E

EXTRACT FROM QUALTRICS RESULTS

Part 4: Your experiences of writing about theory and practice

As a healthcare student, you will often be required to explore the links between theory and practice in your essays. The following statements aim to explore your experiences of linking theory to real-life practice in your writing

#	Question	Agree		Disagree		Don't know		Total
1	I find writing about the theory of healthcare challenging.	60.00%	6	40.00%	4	0.00%	0	10
2	I am more comfortable writing about my own experiences of working in healthcare settings.	40.00%	4	50.00%	5	10.00%	1	10
3	I like exploring the links between theory and practice, but I find switching between formal (3rd person) and informal (1st person) writing styles difficult to do.	70.00%	7	20.00%	2	10.00%	1	10
4	Sometimes it is difficult to write about theory and practice when the theory doesn't always seem to match the reality.	80.00%	8	10.00%	1	10.00%	1	10
5	I don't always feel I can be myself when I write about the reality of everyday practice.	60.00%	6	40.00%	4	0.00%	0	10
6	When I write about theory and practice, I always try to imagine what the reader (my lecturer) would like to hear.	70.00%	7	20.00%	2	10.00%	1	10
7	When I am writing reflectively about my practice, I feel I am freer to be myself than when I am writing about theory.	40.00%	4	40.00%	4	20.00%	2	10
8	I would like to sound more like me when I am writing, but I feel I have to create a different version of myself for essays.	70.00%	7	20.00%	2	10.00%	1	10
9	I feel I can be entirely honest about the realities of professional practice in my essays.	50.00%	5	30.00%	3	20.00%	2	10
10	I don't always have a sense of control over what I am writing.	10.00%	1	50.00%	5	40.00%	4	10

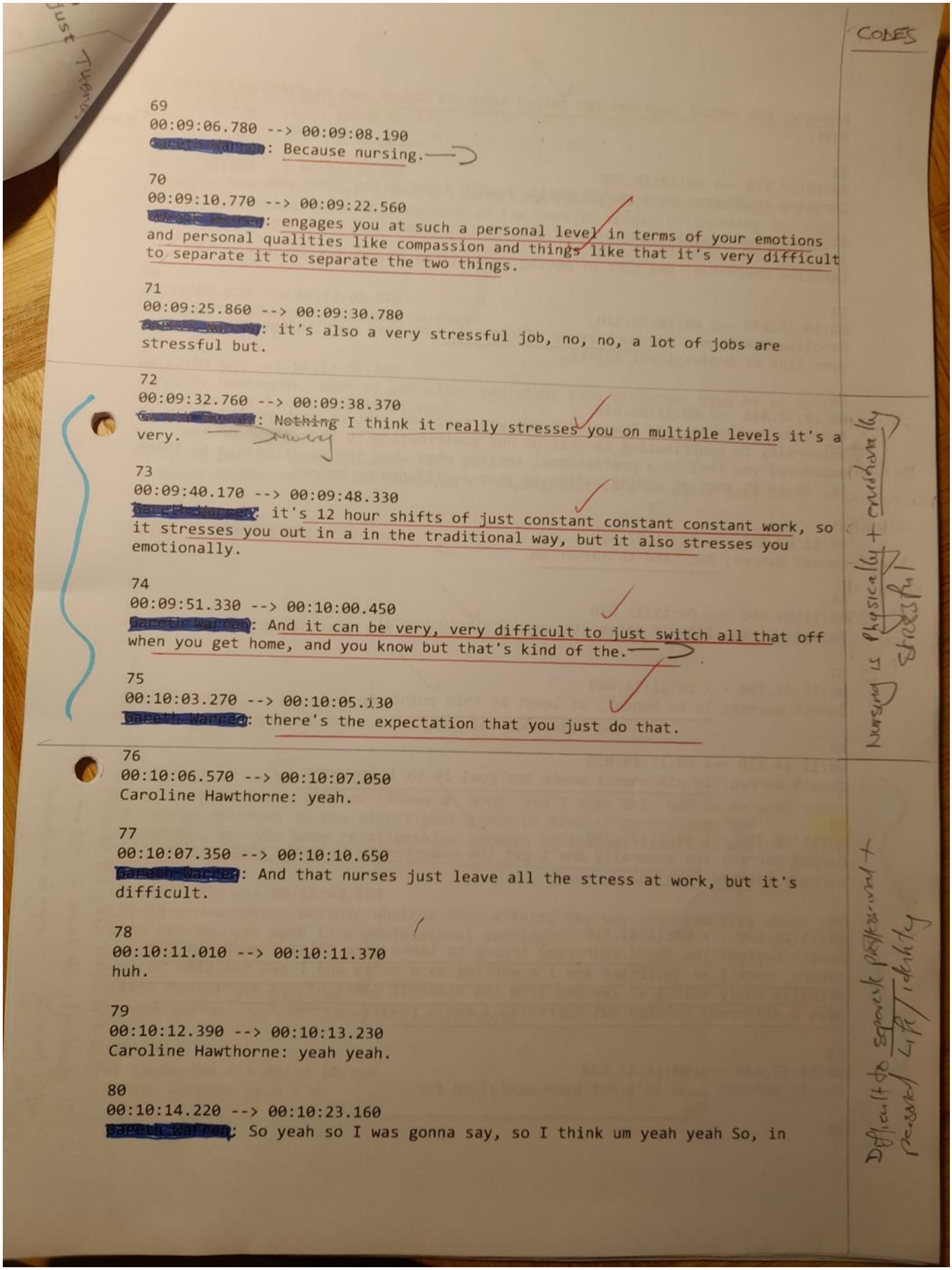
Part 2: Your experience of academic writing

Academic writing is very different from the kind of writing we are required to do in every-day life. The following statements aim to explore your experience of academic writing.

#	Question	Agree		Disagree		Don't know		Total
1	Learning to write academic essays has been like learning a new language.	30.00%	3	50.00%	5	20.00%	2	10
2	Incorporating the ideas of others into my work and referencing them correctly is one of the biggest challenges.	40.00%	4	60.00%	6	0.00%	0	10
3	When I am writing academic essays, it doesn't sound like me.	30.00%	3	40.00%	4	30.00%	3	10
4	When I write academically, I feel my identity or the real me has to change in some way.	20.00%	2	50.00%	5	30.00%	3	10
5	I feel I can be myself in some parts of my writing, but not in others.	20.00%	2	60.00%	6	20.00%	2	10
6	I prefer using first person (e.g. 'I'/'my') when I am writing, rather than more impersonal or formal language.	10.00%	1	60.00%	6	30.00%	3	10
7	Sometimes it is difficult to switch from theoretical writing (3rd person) to reflective writing (1st person) in the same essay.	70.00%	7	20.00%	2	10.00%	1	10
8	It feels like I have to be two different people in the same essay, one formal and one more personal.	70.00%	7	20.00%	2	10.00%	1	10
9	I think carefully about who is going to read my essay, so that I can create a particular impression of myself in my writing.	70.00%	7	30.00%	3	0.00%	0	10
10	I feel comfortable expressing an opinion in my academic work.	50.00%	5	50.00%	5	0.00%	0	10

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLE OF INITIAL ANNOTATION OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS



69
00:09:06.780 --> 00:09:08.190
[redacted]: Because nursing.

70
00:09:10.770 --> 00:09:22.560
[redacted]: engages you at such a personal level in terms of your emotions and personal qualities like compassion and things like that it's very difficult to separate it to separate the two things.

71
00:09:25.860 --> 00:09:30.780
[redacted]: it's also a very stressful job, no, no, a lot of jobs are stressful but.

72
00:09:32.760 --> 00:09:38.370
[redacted]: Nothing I think it really stresses you on multiple levels it's a very.

73
00:09:40.170 --> 00:09:48.330
[redacted]: it's 12 hour shifts of just constant constant constant work, so it stresses you out in a in the traditional way, but it also stresses you emotionally.

74
00:09:51.330 --> 00:10:00.450
[redacted]: And it can be very, very difficult to just switch all that off when you get home, and you know but that's kind of the.

75
00:10:03.270 --> 00:10:05.130
[redacted]: there's the expectation that you just do that.

76
00:10:06.570 --> 00:10:07.050
Caroline Hawthorne: yeah.

77
00:10:07.350 --> 00:10:10.650
[redacted]: And that nurses just leave all the stress at work, but it's difficult.

78
00:10:11.010 --> 00:10:11.370
huh.

79
00:10:12.390 --> 00:10:13.230
Caroline Hawthorne: yeah yeah.

80
00:10:14.220 --> 00:10:23.160
[redacted]: So yeah so I was gonna say, so I think um yeah yeah So, in

Theory & Practice INITIAL CODES 4-7-22 **APPENDIX G**

POSSIBLE THEMES	POSSIBLE CODES
PRACTICE AND THEORY ARE VERY DIFFERENT	a) Not transferable – frustrating T=2D P=3/4D. b) Theory is given AFTER practice (KB?) c) Learning theory after practice can be REALLY traumatic is hard but has some advantages too (KB)Logistical impossibility to ensure all students do practice BEFORE theory d) No experience of theory being taught (LP) less frustrated -more matter of fact (not comparing practice and uni, rather practice and LIT) e) HW more philosophical (they all saw a gap but their attitudes to the gap were very different) f) There will always be a gap! (8 billion people with different beliefs/backgrounds etc) (HW) g) Healthcare/people can't be reduced to neat boxes of T and P (HW / RW) h) Theory is simply a checklist; a starting point; a springboard; a guideline – no more! (RW / HW) i) Feelings of failure if experience doesn't mirror theory (RW)
RESOURCES: TIME (+ lack of staff)	a) is the main reason that theory and practice don't converge more b) If there were more TIME what uni want and what practice want would be very similar c) Perhaps theory will feel more useful when time has passed, and you can look back on it after experience has been gained (?)
	LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN WRITING Problems with finding supporting literature: a) currency b) E.g. s of applications of theory c) Contradictory evidence is good (critical) but eats up wordcount. d) just got to find something that fits criteria. e) one person's idea of 'fit' may not be same as somebody else's f) Your view of *'fit'* may change if practice was a long time ago (not remembering accurately/over imagining) g) The order in which you look for relevant theory may affect the way you write about the T&P relationship h) Familiarity (or not) with theory may affect the way you articulate the link i) Your understanding of the *practice* you are writing about may have changed over time. j) difficult to write about T&P if you haven't personally had the experience and perhaps are finding out about it vicariously k) some of the theory fits and other bits don's so they kind of cancel each other out l) frustrating when none of theories really fit and you need to tick the boxes m) feel under pressure to use examples from lit that lecturer want to see n) Writing about T&P is all about balance and being professional – just got to be able to back it up (HW)
NURSING IS OVER ACADEMIZED	a) Nursing is– too much theory – not enough basics – lectures don't prepare you for bed making/washing etc b) Nursing isn't inherently a research job
STRATEGIC LEARNING	a) No time to explore disconnect between T&P – just need to address marking criteria!!! Strategic learner!! b) Uncomfortable exploring disconnect bt T+P due to lack of confidence- don't want to lose marks – c) may just have to say this happened in practice when it didn't (for an easy life). d) Can't challenge the literature because I'm just learning (KB)

EXPERIENCE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE	a) The more experience you have the more you realise how different T & P are b) Total lack of experience makes learning experience OVERWHELMING – hard to spot disconnect between T+P (got very little P and currently drowning in T!) (KB)

APPENDIX H

THEORY AND PRACTICE: REVISED CODES/THEMES 10-7-22

DISCONNECTION BETWEEN PRACTICE AND THEORY (THEME 1) CODES:

a) Theory does not match practice
b) Sometimes theory input comes after practice which can be hard
c) It is difficult to apply specific elements of theory if you are not working in those specific areas
d) It is inevitable that there will be a gap between theory and practice
e) Theory is simply a starting point
f) If theory and practice don't match it feels like a personal failure

TIME AFFECTS PRACTICE + PERCEPTION OF THEORY + PRACTICE (THEME 2) CODES:

a) There is no time to do things the way the theory recommends
b) If there were more time, then theory and practice would be more alike
c) Perhaps more experience is needed before theory starts to make sense

THE 'FIT' BETWEEN LITERATURE AND PRACTICE IS COMPLEX (THEME 3) CODES:

a) The mismatch between Theory and practice makes it hard to write about
b) It's sometimes hard to find *current* evidence
c) It is not always possible to find evidence of how theory is *applied*
d) The main priority is to find evidence (theory) that fits the practice and the marking criteria
e) Sometimes it can be frustrating when examples from practice don't link perfectly to the theory that you know the assignment requires you to discuss
f) One person's idea of a fit between theory and practice may not be same as somebody else's
g) Understanding of practice may change over time and this may affect perceptions of the theory-practice fit
h) The extent to which you are familiar with a particular theory may affect the way you articulate the relationship between T&P
i) It is difficult to write about T&P if you haven't personally had the experience
j) The more personally involved you are (in practice) the more difficult it is to establish clear-cut links between experience and theory
k) Contradictory evidence is good (critical) but it eats up wordcount.
l) The order in which you read about different theories (when you are trying to relate theory to practice) may affect the way in which you write about the relationship between them

NURSING IS OVER ACADEMIZED (THEME 4)CODES:

a) There is too much focus on theory and not enough on the basics of nursing
b) Nursing isn't inherently a research job

STRATEGIC ATTITUDES AS COPING MECHANISM (THEME 5)CODES:

a) There is no time to explore disconnect between theory and practice
b) Lack of practice experience and fear of losing marks makes it very difficult to explore disconnects between T&P

EXPERIENCE LEVEL AFFECTS ATTITUDES TO T&P AND WRITING (THEME 6) CODES:

a) The more experience you have the more you realise how different T & P are
b) The more experience you have the easier writing becomes

APPENDIX I

FREE WRITING EXAMPLE

KIT - My thoughts going through the transcripts for the first time…free writing…instinctive reactions (31/3/22)

Really feels and is frustrated by the T & P divide. She is struggling with the professional identity…talks a lot about having a clear teacher identity (5 years as a primary school teacher – Miss KIT). She doesn't think she can just be herself – she NEEDS a persona to separate personal and professional identities… she talks about it like a protective shield – a mechanism that helps to compartmentalise the baggage (in her own mind) …'Miss KIT deals with that it's not ME' As though a professional identity is put on (Mon-Fri) and taken off over the weekend.

KIT feels that writing about T&P is difficult because they don't always match up… and it makes her feel unsuccessful ----- is this a clashing of identities (good very accomplished student identity meets and has to reconcile real professional identity and in confronting those 2, feelings of failure arise (perhaps this is something that needs explicitly voicing) Two worlds collide – the academic (good student) has to represent their professional self in writing (should this be factored into professional / writing support). RW doesn't find this kind of writing/intellectual (?) experience (i.e. discovering that theory and practice don't match) helpful, but she gets that reflective writing (the purpose of it) is to help to release pressure. As KIT speaks, she seems to identify the fundamental conflict existing in academic reflective writing – hard to compare T&P (if they don't Always match up) – hard to manage that discussion as a professional and as a good student – hard to structure something (models) that is acting as a pressure release – hard to fit an experience into the different headings that models provide when heading don't always seem to naturally fit…hard to stick to a word limit (500 words not enough)…hard to feel reflective when every sentence has to tick an aspect of the marking criteria…is it reflective or a response to the marking criteria? She understands that 'it'(what exactly) needs to be assessed, but just feels that something is missing. KIT has found a particular reflective model that she can work with (DEAL) and suggests that over time you maybe (?) become less aware of the headings. When asked how she would naturally reflect, KIT said she would write a POEM (reference Cronin & Hawthorne 2019) ☺

She suggests students write a professional journal (LEGAL REQUIREMENT) , but that they then have a choice if they want to do something for personal (WELL-BEING SIDE) e.g. write a poem, a song, perform a dance etc. Here KIT is perhaps capturing the irreconcilable nature of reflections…proving you have learnt the LAW as well as using it to promote WELL BEING…'oil and water'…Is it infact 1st person – 3rd person dichotomy – theory vs practice – technical rationality/ positivism/ vs craft and artistry/swampy lowlands (Schon 1991pp31-34) talking about teachers, Schon suggest he must be' willing to enter into new confusions and uncertainties …he must adopt a kind of double vision' (p164) Could the same be said of healthcare professionals – in order to cope with T and Practice gaps you need to blurr your focus….thereby transcending the apparent disconnects…perhaps a blurred gaze allows room for interpretation…reflection on values…perhaps theory is just there to stimulate thoughtfulness…there should be no expectation that they match…practice has to be judged against something (legally?) and theory does the job, but actually it is missing the point to try and equate them…theory is simply a manifestation of higher thinking…higher aspirations…not intended to relate to real life in anything other than an aspirational way…do we as humans need to impose some kind of framework on chaos to help us (psychologically) deal with it?

We can't accept the chaos…we must fight against it. Schon p.329-331 'Quantitative measures permit the system of control, and the other systems that depend on it, to take on an appearance of consistency, uniformity, precision, and detachment'. Is this fundamental one of the reasons why students struggle with reflective writing-the worlds of theory and practice of 1st person and 3rd person simply cannot comfortably co exist? ….may be that is the point that they don't (critical thinking) But doesn't help students very much who are perhaps struggling with more than they realise. 'What happens in an educational bureaucracy when a teacher begins to think and act not as

technical expert but as reflective practitioner? Her reflection-in-action poses a potential threat to the dynamically conservative system in which she lives'. (1991:332), P335-6 'An institution congenial to reflective practice would require a learning system within which individuals could surface conflicts and dilemmas and subject them to productive public inquiry, a learning system conducive to the continual criticism and restructuring of organizational principles and values' (ME: A UTOPIA THAT DOES NOT EXIST)

KIT demonstrates a huge amount of agency…good metacognition…been a teacher…knows how to play the academic game…wants to do well…not bothered about identity stuff, but really bothered by discrepancy between T &P and about the nature of reflective writing!

Remember when exploring themes that you (CH) tailored questions to each individual, so need to look at survey answers too!!! E.g KIT didn't have a prob with 1st to third, so didn't really discuss it!!!

My earlier reflection on first meeting with KIT (15/3/22)
Very bright and sparky – trained as primary school teacher (5 yrs) but decided to retrain as speech and language therapist after seeing the impact of therapists on children at school. Struggled a bit with reflections on teaching practice because of lack of time (demands of teaching practice/planning etc). Perhaps KIT not a natural reflector but good student – knows the rules of the writing game
Challenges: finding it hard to let go of teacher identity and to embrace inner therapist identity
She said she still behaves very much as 'Miss KIT, the teacher' Clearly academically very able to move between different genres and first and third! In her capacity as course rep, she has raised issues about use of 3rd person/first person after some people were marked down for using 1st person ? There was concern about mixed messages in instructions – unclear.

APPENDIX J
EXAMPLE OF CROSS REFERENCING OF THEMES TO PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Participant	Line	Theme: Reactions to transitioning from 3rd to 1st person
Ash	213-214	'The jarring thing about it is the sudden shift from a third person neutral voice to first person'
Ash	234-235	'…it's like flipping a switch there is no gradual shift'
Riley	182	'Just using the word 'I' in a formal essay is so weird ...I just turned it in and cringed'
Frankie	267	'…it sort of suddenly switches from feeling like you're writing an academic piece of work to I'm writing a diary or something'
Frankie	263	'Clunky and weird'
Frankie	270	'…it does, you know definitely did feel a bit uncomfortable'
Frankie	274-276	'…I don't feel it's professional to sound like myself…it's better to try and emulate the tone of the things that you're reading'
Frankie	286-89	'...it just seems so ridiculous that we feel the need to go and use this cold third person tone when we are talking about such personal and yeah but human things'
Jessie	213-4	'…maybe it's the analysis of it switching from the lived experience sort of voice which is you know *I did this I felt that* then putting that sort of analytical hat on and the analysis feels less personal…it's quite a difficult transition…'
Jessie	218	'…it feels quite sort cold and impersonal'
Jessie	220-221	it feels very jumpy…sort of blocky
Jessie	249-252	…it's not technically challenging to switch from you know 'I' to the 'the author'[BUT] it's quite time consuming…because it's almost switching between the two sort of you know elements of your thinking'

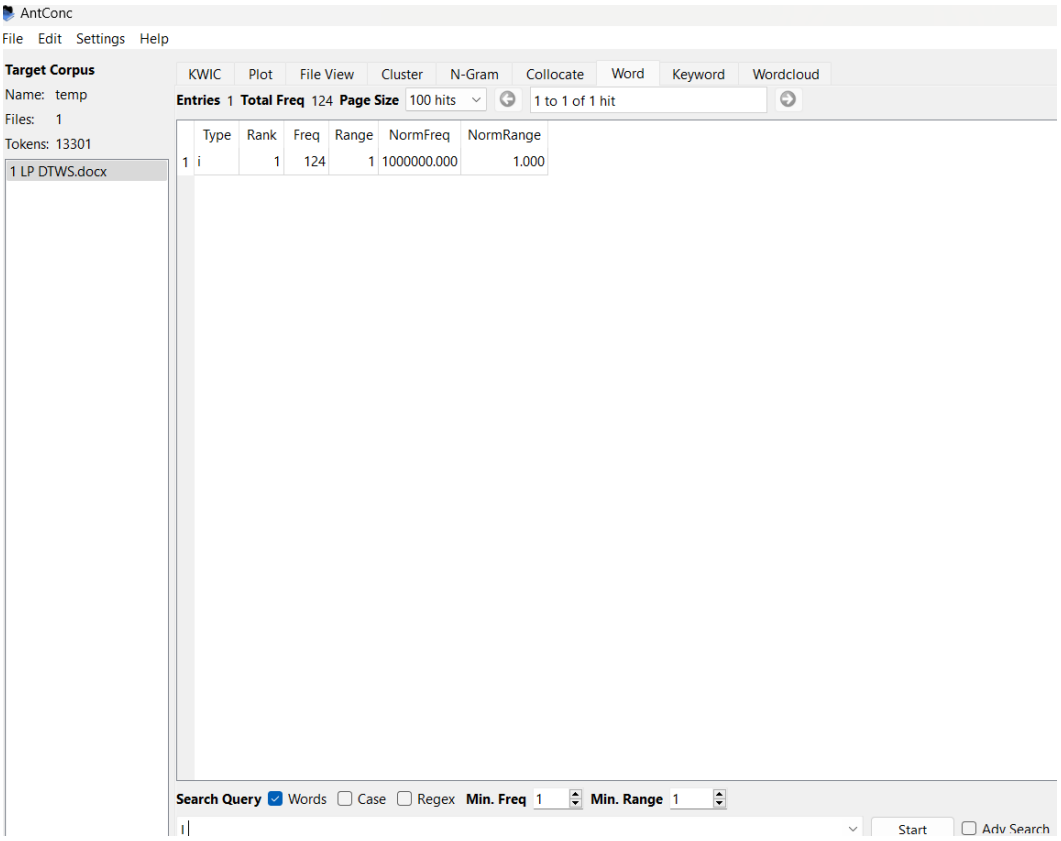
Participant	Line	Theme: multiple factors affecting voice development
Riley	227-230	'I have like a different persona for each writing like they're both me….I kind of have a voice in the both and I just feel like they're both me they're just like different mes. It's the same way that I wouldn't talk to my parents, the same way I talk to my friends'
Kelly	237-238	'…even if I don't outwardly get to say this is my opinion these are my reflections, the evidence that I will use to back up one side or the other will be things that I've looked for that are important to me.
Kelly	240	….something that I care about
Kelly	242	So I guess if I don't have the opportunity to bring in my opinion, explicitly, I'll try and do that by bringing in research that speaks to me..'
Kelly	245-246	Yeah, it's more like an indirect this is me.
Jessie	221	…so, it's almost like two sorts of voices…
Jessie	234	Talking about the way in which different aspects of identity affect her writing, LP says 'it's difficult making them sort of come out with the same voice
Jessie	331	Sometimes certainly yes your voice feels very constrained in terms of your writing style…
Kit	291	…I'd write it in a poem…
Kit	281	Talking about academic writing, RW says '…it feels artificial'
Frankie	276	…given the choice …it might be nice to try and develop a style of writing that feels…is more like myself.
Frankie	433	I would love to get my own style academically
Frankie	440	To write in a style that was more open and accessible.
Ash	312	'I think it's more a means to an end, I don't really enjoy it...'
Ash	320	'most of us aren't going to become researchers and nurses don't have to be researchers'

APPENDIX K

EXTRACT FROM KEY WORDS IN CONTEXT (KWIC) SEARCH USING ANTCON SOFTWARE

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
manager, alongside learning from practice in my current setting, ensures	I	have a breadth of experience and reflection to draw
supervision role is intertwined with my management and leadership skills.	I	have a solid understanding of my colleague's requirement
to join, leave or change their contracts with the setting,	I	have to consider how the action will impact our
my outgoings are and how much profit I have made.	I	have to make decisions as to when and how
professional knowledge and pursue higher qualifications. The knowledge and understanding	I	have acquired through accessing HE has enabled me to
home. I work with my husband, also a registered childminder.	I	have been childminding since 2012. After a successful solo first
between our individual roles within the setting has persisted, as	I	have continued to further my professional knowledge and pursue
been undertaken. I often refer to literature and ideas which	I	have discovered through my own developing knowledge, and sharing
my influence upon previous and current situations in the workplace.	I	have identified opportunities for development of my personal efficacy
is, how much my outgoings are and how much profit	I	have made. I have to make decisions as to
a seismic change for our setting, as my colleague and	I	have previously worked together in the setting for six
developing understanding of the theories behind leading and managing change,	I	have reflected on the factors that contributed to this
in keeping going through this difficult time. The management decisions	I	have taken have allowed my business to survive, and
is essential to avoid setting management becoming chaotic (Riddall-Leech, 2015).	I	have well-developed skills in multi-tasking, prioritising and
to a Change in the Setting Team My colleague and	I	have worked together for several years, we have a
foundational core shared by management professionals and prosperous organisations (Gualco, 2016).	I	am mindful of practitioner wellbeing and its connections with
sacrifice things so the most important things can be prioritised.	I	am mindful of similar feelings my colleague may experience,
mean higher priority activities often result in cancelled supervisions (Hughes, 2009).	I	am mindful to keep supervisory activities which are undertaken

EXTRACT FROM **WORD FREQUENCY** SEARCH USING ANTCONC SOFTWARE



APPENDIX L

FUNCTIONS OF PERSONAL PRONOUN USE: ANALYSIS (EXTRACT)
Function of 'I', 'my', 'the author', 'the practitioner', 'the researcher' : analysis (*1-5) 1-4 derived from Hyland and Tang and Johns and no.5 added by me.

	Example text from line?	**1 (what was done/descriptive)**	**2 (Structuring discourse)**	**3 (showing a result)**	**4 (Making a claim)**	**5 (Reflecting on per./prof. dev.)**	**NB identity not always expressed thro 'I'**
GW	'…which **I** looked back on at a later point…	x					
GW	**I** described the experience…and emotions **I** felt (1 in both cases)	xx					
GW	**I** was able to form a plan of action on how to adjust my thinking (5)					x	
GW	**I** was able to identify some of my interpersonal flaws (5)					x	
GW	**I** reflected on what went well (1)	x					
GW	**My** experience of this distress…can be linked to the concept of resilience					x	
GW	This specific experience had challenged **my** personal resilience				x		
GW	I described the experience and performed a critical analysis and evaluation of **my** behaviours and emotions.	x					
GW	I was able to form a plan on how to adjust **my** thinking…					x	
GW	I was able to identify some of **my** interpersonal flaws…					x	
GW	I reflected on what went well…to inform and refine **my** future practice…	x					
GW	**My** care of the patient involved…	x					
KW	**I** am hesitant to participant in difficult conversations because of…					x	
KW	**I** chose nursing in the interest of helping people					x	

KW	**My** experience with breaking bad news is limited.	x					
KW	Awareness and regulation of **my** own feeling can promote…				x		
KW	…can promote a positive emotional investment in **my** patient…				x		
RW1	**I** have found it challenging to view Angus' profile through a therapy lens…				x		
RW1	From this learning process, **I** take forward the skill of critical comparison				x		
RW1	…through a therapy lens, because **my** education background would naturally				x		

Source: template adapted from Hyland(2002A) and Tang and Johns (1999).

University of Essex ERAMS

APPENDIX M

09/08/2020

Ms Caroline Hawthorne

Essex Pathways, Language and Linguistics

University of Essex

Dear Caroline,

Ethics Committee Decision

I am writing to advise you that your research proposal entitled "Identity and agency: Exploring the relationship between theory and professional practice in Healthcare students' academic writing " has been reviewed by the Humanities Ethics Sub Committee.

The Committee is content to give a favourable ethical opinion of the research. I am pleased, therefore, to tell you that your application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Weir

Ethics ETH1920-1731: Ms Caroline Hawthorne

University of Essex ERAMS

APPENDIX N

02/09/2021

Ms Caroline Hawthorne

Language and Linguistics

University of Essex

Dear Caroline,

Ethics Committee Decision

Application: ETH2122-0023

I am writing to advise you that your research proposal entitled "Identity and agency: Exploring the relationship between theory and professional practice in Healthcare students' academic writing " has been reviewed by the Ethics Sub Committee 3.

The Committee is content to give a favourable ethical opinion of the research. I am pleased, therefore, to tell you that your application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Daly

Ethics ETH2122-0023: Ms Caroline Hawthorne

APPENDIX O

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Project title: Identity and agency: Exploring the relationship between theory and professional practice in Healthcare students' academic writing.

Invitation to this study

My name is Caroline Hawthorne and I am an *English Language and Academic Skills Tutor* at the University of Essex. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about writing at university. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

The study

This research explores representations of identity and agency in healthcare students' academic writing. In other words, it is interested in finding out about the way in which you present yourself through your writing. A common writing requirement of healthcare programmes is to combine discussions about theory and real-life practice in assignments. To do this, students often have to switch between formal and more reflective writing styles in the same piece of work. This research is interested in your experiences of moving in and out of academic and professional identities as writers, and the different challenges this may present. Insights gained from the study will contribute to wider discussions about how best to support students who are frequently required to relate theory to practice in their written work.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate because of the unique insights you can offer about combining your academic knowledge with reflections on your professional practice.

Informed consent

It is up to you to decide whether or not you wish to take part in this research study. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to provide written consent. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. If you wish to withdraw, you simply need to notify me (contact details below). If any data have already been collected, upon withdrawal, your data will be destroyed, unless you inform me that you are happy for me to use such data for the purposes of the project.

What will I have to do?

You will have to complete an ***online survey,*** and a ***follow-up Zoom interview***. The survey involves reading a series of statements and simply responding agree/disagree/don't know. This will take approximately 15 minutes. The follow-up interview is designed to explore in greater depth your thoughts on some of the issues raised in the online survey. This will take 50-60 mins. You will also be asked to ***share a sample of your academic writing*** to be analysed.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

Apart from a time commitment of approx. 15 mins to complete the research and approximately 50-60 mins for a Zoom interview to discuss issues raised in the online survey, no disadvantages (physical or psychological) are envisaged.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Hopefully, you will find the discussion around writing interesting and relevant to your own experiences at university. The research may provide you with a different perspective on your current approaches to academic writing. It is also hoped that your insights into possible challenges with academic writing will help to inform future academic-writing support strategies for other students.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The online surveys will be anonymous and although the post-survey interviews will be recorded via Zoom, your personal details will not be included in any subsequent findings. Any findings, or extracts used from the text analysis will be also anonymised. Information collected from the research will not be shared with other participants and all data will be destroyed no later than two years after collection as follows:

- Paper based information e.g. consent forms will be shredded
- Audio and video files will be deleted e.g. interviews

You will also be asked to consent to communication via your Essex email address. This is necessary to allow me to maintain contact to arrange meetings with you. The anonymised findings will form part of my PhD thesis and may at later date be used in published articles and conference presentations.

Who is funding the research?
This research is being funded by the Consortium for Humanities and the Arts South-East England (CHASE) over a period of 54 months, commencing 1 October 2020.

Research participants' rights: By returning the consent form, you are indicating that you have read all of the above and that you are voluntarily participating in this study.

Concerns and complaints
If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the principal investigator of the project, [Caroline Hawthorne], using the contact details below. If are still concerned, you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction or you feel that you cannot approach the principal investigator, please contact the principal investigator's supervisor, [Tracey Costley, tcostley@essex.ac.uk]. If you are still not satisfied, please contact the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager, Sarah Manning-Press (e-mail sarahm@essex.ac.uk). Please include the ERAMS reference which can be found at the foot of this page.

Contact Details
Researcher: Caroline Hawthorne caroline.hawthorne@essex.ac.uk

University of Essex

APPENDIX P

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Identity and agency: Exploring the relationship between theory and professional practice in Healthcare students' academic writing.

Researcher: Caroline Hawthorne

Contact details: caroline.hawthorne@essex.ac.uk

	Please initial box
1. **I confirm that I** have read and understand the Information Sheet dated **17 August 2021** for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.	☐
3. I understand that any data relating to me will be securely stored and accessible only to the researchers involved in the project, and that confidentiality will be maintained.	☐
4. I understand that data collected in this project might be shared as appropriate and for publication of findings, in which case data will remain completely anonymous.	☐
5. I agree to be contacted via my University of Essex email.	☐
6. I agree to: **(please initial all that apply)** • Taking part in an online pre-interview online survey • Taking part in an online (Zoom) interview • Being video/audio recorded via zoom • A sample of my academic writing being analysed	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

Participant Name	Date	Participant Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher Name	Date	Researcher Signature
CAROLINE HAWTHORNE	_____	_____