UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
School of Education

SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, THE ROLE OF THE FORM TUTOR: AN AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY

by

Claire Elizabeth Elhaggagi

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis will illustrate the strong, significant and positive relationship between attendance at secondary schools in England and the role of the form tutor. The aim of this thesis is to use narrative methodology to show how this relationship is auto/biographical in nature and how it could potentially be critically important to understanding and raising attendance levels.

Part I will provide evidence that school attendance is currently officially approached in a restricted, quantitative manner. This has led to inaccurate and ill-defined data and initiatives, with little success in raising attendance. Further, there is a lack of qualitative understanding surrounding the role of the form tutor. Thus, although students and form tutors recognise how their personal and qualitatively described interactions influence attendance, this is not identified by official publications.

Part II will argue that a new epistemological approach is required to incorporate the qualitative, individual and auto/biographical elements already positively influencing attendance but currently unable to gain just recognition. Wittgenstein's (1953) philosophical theories will be argued to include dialectic elements of meaning and therefore provide grounding for a new approach to attendance. In turn, this requires the structure and content of narrative time, identity and ethics, based upon Ricoeur (1955, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990), to fully communicate the significant relationship between attendance, individuals and the role of the form tutor: ultimately enhancing the accuracy, definition and understanding of attendance.

Part III will discuss the practical implications of this new epistemology and methodology, through an analysis of the methods used here to undertake research with a small group of form tutors within a secondary school in England. It will also be noted how narrative theory and my own auto/biographical experiences have affected this thesis. The content presented crosses multifarious boundaries, bringing together a passion for mathematics, philosophy, science and self-consciousness, with a personal experience of family love and professional experience of attendance. Consequently, this thesis auto/biographically brings together academic, practical, applied, theoretical, professional and personal concepts to gain a more meaningful understanding of secondary school attendance.

CONTENTS PAGE

LIST OF PERSONAL POEMS

DECLARATION OF AUTHORISHIP

I, Claire Elizabeth Elhaggagi, declare that the thesis entitled: 'Secondary School Attendance, The Role of the Form Tutor: An Auto/Biographical Inquiry' and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:
Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Gill Clarke, for her support, guidance and endless patience throughout my studies. I would also like to thank the School of Education at Southampton University for providing me with the structured opportunity to study specifically the auto/biographical elements of education through the 'Doctorate of Education' programme.

I would like to show my appreciation to all of the form tutors at the school in which I previously worked, from whom the inspiration came for relating their role and individuality so positively to attendance. A special thank you must also be given to those particular form tutors who directly contributed and became involved in the project itself, as well as the school for its support.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband Mr. Khalid Elhaggagi for supporting me throughout this project and always ensuring I had time to achieve it, even during the dramatic changing circumstances that our family has gone through. I would like to thank my mother Mrs M.A.E. Jane Marshall for her patience and time listening to my ideas as well as Mr. Stephen Newte for always believing in and seeing the importance of every individual.

DEDICATION

To my family, without whom this thesis would not have been possible for me to complete. Their never-ending enthusiasm and unquestioning support with balancing my own family commitments and changing circumstances with studying as well have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive.

ABBREVIATIONS, DEFINITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Abbreviations

'Attendance'

The abbreviated term of 'attendance' will often be used to refer to the overall concept of secondary school attendance levels in mainstream schools in England.

References to Wittgenstein (1953)

In line with usual practice, this thesis will refer to Wittgenstein's later work within the *Philosophical Investigations* by providing reference to the relevant paragraph number from within the publication preceded by the abbreviation of 'PI'.

Official Government Departments

The following abbreviations will be used within the thesis to refer to the relevant official government departments that have, over time, covered the area of education and therefore also school attendance:

- DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007 to date).
- DfES: Department for Education and Skills (2001-2007).
- DfEE: Department for Education and Employment (1995-2001).

Such is the extent of analysis within this thesis of documentation published by the above government departments, in-text references to this material will be abbreviated. For example, (Great Britain. Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009a) will be abbreviated to (DCSF 2009a). However, all references will be listed in full at the end of the thesis.

Education Terminology

The following abbreviations will be used to refer to relevant education terms:

- PSHE: Curriculum lesson upon Personal, Social and Health Education.
- SEAL: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Project (DCSF 2009h).
- Pastoral: Taken in contrast to 'Curriculum' aspects of education, this term refers to the personal and social aspects of development, welfare and learning for students whilst in school.

- OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education.
- EWO: Education Welfare Officer.

Philosophical and Methodological Terminology

- Auto/biography: Throughout this thesis, it will be argued that autobiographical and biographical time, identity and structure are a part of each other and structured, communicated and understood through narrative methodology. Thus, the term 'auto/biography' will be used to refer to the intricately related combination of understanding, identifying and communicating constitutive elements and influences from and over one's own life, with that of the lives of others.
- Normative/normativity: In the traditional philosophical sense, this term will be used to refer to the potential truth-value, or contribution to truth, attainable from a concept or element.
- Mimesis: The definition of mimesis and its related aspects (such as plot, emplotment and postunderstanding) will be based upon the definitions and context found from Ricoeur (1984, 1988, 1990).

Definitions and Limitations

'Form Tutor'

The definition of a form tutor (discussed in detail within chapter 1 and chapter 6) will initially be taken as that of a member of teaching staff within secondary mainstream schools in England, who lead a 'tutor group' each morning before curriculum lessons start. A significant responsibility for this role is to legally register each student as present or absent from school.

By emphasising the role and individuality of the form tutor, this thesis is not arguing for sole responsibility for attendance to be placed upon this role. The form tutor is, as this thesis will show, just one member of a socially complex group of individuals that come together to form the school social environment. Therefore, placing sole responsibility is not the aim of this thesis. Rather, the aim is to recognise the part this role and the individuals are already playing (or could now potentially be supported to play) within the story of attendance.

'Tutor Group'

The students in each tutor group come together to register attendance and prepare for the rest of the curriculum day ahead. The actual use of tutor group time is part of that which is debated throughout this thesis. However, in general it is used as non-curriculum time in which to take the register, chase absences, pass on messages from other teaching staff to students and to support, listen and help students become a part of the school society. In some schools, students finish their school day by returning to tutor groups to complete the legally required afternoon register. However, this register can legally be completed at any time during the afternoon period.

Potential Depth of Researching and Defining Attendance

This thesis does not aim to conclude with one overall answer to all the issues, difficulties, problems and life-experience elements that can be found when looking at why young people miss school. Instead, it will argue that a different *approach* to attendance will provide a clearer, more accurate, productive and positive understanding of attendance in general, through recognising individuals and roles such as form tutors. However, it is recognised that this does not cover the numerous specific, individual elements such as medical, cultural, family, environmental and curriculum-based influences that affect attendance.

The 'Later Wittgenstein'

This thesis is based upon the epistemology found within Wittgenstein's later work, specifically his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). This later work incorporated fundamental changes to Wittgenstein's thinking compared to in his earlier thoughts (Wittgenstein 1921). This change has led Wittgenstein to attain differing labels of biographical identification, as either the 'early' or the 'later' Wittgenstein, as documented by Hacker (2004). Wittgenstein's 'later' work was not published until 1953, after his death in 1951. Auto/biographical narratives therefore can be seen to influence not just the thoughts and lives of the individuals themselves but also how others identify, code and label such individuals even after death.

Philosophical Context and Application

This thesis is based upon an *application* of Wittgenstein's later philosophy (Wittgenstein 1953) and Ricoeur's (1955, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990) narrative methodological theories. The pure philosophical arguments for and

against these theories will be discussed whenever appropriate and often in comparison with contemporary research. However, pure philosophical argument is secondary to the actual and potential use of *applying* the theories to attendance. This thesis is not about philosophical debate in its purest form but an application of philosophical and methodological theories to actual life.

Wittgenstein's epistemology will be argued for principally through drawing upon the work of McDowell (1996). However, such a philosophical work has been approached within the context of McDowell's various and extensive philosophical theories, which can be found in his own collected volumes of work (1998b,c). Within these volumes, specific context for this thesis has been achieved from McDowell (1998a,d,e,f,g).

In addition, Luntley (1999, 2002, 2003a,b,c,d, 2004, 2005), Ainsley and Luntley (2007) and my own research (Marshall 2001a,b,c; Elhaggagi 2006a,b,c and 2007) also form a base to the ideas expressed in this thesis. Further, Ricoeur's theories will be taken primarily from his own extensive volumes of work (1955, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990) as well as again drawing on my own previous research upon his philosophical content and context (Elhaggagi 2006a,b,c and 2007).

SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, THE ROLE OF THE FORM TUTOR: AN AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY

INTRODUCTION

'The Beginning'

There is no end.
There are multiple beginnings.

I see the lives of others,
Keep on turning, spiralling, circling,
Around me, surrounding me.
All these lives making a difference, all the time, every time,
Sometime, no time.

One life starts to struggle, another picks it up.
A smile, a comment, a gesture.
Upon a shared understanding,
Meaning escapes free: Learning, imagination, individuality.
All defined through each other.

But now this learning must happen in one place
A school, an education, by law.
A divergence is created, a problem occurs.
Creativity and learning become enforced:
Participation through Obligation.

Although this may work for many,
Some will not be so lucky.
Some lives will be lost in the system of codes
And then learning, imagination, individuality
Start to fail.

Within all of this, such students don't suffer alone.
Form tutors are torn in identity.
They are defined by their act of taking legal registers,
Yet their personal commitment finds them doing
So much more.

By using tutor time as more than a register
These people bring belonging to learning.
Individuals come together to support each other
To find identity as a group and the possibility of learning
Whilst attending a school.

Elhaggagi (2008)

Thesis Content and Structure

Secondary school attendance is a complex concept. On the surface, attendance is a legal requirement in England recorded through the statistical measurement of young people who are obligated to attend education establishments each day. It is, therefore, a concept deeply rooted in number and quantifiable data collected through compulsory attendance registers completed daily in schools using officially defined codes with specific statistical significance. Consequently, attendance is by tradition, extremely reliant upon mathematical analysis, numerical models and statistical conclusions.

Conversely, this thesis will argue that there is an additional side to attendance as well as the current heavily weighted reliance upon external, objective and quantifiable data: attendance is also created through the interpretations, judgements, intentions and actions of individuals through their life stories and experiences as they actively relate with each other. Thus, through combining these elements with the traditional elements, attendance becomes based upon dialectically, but intricately entwined, related elements.

Combining Attendance with Narrative and Auto/biography

I wish to argue that attendance is specifically made from multiple narratives entwined within a complex plot of interwoven times, spaces, personalities and relationships. Instead of just numbers, percentages, prosecutions and targets, attendance is about people: it is a collection of narratives telling the inter-related autobiographical and biographical (auto/biographical) stories of subjective individuals based within our objective world.

My thesis uses narrative to cross the boundaries between philosophy, method, methodology, documentary research and everyday educational practice. Such a combination and collaboration of areas has emerged from my own background in mathematics, through philosophy and into practical education scenarios. A detailed description of the impact my own life has had on the creation of this thesis is provided later in this introduction. It is as a consequence of this influence that this thesis has become based upon an individual's life path and context as well as a mathematical and

philosophical academic learning, now applied to the practical and professional experiences I have encountered within attendance.

It is narrative as a methodology that has presented the active ability to contain these diverse elements and yet house them within one whole. Narrative has the fluid, flexible and ongoing nature needed to capture meaning within areas such as school attendance, which definitively involves people's auto/biographical lives whilst also incorporating quantitative data and statistics.

Thus, narrative will be used and argued for as the methodology needed both directly for attendance and also for the creation of this thesis. It is the auto/biographical element of the narrative structure of attendance that is currently overlooked. This is so in the specific sense of recognising individual life experiences and journeys as they cross and interact with each other, thus combining autobiographical and biographical time, memory and identity through narrative structure.

Therefore, this thesis is not aiming to present stand-alone autobiographical stories from individual form tutors or to overtly present their statistical, background information and data. The ages, experience levels and backgrounds of each individual are only drawn upon when genuinely applicable and where the individuals have themselves reflected upon such specific content. The overall drive for this thesis is thus towards the fundamental, methodological, epistemological and practical way their stories become influential and critical to the entire structure, creation and understanding of attendance as a concept itself.

As a consequence of this approach, the practical research carried out for this thesis was intentionally small-scale and created through auto/biographical input from form tutors. The content of their stories has been used both explicitly and implicitly within the creation of each chapter, as much from their methodological and practical creational influence as from their direct and linguistic content. In relation to this, Stanley and Temple (2008: p.276) interestingly point out the difference between narrative studies as "a focus on narrative as a particular kind of data or the content of this" and narrative inquiry as "narrative as a methodological and analytical approach…". With this distinction in mind, this thesis is more inclined towards the latter.

Thesis Structure: The Dialectic Elements

This thesis will be structured in three parts. 'Part I' houses the initial two chapters of the thesis and is based upon how the current pre-understanding (Ricoeur 1984: p.46) of attendance, as well as the role of the form tutor, are inaccurate, confused and illogical. This, it will be contended, is due to an assumption within official literature that attendance is heavily constituted by quantitative, rather than qualitative, content. Hence, Part I involves the first dialectic relationship in attendance, between quantitative and qualitative meaning.

Chapter 1 will begin this discussion by analysing and discussing the present literature and definitions surrounding attendance. It will be shown that attendance is currently defined primarily through quantitative and external means, excluding the influential aspect from subjective and qualitative aspects within the creation and analysis of attendance levels by individuals. This current approach, it will be concluded, is directly leading to incorrect and invalid conclusions.

Chapter 2 will lead with a similar discussion but with regard to the definition of the form tutor. The *role* of the form tutor will be found to gain partial definition through task responsibilities described using external, discrete and quantitative terminology. However, through the practical research obtained from form tutors directly for this thesis, it will also be found that qualitative aspects formed from the individuals and their identities fundamentally constitute the definition of this role. This chapter will introduce, but not conclude, upon the second dialectic relationship, between individuals and their roles.

Part I will therefore see the initial argument put forward for reinstating the influence of subjective and qualitative interpretation, meaning and judgement in order to create a more accurate and less confused pre-understanding of attendance. The role of the form tutor will be seen to be instrumental through the completion of the legally required register each morning. The act of inputting attendance codes into this register is not just a statistical and external act but also dialectically constituted by elements of individual judgement and interpretation from one individual over another.

Part II is constituted by the following three chapters, representing a transition from the current confused approach discussed in Part I, to a new, dynamic approach capable of housing, and productively understanding, dialectic relationships.

Chapter 3 will start this process of transformation through presenting an argument for an active change in epistemology from which the dialectic relationships between quantitative and qualitative meaning are maintained as distinct and yet intrinsically related to each other. It will be argued that it is specifically the epistemology of the later Wittgenstein (1953) that provides an epistemology capable of housing this dialectical relationship within attendance.

Chapter 4 will argue that from this epistemological grounding, a specific methodology based upon Ricoeur's (1955, 1965, 1984, 1985, 1988) narrative theories of time, needs to be applied in order to approach attendance and the role of the form tutor not just coherently but also consistently and with practical application in mind. By combining Wittgenstein's epistemology with Ricoeur's theories of double meaning (1965: p.15) and narrative temporal structure, the complex relationships between individuals and social groups will be shown to be capable of presenting meaningful communication (both positive and negative) through more than formal linguistics and statistics.

Chapter 5 develops the narrative methodology initialised in chapter 4 onto its significance and effect when applied to the role, individuality and identity of form tutors and attendance. Thus, the dialectic relationship between identity and role is finally provided with an epistemological and methodological grounding. This chapter will achieve this through application of Ricoeur's (1955, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990) narrative theories of identity based specifically within attendance applications and situations.

Additionally, it will be argued that as a consequence of applying this form of epistemology and narrative methodology, the third dialectic relationship, between individual ethics and social morality, becomes both highlighted and productively understood. It will be argued that form tutors represent such a dialectic relationship through their commitment and approach to attendance and young people as individuals and yet through socially and institutionally defined roles. Form tutors thus become individuals able to choose to act in ethical ways in relation to other

individuals and their sense of belonging to the school, whilst simultaneously representing and recording a social grounding through which this belonging is legally enforced and morally required.

Therefore, Part II will argue that Ricoeur's narrative concepts and relationships between time, structure, plot and identity, set within Wittgenstein's epistemology, are paramount in understanding school attendance and the individuals involved. Such methodological grounding will give rise to the significance of auto/biographical identity and active relationships between auto/biographical individuals.

At a methodological level, combining school attendance with narrative auto/biographical time and identity will allow for the significance of individual roles such as the form tutor to become apparent and crucially significant. Narrative methodology is something that can be utilised not only as the official methodology for this thesis but also as the overarching framework for approaching understanding of form tutors, students and school attendance alike.

'Part III' of this thesis will take these epistemological and methodological groundings towards actual, practical application within real life experiences and situations. Through chapter 6, the thesis concludes by providing a summary of the chapters within both Part I and Part II. This is reached by applying each process and meaning argued for to the actual methods used within the practical research carried out for the thesis.

Thereby, chapter 6 produces a discussion upon the practical implications of all the dialectical relationships uncovered within attendance and the individuals within it, as well as potential effects and practical methods for the future. This is achieved by bringing the content and needs highlighted by Part I of the thesis, through the epistemology and methodology of Part II, towards a concluding and final process of actual application: the auto/biographical and narrative role, identity, individuality and importance of the form tutor is given a philosophical, theoretical and practical place within the meaning of secondary school attendance.

Autobiographical Drive and Influence

In relation to the methodology, epistemology and ethos of this thesis, I am writing *to* you as the reader but I am also writing to, for and about myself in doing so. However, I am intending to submit this thesis as a document for others to read. With this intention comes the commitment to opening a dialogue, relationship and an active, flexible and fluid piece of meaningful conversation through which I cannot distance myself entirely. Within this in mind, Appendix 1 provides a personal reflection upon writing and approaching the opening chapter of this thesis.

In addition, each chapter and part of the thesis will start with a relevant quotation, contribution from a form tutor or a short poem regarding my own feelings about the meaning to follow. The poems are presented as a reflection of Ricoeur's (1975: p.13) analysis of poetry and metaphor within which he states:

> Now poetry does not seek to prove anything at all: its project is mimetic; its aim…is to compose an essential representation of human actions; its appropriate method is to speak the truth by means of fiction, fable, and tragic *muthos*.

Thus, such poems are presented as a mimetic combination of subjective, informal and representational meaning in dialectic relation to the formal, traditional structure of the thesis.

Below follows a brief outline of my personal journey as it has progressed on a path towards writing this thesis. My aim here is to present a platform for understanding the basis and grounding for my ideas and the subsequent research that materialised. I believe it is paramount to present this thesis in as transparent a context as possible. Understanding the journey that the author has undertaken to reach the point of writing a thesis is a part of the meaning of the thesis itself.

Trusting in Objectivity then Discovering Subjectivity

Mathematics has always been my academic strength. By solving mathematical problems as a child, I gained security, identity and belief in myself. I built a confidence in maths to provide answers to everything in the world. Reading literature

about maths during secondary school years onwards (Berlinski 1996; Butterworth 1999; Devlin 1997; Stewart 1995) strengthened this belief. I had also intended to study pure mathematics at university. However, I opted in the end to study philosophy at the University of Warwick.

This critical change in decision was, in an academic sense, primarily due to two specific teaching individuals. Firstly, my English literature teacher at secondary school had been such an inspiration to me about the power of the written word that I had continued with English literature to 'A' level, even though I did not believe it held any epistemological depth. I thoroughly enjoyed the diversity and challenge it presented but only as a 'fun' subject and a contrast to my other subjects in Maths, Further Maths and Physics.

However, through this combination of subjects, I was enabled to consider possibilities at university other than just pure maths. From this freedom, I met the Head of Philosophy during my visit to see the University of Warwick (where I was intending to study maths or mechanical engineering), who happened to be a maths and physics specialist. He instantly accepted my personal concerns about managing any form of public speaking, which had persisted as a negative element of my personal identity for many years. He turned my concerns around and placed them within a context through which I could achieve results using my own individuality. He somehow enabled me to see possibilities and potentials within my own character and identity that I had not been able to find myself.

I cannot overstate how important his influence was. Through his department, and particularly his lectures upon 'Philosophy of Enquiry' and 'Philosophy of Science', I had the opportunity to study philosophy in direct relation to maths and science (Barrow 1998; Cohen 1989; Ferris 1991; Lakatos 1976; Losee 1980; Kuhn 1970; Newton-Smith 1990; Popper 1963; Reichenbach 1961; Silver 1998). This form of study has directly influenced my understanding of scientific, 'objective' and quantitative research methods and their effect upon the data and meaning collected. In turn this has affected my current understanding of attendance and the role of individuals.

This scientific philosophical study at Warwick was balanced with traditional and historical philosophical study, including Kant (1785, 1781, 1788), Descartes (1641), Plato (399BC) and Aristotle (350BC). I was presented with multiple arguments both for and against the epistemological strength of maths, science and objectivity and I started to doubt my absolute trust in external objectivity as the only route to truth.

When I continued at Warwick to study for a Masters Degree in Philosophy of Mind, Language and Consciousness, I had the opportunity to research into memory, mental states and self-consciousness. This line of 'scientific' philosophy allowed me to study Wittgenstein and McDowell directly in relation to, and under the teachings of, professors and researchers such as Luntley, Eilan (Eilan *et al.* 1999) and Hoerl (Hoerl and McCormack 2001). It is this line of philosophy that has significantly shaped my interest in consciousness, self-consciousness, memory and ultimately the shape of human temporal life-experience, which has helped contribute to the creation of Part II of this thesis.

Throughout, within Wittgenstein's philosophy I found excitement, relief and a sense of overwhelming connection. Where my first degree had opened up questions and uncertainties, my Masters degree provided answers regarding epistemology, ultimately culminating in my dissertation upon episodic memory (Marshall 2001a).

I had originally assumed that identity and meaning would be held by maths alone. I wanted to hide behind maths in order to not need to acknowledge the difficulties I found in social and vocal confidence. However, through Wittgenstein's philosophy I was enabled to search for objective truth and meaning in the world directly *through* my personality and character. Objectivity and subjectivity became both the content of my academic passion and also my personal auto/biographical approach to identity and role.

Individuality and Role

My passion for Wittgenstein's later philosophy did not fade as I moved into full-time professions within education and children's charities. I completed a second Masters degree in Education, specialising in Special Educational Needs. Through this, I researched into the human ability to learn through play (Marshall 2003/2004) and once

again found an intrinsic connection between Wittgenstein's ability to join subjectivity and objectivity reflected in the actual activity happening in front of me.

Following this, I became employed by a Local Education Authority in the south-east of England. Within this, I was employed as both an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for a group of schools and as Attendance and Welfare Manager for one of the schools I was the EWO for. Later I became full-time for this particular school as their internal Head of Attendance and Welfare. This initial joint position was an example of the new idea being trialled to semi-devolve EWO positions out of Local Authorities and into schools (Wilkin *et al.* 2003).

This post combined my love of maths through the extensive reliance upon statistics in attendance, with direct work with individuals and social groups. I worked directly with secondary school staff of all levels as well as students, families, Local Education Authority staff, OFSTED and official government attendance organisations and departments. In addition, I carried out attendance related legal and court proceedings based upon statistical evidence, counselling for young people and numerous welfare schemes and projects.

Ultimately, attendance proved to be a complex subject with many intricate and specific areas. Students regularly missed school for multiple and complex reasons and, in many cases, only attended again with support from specific external agencies. The term used to register absences occurring often determined what form of agency support was requested: "The choice of a particular term depends on many factors, but the term often determines a subsequent intervention policy" (Cooper and Mellors 1990: p.319). Thus, a relationship became apparent to me between the codes and terms used in legal attendance registers and the resultant pastoral agency help that individuals received: maths and logic were intricately related to subjective and socially prescribed interventions.

Crucially, as I was lucky enough to work directly within a secondary school, I began to work closely with school staff in particular. Within this, the role of the form tutor very quickly became critical. In cases where the form tutor had a natural and constructive connection with their tutor group, the positive outcomes were evident in terms of high levels of attendance. I could not always overtly state the specific activity

happening that caused this relationship, but there was always *something* coming from the form tutor that was having a positive effect upon the students.

I began to see similarities between this relationship and elements of my own personal upbringing. My parents fostered various children when I was younger, in addition to my three biological and older siblings. My foster siblings came from 'disadvantaged' or 'broken' families: they were 'unwanted' and all seemed to need an identity and a feeling of worth as an individual. To achieve this, my parents seemed to just give them a sense of love and belonging. They took these children into their home, our home, and made it a home for them too.

From this experience I learnt that simple, but real connections between individuals could make it possible for identities, lives and existence to become possible. To care and listen, to stop and acknowledge someone with even just a smile, can make lives exist. It was versions of this that I was seeing happen between form tutors and their tutees. This connection was often critical to the self and social identity of all the individuals in the tutor group, including those with existing attendance issues and those who could otherwise have started to have such problems.

Hence, I became reliant upon form tutors for the accuracy and completion of the statistical side of attendance as well as the pastoral, welfare and individual side of enabling students to confidently attend. This reliance very quickly became directed upon the individuals within the role, as the official attendance directions published either did not mention such a role or took power and responsibility away. Thus, my practical work with form tutors was not supported or recognised in any official attendance related directives. Form tutors had no official definition, context or training for their role and were left to carry it out through their own individuality and commitment. This led to considerable differences in how individuals believed in and carried out their role, resulting in students receiving very different reactions, greetings and support as they entered school each morning.

Social Morality and Individual Ethics

I genuinely believed that the later philosophy of Wittgenstein held an answer to the problems I was seeing in attendance. However, initially I had no methodological way

to join his theories with the practice of attendance I was witnessing. I felt that the individuals who were form tutors needed official recognition from education departments such as the DCSF (or DfEE or DfES as it then was) for their personal commitment to attendance. A high level of individual ethical intention from form tutors was being relied upon to represent the institutional face of education each morning but without a social or official moral reciprocal balance of recognition.

This difficulty I was facing changed as I started studying for my doctorate in Education, researching specifically into secondary school attendance. The auto/biographical research options available within this course presented me with research methods as deep and meaningful and rich in content as the lives of individuals. I studied obituaries, art and poetry as part of uncovering meaning and identity through qualitative methods, without relying upon numbers and quantitative measurements alone.

I decided to complete doctorate assignments (Elhaggagi 2006a,b,c and 2007) researching upon qualitative methods in relation to my previous quantitative understanding of meaning, thus incorporating research from Erben (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 2000), Paley (2005), Darbyshire *et al.* (2005) and Ely *et al.* (1997) with Wittgenstein and Ricoeur. Within Elhaggagi (2006b) I specifically looked at the how Wittgenstein's later philosophy influences and brings together the dialectic relationship between quantitative and qualitative research.

Through such study, the particular methodological approach available through narrative and auto/biographical elements became apparent to me as particularly significant. Such an approach is capable of housing my belief in quantitative reality, Wittgenstein's epistemology and the care, love, belonging, ethics and morality that I was seeing within attendance. Within Elhaggagi (2006c), I discussed the ability of auto/biographical and narrative methods to contain and express the complex yet significantly influential *levels* of self-consciousness, and the ethical and validity related consequences, found within research and research processes.

However, very specifically it was a session upon Ricoeur's narrative theories of identity, auto/biography and time that had a monumental impact upon me. The discussions that ensued regarding his theories felt as if they were putting together the

pieces of my previously scattered puzzle from my childhood right through to my academic and professional experiences. Ricoeur's theories had the outward methodological ability to *communicate* and express active meaning to others, which Wittgenstein's philosophy had specifically lacked on its own. Within Elhaggagi (2007), I argued that by basing Ricoeur's theories upon Wittgenstein's epistemology, meaning could finally be understood upon temporally active, dynamic and vibrant grounds. This has directly influenced and affected my understanding of attendance and therefore the content of this thesis, as Part II will discuss.

Ricoeur's narrative methodology, based within Wittgenstein's epistemology, is capable of bringing together all the elements of school attendance through positively emphasising and using the moral and ethical relationship between individuals and social groups as they interact immanently within the objective world: this is, therefore, how to describe the auto/biographical significance of the individual, identity and role of the form tutor in school attendance.

In order to progress towards this conclusion therefore, this thesis will now advance onto Part I. Within this, the dialectic relationship between quantitative and qualitative meaning in relation to attendance and the role of the form tutor will be presented and the journey of this thesis, as it emerged from my life experiences, will truly begin.

PART I

A Confused Pre-Understanding

'Official Attendance'

The DCSF have another directive
Upon school attendance issues.
Statistics and targets shall be given priority:
Truancy is a numerically measured crime.

If I may interrupt just now,
Your directive is important I know.
But may I enquire to the children?
How best can I care for them?

The school must increase the attendance rates.
The school must step up the pressure.
The school must tackle parents and students.
Truants and families must conform.

May I interject once more?
I believe you may have forgotten,
Each individual student
Has a story to tell you know.

Forget the individual:
Focus on the whole.
Increase the numbers and the stats.
Then all will be happy and well.

I will take note of your directive
Put measures in where required.
But I will not forget the individual
For we all have a right to exist.

Elhaggagi (2008)

CHAPTER 1

School Attendance

'Capture the Meaning'

Capture the meaning, detail it fast:
Number it, code it, display it in graphs.
Present your data, use it in court:
Use it to prove what is true.

But please remember the original story –
Think back to what you could feel.
Were there only numbers present?
Or were there people in front of you too?

Elhaggagi (2009)

This opening chapter presents a discussion upon the current pre-understanding surrounding the concept of school attendance. This will be achieved through analysis of official documentation, research and policy, uncovering how these influence the definition and meaning of attendance. It will be argued that school attendance is currently defined, used and constrained by such literature through excessive reliance upon quantitative terminology and data, thereby becoming unable to respond to significant qualitative elements occurring. Hence, this chapter immediately expresses the first dialectic struggle occurring within attendance between quantitative and qualitative elements and how this leads to invalid and incorrect definitions.

Official publications from government education departments have helped shape the backbone of school attendance. This, in turn, has affected how school attendance is related to the education system and in particular to roles such as form tutors. Analysis of official publications regarding school attendance will show how the role of form tutor is related to school attendance in part through the act of completing registers and coding absences. Understanding this coding and registration system more thoroughly will allow the content of the following chapter, on the role and definition of the form tutor, to contextualise why the relationship between the role and attendance is currently so significantly underestimated.

The first section of this chapter will examine the definition of attendance as well as the way current legal and government policies both use and subcategorise attendance. It will be shown how attendance is assumed to be primarily quantitative in nature with subjective and pastoral elements either removed or sidelined. However, it will also be argued that although such concepts are currently unrecognised or, at best underestimated, they remain fundamentally and intrinsically entwined within the very nature of school attendance. Without such recognition, the current definitions are incomplete and, in some cases, based upon entirely invalid inferences.

The second section will discuss the effects of allowing qualitative elements of attendance to remain hidden. This is not to deny that government research and publications have used quantitative and impersonal data to create productive initiatives. However, the limited audience that these initiatives are directed at allows them to loose much power and emphasis. As the definition of attendance is only partially defined using quantitative values, many negative and invalid links are made within the literature between terminology and definitions. Examples of this are found within the definition of truancy and the misunderstanding that currently exists around the unauthorisation of school absences.

Finally and more optimistically, the third section will argue that the most recent political terminology has shifted in nature, incorporating more awareness of the dialectic and diverse nature of attendance. It is hoped that such movement could lead to a more accurate reflection of attendance. It will be concluded that if attendance policy, direction and definition are enabled to embrace both sides of this dialectic tension, then a clearer and more accurate understanding of the issues will be made possible.

Definitions, Confusion and Unrecognised Subjectivity

Attendance at school has been legally required in England, for certain age groups of children, since the Foster Education Act of 1870. Currently the legal requirement for parents to ensure children have an education is found in s.7 and s.444 of the Education Act (Great Britain. *Education Act 1996*).

The definitions within this Act are not always clear however. The meaning of 'compulsory school age' for instance, is a concept created and much debated by individuals and governments, such as recently within the Queen's Speech (Great Britain. The Prime Minister's Office, 2007). Late in 2008, the age of participation in education or training rose again to eighteen years of age, as defined in s.1 of the Act (Great Britain. *Education and Skills Act 2008*).

There are a plethora of publications that outline how these definitions have evolved and been shaped between attendance, politics, official policies and the law. Notable are the views of Reid (1985, 2003, 2004, 2005a,b,c, 2006, 2007) and Sheppard (2005) who provide an extensive range of references for each decade of attendance material. Carlen *et al.* (1992) provide an overview of the political, historical dimensions of school attendance. Paterson (1989) also provides a wide-ranging overview of the social influences upon school attendance.

Paterson's work however is based within the context of Scottish laws: a factor that requires recognition as school attendance is also defined through social customs and agreements set down in the relevant law for each country. Each publication must also be read within their relevant temporal context as legal aspects and working definitions frequently change with time (for instance, Carlen *et al.* 1992: p.23, pp.52-53).

This brief overview illustrates how school attendance is constrained in definition by human decisions, time and geographical location. Not only does this highlight the need to be specific about the context in which attendance is discussed, but it also demonstrates how these definitions are constantly changing in meaning. In terms of this thesis, the primary focus will be upon the current official definitions of school attendance for mainstream secondary schools in England.

Changing Times in Official Circles

The impact of time upon the definition of attendance is most apparent within the policies and practices published by official government departments. Official approaches to school attendance have changed in ethos, direction and lead. Even the name of the official department has changed and with it the overall responsibilities and context within which school attendance has been associated. Education has been

officially linked with adult employment (DfEE), general training and work skills (DfES) and now to children, schools and families (DCSF). These modifications are extremely important as they show how the official understanding of education, and therefore attendance, is placed within different contexts depending on government priorities and direction.

The concept of school attendance is often a high priority and can be given significant political backing. One official letter to Local Authorities (DfES 2004b) highlighted the significance the then Prime Minister (Tony Blair) placed upon the issues of school attendance. Rt Hon Ivan Lewis MP (2004: HC. 5s. vol.416. col.232) declared in a speech to the House of Commons that attendance was an "issue of profound importance for the country". Drawing a comparison with the Conservative days in power, Lewis (col.1233) continued:

> …we are also paying a heavy price for our failure to acknowledge an enduring truth that a society which values individual freedom and community solidarity must assert responsibilities as well as rights. Too often…we have appeared value neutral…

This statement provides evidence of how official and social responsibilities are intricately interwoven through education concepts such as school attendance. The subject of school attendance becomes threaded within this weave and becomes a part of the material of the country itself through politics and official policies and drives.

However, this level of official support is as changing as the departmental names and the definition of attendance itself. In 2004 the current Government published a five-year plan regarding education strategies (DfES 2004a). Within this one of the "five clear priorities" for education was stated as school attendance (p.2). Unfortunately, two years later, within the progress report headed by The Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP (DfES 2006d), school attendance no longer appeared at all within the list of priorities. Most recently, the DCSF have also changed the official approach to attendance by introducing new terminology such as 'persistent absence' (DCSF 2007b: Online pagination), which is defined as:

> …the number of secondary pupil enrolments with absences (for any reason) totalling at least 20% of the national average number of sessions available,

> expressed as a percentage of the total number of secondary pupil enrolments. The national 2005/6 level of persistent absence for secondary schools was 7%.

Such a new subcategory adds to the inconsistencies that become associated with the overall concept of attendance. In contrast to this background of change, alterations and modified terminology however, the same official documents use a language of logic, formation, structure and rigidity to create authority. Attendance, as seen above, becomes 'defined' through numbers, percentages, targets and 'persistent' absentees and is therefore assumed to be sound and objectively reliable.

Attendance Codes

This disparity is acutely seen within the subcategory of attendance codes used within all school attendance matters. Many secondary schools take registers in all lessons in order to track students throughout the day. However, the only registers legally required are those taken at the start of the school day, usually within tutor time, and again at some point during the afternoon. This second legal register can be taken either in an afternoon tutor time or in the last curriculum lesson of the day. Therefore, it is within these morning and afternoon legal registers that the inputted codes are most crucial.

These codes are now prescribed by the DCSF (2009b), which allows schools no flexibility in how to code attendances and absences. The DCSF and Local Authorities often collect this data entirely electronically from electronic tutor group registers, thereby allowing the collection of data to be carried out with no human interaction. The data is then used to create targets, policies, school comparisons and published league tables upon attendance levels (DCSF 2009f). Therefore, the information form tutors input within the official legal registers is of paramount importance to the school as well as to the individual students they are coding.

This method of electronic coded input and subsequence data collection places significant pressure on form tutors to understand the codes they use and how such quantitative measures affect the support their tutees may receive. This pressure to quantifiably judge and code student actions is in contrast to the qualitative attention

and passion that Tony Blair spoke of regarding teachers' skills before he became Prime Minister (Blair 1996: pp.5-6):

> Perhaps in this of all years, we have been reminded more starkly than ever before of just how teachers are the lifeblood and sometimes the life-savers of children in their care. This has, after all, been the year of Philip Lawrence and the year of Dunblane.

The limited quantitative codes available to form tutors can hinder this ability to clearly and qualitatively see the situations occurring within the lives of their tutees. Yet, codes should in theory enable a consistent, numerical and coded format to ensure comparative and objective information is collected between schools. A tension remains therefore between the quantitative and qualitative aspects involved in attendance.

The codes available to schools are not objective or absolute in definition, as subjective individuals who are not involved in their every day use, create them. Through this, the level of accuracy that can be obtained from the codes becomes diminished. For example, it is notable that there are limited codes to differentiate between *sorts* of absences that various individuals may, or may not, believe to be due to unauthorised reasons. However, these limitations are not recognised within official publications and parliamentary reports (such as Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons, 2006: p.12):

> Some pupils are absent from school without their parents' knowledge. Electronic registration systems enable schools to record and monitor attendance efficiently and they provide information to follow up individual cases.

In contrast to the positive authority communicated within this report, there is in fact no code, or therefore method of collecting data, that actually specifically denotes an absence where the parents were not aware of their child's absence and the child absconded deliberately. An identical code often has to be used for cases when the parent, or the parent and child together, decide upon the absence.

Relying upon the specific codes currently available to capture entire meaning regarding subjective individual situations creates a mistaken illusion of objectivity and

accuracy surrounding the data. School staff responsible for the legal registers, primarily form tutors, therefore have an extremely difficult task to both code each absence correctly and to then ensure the correct follow-up, understanding and support is given by the school and official agencies regarding each case.

In theory, it is up to the school, and often in reality the form tutor, to decide which absences to officially authorise. Crucially, the decision to authorise an absence therefore is a personal one: a subjective and individually made decision on each occasion. As Reid (2005a: p.39) confirms:

> …how do form and classroom tutors…*really* know the true reason for every pupil absence? The answer is that they cannot always be certain.

This uncertainty is also extenuated over time. Currently, schools are asked to challenge reasons given to them by parents in order to deter subsequent absences. Schools are asked to code absences as 'N' (no reason given) for up to two weeks whilst they ascertain specific reasons. After this time schools must choose an alternative code that best suits their opinion regarding the case and situation. This once again brings in subjective and also variable elements (DfES 2006b: p.2):

> Some schools are already very good at challenging parents where they suspect that the reasons offered for absence are not valid, but others find it easier simply to accept at face value what parents tell them.

This infers that the 'easy' route is not acceptable for schools to take. However, it is often only by agreeing with the initial reason given by parents, that schools can keep their unauthorised absence (or truancy) levels low. By challenging reasons, schools risk having to unauthorise the absences. Levels of unauthorised absences have financial and support implications for schools, as this same document goes on to show (p.3):

> Resources and time from the National Strategies will be prioritised to schools who have significantly large numbers of these 'persistent truants'.

With such little clarity and differentiation possible within the codes and between school uses of the codes, it is difficult to see how official financial support, published league tables and official praise may be given to schools based upon the data collected.

'Truancy'

These confusions over the objective definition of unauthorised absences and the possible subjective elements at play have a second and critically important consequence: the misuse and misunderstanding surrounding the term of truancy. Clear working definitions of this term are still not available. Such an issue is raised in the literature both in England (Sheppard 2005; Elliott 1999; Zhang 2003) and in international settings (Lindstat 2005).

As it will be shown, truancy is often associated with crime, anti-social behaviour and poverty and it is not the intention here to argue that there is no relationship between these aspects and *unauthorised absences*. However, it will be argued that the present data collected to prove any link between unauthorised absences and the socially understood term of truancy is based upon ill-defined terminology, lack of base data and invalid inferences.

Given the sensitive and complex nature of discussing social deprivation and social class issues, using quantitative data from school registers to create judgements upon such social aspects, should be a matter of high concern. As Paterson (1989: p.2) explains:

> Truancy is a sensitive topic…it is often linked with poverty, unemployment and delinquency. It has been variously taken as implying rejection of society now, a warning of future anti-social behaviour…

However, there is no official absence code to denote 'truancy' specifically. Therefore, no data can be collected upon truancy rates, so no proof exists regarding its valid relationship with any social or behaviour patterns. Consequently, official figures and publications use *all* unauthorised absences to create levels of 'truancy': every unauthorised absence becomes potentially deemed as truancy.

The terms of unauthorised absence and truancy are intermixed within official publications on a frequent basis, as is evident within the Rt Hon Jacqui Smith MP's letter to Chief Education Officers and Directors of Children's Services (DfES 2005c) as well as the 'Five Year Strategy' published by the current Government (DfES 2004a: p.58):

> Both behaviour and attendance are also improving – with fewer violent incidents and fewer days lost to truancy.

This states that attendance is improving and correlates it directly with less truancy and bad behaviour. It is this form of imprecise use of terms by official publications that allows confusion to arise. However, despite this, official publications and policies continue to use the term frequently without a clear definition.

This lack of definition can be used both positively and negatively, depending on the context. Use of the term truancy to promote official success is shown through official statements made such as: "1,300 former truants are back in school every day compared to last year…" (DfES 2004a: p.62).

In addition, truancy is used to promote the legal aspect and importance of attendance: 'Truancy Sweep Teams' exist in most Local Authorities in England and are at liberty to enforce legal action against parents and carers. Further, this concept of 'Truancy Sweep' has its own section on the Government's website for school attendance (DCSF 2009g). As it will be shown later, although the name of these teams is changing, they are still referred to as truancy sweep teams. Within this website (Online pagination) it is stated that:

> Everyday over 54,000 pupils miss a day of school without permission…an estimated 7.5 million school days are missed each year through truancy. Research shows that these children who are not in school are most vulnerable and are easily drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour and more likely to be unemployed after leaving school.

This statement opens with data on the general number of children missing school without the school's permission but then links this data directly to the term truancy. This is then taken a step further and linked directly to those children being implicated in crime, anti-social behaviour and unemployment. Emphasising this relationship can have a genuinely negative and detrimental impact on attendance, such as through the medias' use of the term and the pressure applied to schools to lower such rates. For instance Paton (2008: online pagination), writing for *The Telegraph,* reported that:

> Truancy rates reached a record high last year as more than 63,000 pupils skipped school every day…Official figures released on Tuesday

> showed that since Labour came to power, the number of children in England playing truant has risen by a third - despite more than £1 billion being spent on tackling the problem.

The notion of truancy being defined as students 'skipping' school adds to popular concern regarding truancy being associated with anti-social behaviour and crime. Truancy figures here are turned back on official policies in order to show underachievement and political failure.

In turn, these manipulations of the terms and data complicate issues for schools. If schools, and form tutors, follow official advice and challenge absences rather than accepting and authorising reasons given to them, they risk increasing their unauthorised absence, or 'truancy' levels. However, unauthorised absences can be due to a multitude of reasons, many of which will have no link to anti-social behaviour or crime. Unauthorised absences can include extended holidays, lateness after the close of registers or any subjectively judged 'inappropriate' reason given by the parents or carers. This is extremely subjective in nature: it is up to the school and often the form tutors to decide what is deemed an appropriate reason.

Therefore, a school's wish to chase and question absences becomes less appealing, reducing the care and attention bestowed upon individual students involved: the drive for objective, logical and external results can affect the real lives, experiences and situations of individuals. Thus, instead of recognising this subjectivity and embracing it, this formal and assumed 'logical' stance pushes the subjective element of attendance issues into the shadows.

However, ironically, there are areas where schools have excessive room for subjective opinion regarding coding issues and these areas could benefit from being made more objective. Schools have the freedom to alter their official time to close their legal morning registers as the DCSF only "advises" schools regarding this time (DCSF 2009b: p.5). This timing has critical influence, as students who arrive at school after this time are marked as *unauthorised* absent for that whole morning period. This counts towards 'truancy' levels in official publications and league tables. However, students late to school but just *before* this time are counted as late but statistically present. Therefore this latter group of students count neither towards the unauthorised

nor the authorised absence figures. By ensuring this time is as late as possible, schools can significantly affect their attendance and 'truancy' levels.

Thus, official approaches and definitions of attendance attempt to find, create and analyse meaning through objective, logical and quantitative methods. However, the subjective and qualitative side to attendance is always present even if it is not acknowledged. Accordingly, not only is a crucial opportunity for progress within attendance missed but this lack of clarity over definitions can lead to even less accurate figures than would otherwise be possible.

The Effect of the Current Approach

Numerous official schemes and initiatives are created and used at present to help schools reach attendance targets. Schools and Local Authorities are currently required to sign Public Service Agreements (*The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007;* DCSF 2009c), which offer rewards, including financial rewards, to schools (DCSF 2008a,b). OFSTED also take attendance percentages into account during official school inspections, which are published through their website (Office for Standards in Education, 2009) and within official reports upon how to improve attendance (Office for Standards in Education, 2001 and also within Reid 2005a).

However, based upon the ill-defined definitions and premises to attendance used by a significant number of official materials, such initiatives and reports lack recognition or productive use. Many publications, such as DfES (2005i,j), are projected towards an audience constituted by senior management or Local Authority staff, not staff members such as form tutors who actually deal with personal and individual attendance matters daily in schools.

Power, Language and Spin

Official initiatives often assume that quantitative, objective methods are a priority. As a consequence, the language used within the titles and content of such material is largely punitive, legal, contractual and statistical. For example, there are numerous lengthy publications, research projects and initiatives that promote prosecutions,

penalty fines and fast-tracking to court. Within these, a considerable number link the term truancy with crime, such as DfEE (2001a,b) and DfES (2002). There are a significant number devoted to the *legal side* of attendance also, such as Evans *et al.* (2008), Halsey *et al.* (2004), Kendall *et al.* (2004), DfES (2005b, 2007) and DCSF (2007c).

Penalty notices have also been introduced to speed up the process by which parents and carers can be penalised for allowing children to 'truant' (DfES 2005b, 2007). Within the DCSF website regarding school attendance (DCSF 2009i) there is a dedicated section on penalty notices (DCSF 2008e), with links to Statutory Instruments regarding penalty notices (*The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005).*

There are also explicit links within the official attendance website to numerous Police and Criminal Evidence publications (PACE), including the Act (Great Britain. *Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984)*, the Act (Great Britain. *Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003)* and s.16 of the Act (Great Britain. *Crime and Disorder Act 1988*), which states: "chief police officers can authorise their constables to remove truants from a public place". Official documents clearly use the term truancy in amongst legal and anti-social terminology.

Moving away from official initiatives, it is possible to find legal initiatives that can and do have positive effects. For instance, Evans *et al.* (2008: p.71) have shown that quantitative material can be used successfully to understand school attendance issues if used, understood and described accurately and in conjunction with well-defined qualitative material:

> …in line with the qualitative results, the quantitative survey shows that schools which use Parenting Contracts are broadly positive and see them as being successful. Six out of ten think they are successful for behaviour, and seven out of ten for attendance…

Evans *et al.* separate findings on parenting contracts between attendance and behaviour, allowing for greater understanding of the issues at hand. Their findings also show that working with parents, schools and Local Authorities through contracts and

formal processes in some cases can help. However, these routes are not universally approved of. Sheppard (2005: p.19) argues:

> Government policies encouraging the use of punitive measures…do not provide practitioners or pastoral staff with the sophisticated working methods necessary to help poor attending children…

This is particularly interesting given Sheppard's role in North Yorkshire Local Authority. Additionally, the quantitative success of such punitive methods and approaches has not materialised. A BBC online news report (Coughlan and Westhead 2009: Online pagination) recently declared:

> A parent is jailed for their child's truancy once a fortnight every school term in England and Wales…with 10,000 prosecutions in England in 2007 - up 76% since 2000… there has been a 41% annual increase in the number of parenting contracts…The "fast-track" scheme to intervene with truancy problems has had 125,000 cases since 2004.

Crucially, this report directly relates this to the finding that:

> Despite the penalties, unauthorised absences are higher than in 1997…It [the current Labour Government] set an ambitious target of cutting truancy by a third - but after more than a decade of crackdowns the most recent figures show that the rate of unauthorised absence in England is a third higher than in 1997.

Even though this is yet another example of confused and mixed use of terminology, this report does highlight how current official approaches and quantitative, punitive measures are not achieving a rise in attendance in schools.

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy

One of the main initiatives implemented recently comes from the relatively new Key Stage 3 National Strategy (DfES 2006c: p.3), designed to enable:

> …children and young people to attend and enjoy school, achieve personal and social development and raise educational standards in line with the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

Within this Strategy, a new official role of 'regional adviser', carried out by those wishing to specialise in 'Behaviour and Attendance', has also been put into place (DCSF 2009d).

Alongside this new strand and associated consultants, there are official training materials (DfES 2003a, 2004c) as well as a lengthy electronic and paper 'Toolkit' (DfES 2004d,e,f,g,h, 2005e,f,g). Together, these initiatives (DfES 2005i: p.2) are designed with the goal of ensuring:

> …every pupil should enjoy every day at school, that they should learn something and feel a sense of progression and self-fulfilment in doing it.

The initial subunit of the Toolkit (DfES 2005e: p.7) introduces the 'National Programme for Specialist Leaders for Behaviour and Attendance'. This is a newly introduced qualification designed for leaders in behaviour and attendance. While this is positive, it fails to support or recognise the staff at the heart of attendance issues as they deal with individual students and their lives each day.

Further, the Toolkit is also overtly directed towards behaviour, rather than attendance. Upon a close reading, it is evident that when the word 'attendance' is used, it is in such a general context that it could be interchanged with 'behaviour' with no adverse consequences. Many of the ideas, although useful, could be implemented within most areas of education. For example, the praise postcard initiative (DfES 2005f: p.52) provides a positive method by which teachers can send a message to parents written in a 'postcard' format. However, such an initiative is not specifically tailored or created for attendance issues but rather is a general initiative for use in any circumstances.

Nonetheless, some of the units within the Toolkit do, on rare occasions, emphasis the importance of the interpersonal and pastoral element of school relationships. "Informal rewards" (DfES 2005f: p.23) such as 'smiling', and 'verbal praise' are mentioned briefly as well as the importance of effective school relationships and mentoring. However, there is no mention of empathy, consistency or compassion from staff to students, once again missing crucial factors that the following chapter will show students overtly state are significant.

Unit five in the Toolkit does emphasise the need for staff to *listen* to students and parents (DfES 2005g: p.10) and also the importance of heads of year as they "work at both pastoral and academic levels for pupils" (p.11). However, it is unclear why this is not also related to form tutors, given the pastoral and academic work they also cover. This oversight is particularly notable in the questionnaire for staff to use asking for pupils' views (p.16), which lists heads of year, teaching assistants, counsellors, other pupils, but crucially not form tutors.

In general, the entire Toolkit focuses upon behaviour and attendance as grouped together, which itself can be taken as both a negative approach and a definitive skew on attendance. The size and scope of the Toolkit also makes it difficult to use on a practical level, especially given the time priorities of teaching staff.

Other initiatives parallel to the Key Stage 3 National Strategy include research into specific inner-city areas through the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative (Morris and Rutt 2004). There are also a small number of qualitative research projects being carried out looking at the attitudes of parents and carers (Dalziel and Henthorne 2005). The views of parents and students are again covered within Malcolm *et al.* (2003) and this publication also briefly covers the views of teachers in general. However, although these projects provide useful information for attendance issues generally, the space and time given to the views of teachers and form tutors is minimal, if at all.

The Distribution of Responsibility

Many of the legal and punitive initiatives are aimed at parents and carers who fail to deliver on their responsibility to ensure regular school attendance. Much of this is a consequence of school attendance being directly and primarily related to anti-social behaviour, truancy and issues external to schools and education itself. This will be found to be in direct contrast to the research highlighted in the following chapter, where students express that it is more often in-school issues that affect their attendance levels (Reid 2005a: p.33).

The DfES published leaflets in multiple languages (DfES 2005d) for parents and carers to explain their legal responsibilities as well as leaflets in cartoon format for children (DfES 2005a,h,k). These leaflets cover a wide range of people, ages,

ethnicities and cultures. The official message regarding the legal necessity of school attendance is given high priority when associated with the responsibility of parents, carers and the young people themselves.

Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) are employed nationally to carry out the legal tracking and presentation of attendance cases to court, on behalf of Local Authorities. The advice, literature and working practices of EWOs are also directed towards parents and carers with relatively little or no practice towards supporting the duties of schools and teaching staff. Further information regarding Education Welfare Services can be found within Reid (2004) as well as official publications (Effective Practice - Tackling it together: CD Toolkit for EWS, undated).

With respect to school responsibilities however, such literature is significantly sparser. DCSF (2007a) includes parental responsibility and school attendance orders as well the role of schools in monitoring attendance, as does DfES (2005b). However, neither goes into detail about the duty of schools to do more than monitoring. Morris and Rutt (2004), even within their extensive longitudinal study of attendance, also failed to look at pastoral relationship between students and individual staff members or the responsibility of the school as a whole.

There is an official category of attendance publications that come under the title of 'Effective Practice' (DCSF 2009e). These are initiatives directly aimed at improving school and education procedures towards school attendance. It is noteworthy that it is not possible to find such 'Effective Practice' documents specifically aimed at teaching staff or form tutors within secondary schools.

Schools are restricted through Statutory Instrument regarding when they may take students off roll (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). This should have significant implications as it is often in a school's interest to remove an individual if they are not attending. However, it is noted within the official *guidance* to schools regarding these regulations (DfES 2006a: p.35) that should any question over a school's actions arise, it would be considered on a discretionary basis:

> ...any prosecution [upon a school] will be brought by the local authority which will use its discretion to decide whether it is appropriate to do so.

This is very different to the quantitative, structured, objective way that official materials treat the responsibility and duty of parents and carers. There is some mention of school responsibilities within DfES (2005b: p.27). Primarily, however, this goes through the legal side of a parent's responsibilities. It does very briefly mention the responsibilities of teachers for registration but ironically it does not mention that this is most often carried out by form tutors (p.29 sec 110):

> Wherever practical, action should be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems...These will depend on the child and their circumstances and will involve working closely with the parent. For example: Early discussion of unauthorised absence between the pupil and teacher responsible for their registration.

Sheppard (2005: pp.24-25) discusses the not uncommon situation where students, who are typical non-attenders, are excluded for behavioural reasons when they just start to attend school again. She believes there is a gap in research as to why some children with difficult backgrounds do become non-attenders whilst others do not. These are particularly interesting ideas as they suggest that the breakdown is often occurring within school and highlights the importance of in-school situations. This increases, rather than decreases, the responsibility and moral duty of schools.

Reid's research (1985: p.10), in comparison to some of the official publications, is often aimed directly at the moral duties of teaching staff and schools:

> Teachers…have a duty to enquire into their pupils' actions and needs. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away.

He continues by stating: "Teachers need to raise the self esteem of students" (p.78). A concern raised as a consequence of Reid's findings is the lack of knowledge that staff members have about their own importance regarding attendance: a situation that reflects the lack of official recognition given to staff about their roles and responsibilities. In addition, Reid (p.114) finds:

> …[a] certain amount of research into the relationship between school absenteeism and truancy and pastoral care, took place…much…have dried up.

Paterson (1989: p.2) similarly argues that there are:

> ...major unresolved issues…Issues involving beliefs about what schools ought to do; what they do; and what they can, under particular circumstances, be reasonably expected to do.

Such recognition is crucial to the argument posited in this thesis as it underlines the combination of elements missing at present. There is a major gap in recognition of the role and responsibilities of schools and this is occurring due to what I am arguing is an invalid, unreliable approach to attendance constituted through officially and often politically motivated policies. What is therefore needed, and what this thesis seeks to argue, is that a change in the way school attendance is approached is required.

An Optimistic Future?

Notwithstanding these claims, it is notable that a very recent change has occurred within the DCSF that has brought about a stark difference in tone, language and direction (DCSF 2008c). By way of example, the previously entitled 'truancy sweep teams' were, in 2008, renamed 'attendance and exclusion sweeps' (DCSF 2009g). Unfortunately, the website within which the change is noted is still accessed via an address that includes the term 'truancy sweeps'. However, this is still a major step in improving the definitions and understandings surrounding school attendance.

The Rt Hon. Kevin Brennan MP sent a letter to schools in February 2008 (DCSF 2008d), within which the terminology used is of 'attendance', "encouraging results" (p.1) and "Overall absence" (p.2). Brennan states:

> School attendance…is not something that should be seen in isolation but as an integral part of the work of schools, Local Authorities and individual staff (p.2).

This document does not mention 'truancy', 'crime' or 'behaviour'. Instead, it draws attention to correlations between attendance and attainment, student welfare and "safeguarding during their school years" (p.2). Within DCSF (2009f) the same change in direction and terminology is found. Absence rates are now clearly shown as 'overall', 'unauthorised' or 'authorised'. Although this still does not solve all the

specific issues, such as coding problems, it does at least avoid focusing just on unauthorised absences or terms such as 'truancy'.

The most crucial factor regarding this document is a 'notes' section at the end (p.7) that goes through the definitions of the terms that have been used. Within this, it is stated:

> The decision to authorise an absence is a local decision leading to unmeasured variation both between and within schools…

It is encouraging to find the beginnings of recognition of the subjective elements at play within attendance. It remains regrettable that this is marginalised to end notes and dealt with still as a negative issue and a factor assumed only to lead to unreliability.

Nonetheless, it is also now being recognised that the education system is perhaps not necessarily always presenting individual students with a method of learning that suits their needs. As such, the current Government is introducing 14-19 year old schemes to run diplomas and vocational training schemes for individuals in schools as well as colleges (DCSF 2009a). Balls (2008: p.11) highlights:

> ... as our Children's Plan makes clear, it is only with teachers and schools, children's services and Children's Trusts, parents and government all playing their full part and accountable for what they are doing, that we can make this the best place for children and young people to grow up.

In addition, the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) project is a positive initiative that highlights the importance of understanding social and emotional skills in both teachers and students (DCSF 2009h). This programme is published through the National Strategy but not, significantly, within the attendance section. Even so, this is an extremely positive initiative that would benefit from a more obvious and overt link to the topic of attendance.

Some Concluding Remarks

This chapter has shown that the definition of attendance is of itself not objectively or consistently defined. Attendance is currently assumed within official literature to be

based largely upon grounding assumptions that do not reflect the complexity of the subject material or how time, context and subjective aspects affect it.

The imprecision possible from allowing attendance to be based upon this assumption allows incorrect associations to be made regarding attendance and concepts such as crime and anti-social behaviour. Within this, terms such as ‘truancy’ are used without clear definitions and associated with negative connotations. With a base assumption that such associations should be correct due to being created from numerical and coded data, the conclusions made obtain invalid and yet official status and authority.

The complexities of attendance that come from subjective individuals are not reflected in the manner in which the data is electronically and impersonally collected. Ironically the role of the individual within attendance issues is removed in an attempt to improve reliability, validity and generalisation of data and information collected.

The official literature has substantially covered the quantitative side as well as the legal side of attendance. There are numerous publications that cover the parental component and responsibility. However, such approaches have failed to enable attendance levels to rise and capture the full meaning and content of attendance.

There is now a need to recognise that attendance is not a quantitative subject only but one of deep, qualitative and individual depth. It is about individuals, people and relationships: it is a living, evolving, changing concept. If this is accepted and policies continue to be adjusted accordingly, it will be argued in the following chapters that genuine improvements in attendance will be possible, meeting the original desires of the official literature and the country as a whole.

The chapter that immediately follows concludes Part I by presenting content parallel to this chapter though in relation to the role of the form tutor. The need for quantitative, objective definitions regarding the meaning of this role will be shown to disregard and diminish the impact of subjectivity and qualitative significance.

CHAPTER 2

The Role of the Form Tutor

> Be aware of the cries for help – no matter how silent!
> Be honest with your students – they know if you are not true…
> Share the love – the last is the most important…because we are mostly too scared to reveal our true feelings.
>
> Mathew (a form tutor)

This chapter presents a discussion upon the current literature, research and definitions that exist regarding the role of the form tutor, both in general and in terms of its influence upon attendance matters. Section One will argue that the definition of the role of the form tutor is currently confused and indistinct. This is due to current education and attendance literature either ignoring the role entirely or attempting to define it through externalising and quantifying discrete task responsibilities. However, even such discrete task requirements are not clearly defined and consequently official literature is seen to contradict itself in terms of what is expected from the role.

Section Two will examine comments directly made by form tutors who contributed to the research for this thesis. This examination will show that it is only through their own subjectivity and qualitative input that form tutors are currently rising above the confusion regarding their role. Form tutors use qualitative judgements and interpretations to decide which codes to enter into the quantitative and legal attendance register each morning as well as in supporting students to attend school in the first place.

Significantly, this qualitative approach will be shown to exactly correspond to the elements of staff characteristics and attitudes that students equate directly with their attendance levels. Thereby, this chapter will show that both students and form tutors already express and understand the significance of the qualitative side to attendance. The crucial involvement of the qualitative individual within the role of form tutor hence begins to emerge. This then underscores the materialising need for a

methodology capable of capturing qualitative and quantitative meaning as well as potential subsequent dialectic relationships.

Section Three will argue that the small amount of research that does recognise the existence of this qualitative approach and connection between individual form tutors and students, unfortunately does so through defining it in general, quantitative or objective terms. This illogically denies it from its fundamental role-specific and individual-specific constitution. In practice, such research either therefore misses the consequent impact it has upon attendance levels or subsumes the role of form tutor within generic terms of 'school staff' or whole school initiatives. Hence, current research is currently unable to clear the haze that exists over defining a role that is so intricately constituted by both quantitative and qualitative aspects, with critically related and largely deleterious consequences on attendance.

Research Carried Out Specifically For This Thesis

Section Two of this chapter utilises the findings of the practical research carried out with form tutors directly for this thesis. A detailed account of the methods, ethics and practical implications of this research will be discussed in chapter 6 and the material used within the research can be found within Appendices 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

In brief, the research was carried out within one secondary school in the southeast of England. All twenty-one form tutors in the school were given the opportunity to participate: eight initially completed consent forms, with six of these individuals actually presenting at least one form of official contribution by the end of the project. All contributions used directly within the thesis are referenced through given pseudonyms.

Methods of participation were semi-structured and in general constituted qualitative methods such as diary entries, fictional letters or descriptive writing as well as scrapbooks and pictures. Personal information regarding aspects such as age, experience levels and background were not asked for explicitly but were left for the individual to bring forward if appropriate. Through this, qualitative and personal accounts, descriptions, views and opinions from the individuals within and about the role of the form tutor were obtained. These contributions have brought to the

understanding of the role, and its influence on attendance, a critical and significant understanding from which a deeper, richer and more productive understanding and meaning can be formed.

Defining the Official Role of the Form Tutor

This section will discuss the current approach taken to the role of the form tutor by research and official documentation. Such documentation either does not significantly recognise the role, does so but not in connection with attendance, or recognises it as something with great but unreachable potential due to a current inability to define its constitution.

Discrete Definitions

The role of the form tutor usually involves a member of teaching staff taking on extra non-curriculum responsibilities by leading a tutor group. Marland (2002) presents an account of the historical developments of this role. This is in contrast to other 'tutoring' positions within higher and further education systems (Schofield 2007) and studies into generic student-teacher relationships (Pomeroy 1999). Not all form tutors have to be teaching members of staff but traditionally (as is assumed in Lodge 2002) and in general, this is most often the case.

Each year group in a secondary school is usually separated into such tutor groups in order that students come together for non-academic purposes at the start, and often the end, of each day. Within this time, the priority is to legally register each student and to prepare for the curriculum lessons ahead. Therefore, form tutors become responsible for completing the quantitative legal morning register and ensuring students have a productive and positive start to each school day. Thus, the role of the form tutor is associated with attendance in complex ways that go beyond most other individual roles within schools.

It is from these legal registers that attendance data, statistics, analysis and conclusions are quantitatively formed nationally upon individuals, institutions and Local Authorities. Thus, in itself the act of taking this register becomes critical to the formation and constitution of attendance levels. Hence, the role of the form tutor can

on the surface become understood primarily through this act of completing the quantitative legal register.

Of particular interest at this point is the content of specific research carried out by Reid (2006, 2007). Although Reid's recent work is primarily set within the education system in Wales, his work is significant, especially as one of his projects is introduced specifically as "…the first of its kind to concentrate upon the views of secondary staff towards attendance issues…within…England" (Reid 2006: p.303). While this study was primarily about attendance rather than about the actual *roles* of the staff (and even less specifically about the role of the form tutor), it did statistically analyse responses from one hundred and sixty form tutors. Reid (2006: p.317) found that responses from form tutors could be divided into two sections:

> The first was making home telephone calls or interfacing with office staff in cases of first day absence. The second was referring outcomes and/or persistent cases to their line manager, usually heads of year.

Through these discrete responsibilities, Reid (2007: p.36) found that 15.4% of form tutors believed their own position to be the best position to help absentees reintegrate back into school. A relatively high percentage of all the school staff questioned, from headteachers (12.4%) to middle managers (16.9%) also believed form tutors to be the best role to help. The only other positions to gain such high ratings across the board were learning mentors and Education Welfare staff who are often external agency staff as opposed to internal school staff.

Therefore, through quantitative conclusions and analysis, this role is seen as critically significant to raising and supporting attendance levels. Form tutors who contributed to the research for this thesis, also attempted to describe their role through particular tasks, such as:

> …notices to get through…Registration done after checking uniforms… (Graham)
>
> …taking the register…[talking] regularly to their parents (Lucy)
>
> …ensuring good communication between parents and school (Simon)

Simon also specifically *listed* further official tasks he felt his role needed to achieve each morning:

> …15 minutes at most every day to:
> - Sign Planner
> - Chase up absences
> - Do equipment and uniform check
> - Do planner check and hand out day sheets, ensuring it is all documented.
> - Make announcements
> - Discuss any disciplinary issues

Thereby, it becomes possible to create a picture of the form tutor as a role within which a limited number of specific, discrete and quantifiable tasks are required. A role defined as such, is reflected in official requests for school-related approaches to attendance, such as within parliamentary reports (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons, 2006: p.7):

> Schools tackle absence primarily by encouraging good attendance through day-to-day contact with parents and pupils, taking a register, and dealing with absentees.

However, interestingly no mention of the role of the form tutor is specifically made within this document. In fact, through a confusing and divergent tangent, further official documentation states that the role of the form tutor should *not* be completing such administrative or discretely describable tasks. In detailing a new 'workload' agreement between the Government and education unions, one official document (DfES 2003b: p.5) excuses form tutors from having to chase reasons for absences from students. The role therefore involves attendance related discrete tasks and yet the form tutor is officially required not to undertake some of these tasks. Thus, the role becomes confused both in definition and constitution. As Hughes *et al.* (2005: Online pagination) state:

> …information and understanding about the work and role of a form tutor is under-developed in comparison with all other aspects of teaching.

Hughes *et al.* put this lack of information and research down to a number of issues including the fact that schools "take the work that form tutors do for granted" and that "University sector researchers find little that is problematic about the role" (Online

pagination). As a stark and crucial example of this, the role of the form tutor is rarely listed as the official target audience in material distributed by the DCSF upon attendance. Some resources for use in schools generally, such as DfES (2006e), do include aspects of initiatives, activities and worksheets that form tutors could use if presented with specific issues. However, even this publication does not recognise or acknowledge the role of form tutor in particular.

OFSTED (2001: p.35) on the other hand, interestingly do provide a very definite recognition of the role of the form tutor, although such recognition is ironically grounded upon an acknowledgment of its current lack of definition:

> Nearly all the schools in the survey used form tutors as the key link with pupils. However, as is the case nationally, few schools gave specific training for the role of tutor. The role is multifarious and can be of considerable importance, with tutors having a significant influence on pupils, individual and in building their identification with the school community.

This research highlights the crucial role that form tutors have in supporting students through proactive, identity and self-esteem building methods, which generate a sense of belonging to a school. This brings to the definition of the role something less quantifiable and discrete but more regarding relationships, identity and belonging. Reid (2006: p.317) similarly found that about twenty per cent of tutors carried out home visits but half of these did so "…out of personal interest or for reasons of perceived good practice…". This highlights how the role incorporates elements and tasks that are not as easily defined or associated with discrete or specific terms or responsibilities.

This confusion regarding the definition and identity of the role is propounded by a significant lack of training and recognition as form tutors "mainly learnt 'on the job'…[and]…had never marked a school register before taking up their post" (Reid 2006: p.317). Cleave *et al.* (1997: p.16) also found that pastoral training in general for newly qualified teachers is inconsistent and that staff are not "likely to feel adequately prepared for their pastoral roles". For form tutors directly, similar findings have been found by OFSTED (2001: pp.35 -36) with a direct and negative consequence upon attendance:

> ...in too many cases tutor time was used by pupils solely to sit and socialise, with no clear objectives for the day set. Sometimes such periods provided a ragged start to the day, and, by their lack of purpose, had a negative effect on pupils' attitudes…in three of the schools inspected, teachers' absence was reflected in the poor attendance of their tutor group. In five of the schools, up to as many as 12 tutor groups had experienced multiple changes of tutor in one school year.

Although through negative terms, such research does support the argument that tutor time is crucial in setting up the day for students and that form tutors have a direct influence upon attendance levels. Reid (2005a: p.154) also found that:

> …much of the good local practice that exists [in schools regarding attendance] is uncoordinated and there is also very little evidence of good practice in schools in the existing literature…

Reid (2005a: p.160) concluded from his research that training was required for all secondary school staff, as well as other education staff. When such training was held, it was carried out for a wide range of staff. Therefore, specific and focused training for form tutors regarding their own role and influence upon attendance was still not carried out.

In terms of the role itself, there are isolated examples of research and material directed at form tutors and their role but these do not included elements regarding their responsibility and influence upon attendance matters (DfES 2005j: p.15). The DfES (2006e) also published a pack, including a CD Rom, created for teachers and tutors to use regarding attendance issues in 'Personal and Social' lessons, tutor time or other curriculum lessons. This is a positive idea in principle but it is focused on very specific and limited issues and therefore does not address the relationship between students and school overall.

Additionally, Krestovnikoff (2006) has produced a fifteen-minute television programme for Teachers TV about the role of the form tutor. This programme briefly looks at how form tutors can manage a team successfully, solve administration issues and build relationships with students. This is positive but it makes no direct association to attendance responsibilities.

Lodge (2000, 2002) and Hughes *et al*. (2005) have also published research upon the views of tutors in secondary schools (which will be discussed further below) but again without relation to school attendance. Therefore, other than individually isolated examples of discrete task responsibilities, it is extremely difficult to find materials regarding the definition of the role of the form tutor.

Bringing Life Experiences and Individual Subjectivity to the Role

This section will argue that as a consequence of the role of form tutors having a lack of official recognition and definition, the individual carrying out the role often loses identity, security and individual confidence. This is leading to some individual form tutors having an initial negative, unclear and often difficult start to beginning such a role. However, many individuals are rising above the confused identity of the role and enabling the tutor times to be successful through bringing stability, group identity, individual acknowledgement and structure.

Tutor times can become far more than a quantitative registering of attendance, potentially growing into a deep and complex group of individuals. Such a group is brought together by the form tutor to form a sense of belonging, identity and positive attitude towards both attending and completing each day. Thus, the individual as a form tutor is bringing to their role not just the coded results of attendances in registers but actual and real subjective influences upon whether such attendances occur in the first place.

In particular, this section will argue that by looking at the comments of both students (in education research generally) and form tutors (through the practical research carried out specifically for this thesis), attendance can be seen as critically balanced upon factors that are found from roles such as form tutors. Students directly state that subjective attitudes and approaches from staff affect their ability to attend school. Therefore, if this relationship is given acknowledgement then not only can the role of the form tutor increase in accurate definition but attendance levels can also be potentially raised in the process.

Individual Relationship to the Role

With no set official boundaries or methods of work, form tutors have no method of assessing their own achievements. This is something that Rosenblatt (2002) discusses as a consequence of the role not being "recognised and never acknowledged in a formal way" (p.21). In line with this, most of the form tutors who contributed to the research for this thesis, gave a clear and distinct message regarding uncertain identity, lack of initial personal confidence and confusion over their role definition. In each case, the form tutor describes how it is only through personal and individual commitment to their role that they overcame such difficulties:

> The "system" was new to me, but I believed that both my interest and concern for the students in my care would overcome any "culture shock" that I might experience. I was never asked "Would you like to be a Form Tutor?" – each year saw me assigned to a different form. (Mathew)

The power and control of this individual to guide his own personal and professional path has been taken away. No choice was given to him and his language suggests a negative feeling associated with the lack of underlying foundation of status, recognition, consistency and support. Three other tutors also described similar difficulties in initially knowing and understanding what was required from their role. Lucy specifically wrote:

> I did not want to be a form tutor when I first started this post and little was explained to me...As a consequence, it has been something that both my form and I have had to work out along the way. I have no idea whether or not we were right – but it worked for us.

These form tutors have brought individual dedication and subjective qualities to their role to achieve what they believe a form tutor should aim for: that students have not only registered quantitative and coded attendance each morning but also have been brought together successfully as subjective individuals in order to get ready for the academic day. In relation to this, Marland (2002: p.8) finds that when this personal drive is not present in the role, there is a risk that "…children could slip through the net".

Each contribution from the form tutors projected a general theme and overall ethos regarding something deeper and more significant about their role than specific terminology or discrete lists of role responsibilities could capture. Tania wrote a significantly long and detailed account of her experiences with her tutor group, including pictures and a copy of the 'Leaving Assembly' speech she gave when they left. Within this speech, Tania described different humorous scenarios and group-specific customs that had developed through the identity of the group. This included at least one event, personality trait or comment from each student and how this had contributed to the group's collective sense of humour and belonging. As this speech was written prior to my project's existence, its contents are further illuminating as they hold no potential bias or influence. Instead, this contribution powerfully reflects the actual attitude and approach that this individual took to her role as form tutor.

Other form tutors described aspects of their role as "my pastoral responsibilities…on a daily basis…to mentor and coach them to reach their full potential as learners" (Paul) or "…responsibility…[for] the emotional welfare of 25 students" (Lucy). Simon also continued from his list of specific duties mentioned previously by adding:

> …the form tutor plays an important role integrating students into the school community, and in ensuring good communication between parents and the school…I believe strongly in fostering a calm and welcoming environment at the start of the day…a relatively calm place to wake up properly first thing in the morning is something we all appreciate.

The role of these committed form tutors is seen to involve subjective elements of mentoring, coaching, pastoral and welfare duties as well as creating a positive and productive start to each day. Two further form tutors also attempted to describe the aspects of their role that are difficult to capture in words alone:

> No one can really prepare you for the different things which might happen each day. Sometimes it might be as simple as taking the register...On other occasions, you might find that members of your form tutor turn up in your room during the day because you are the only person they want to talk to…then there are times when you will all just laugh – sometimes because something funny has happened and sometimes, just because. (Lucy)

> Tutor time is **not** just there to take a register. It gives one an opportunity to observe and direct students' social integration. It gives time to get to know them as individuals – to share a joke, a news item, to congratulate on successes

> or a special occasion. It is also the ideal time to set examples of common courtesy and mutual respect. (Mathew)

The role of the form tutor, as these extracts vividly show, is not just about formal and quantifiable tasks regarding the completion of the attendance register but a more enduring responsibility to allow the students time and space to make that day's attendance at school a success and the next day's attendance more likely. This is being achieved through personal commitment to the students from the individuals carrying out the role of the form tutor and through the individual's belief in each student and the group.

Positive Use of Understanding Individual and Subjective Life-Experiences

In sharp contrast to the current academic and official approach to the role of the form tutor, the stories, lives and views of students with attendance difficulties have significant coverage now within official documents (DfES 2006e), education policy research (Kinder *et al.* 1995, 1996; Kinder and Wilkin 1998) and academic education research (Broadhurst *et al.* 2005; Riley and Docking 2004; Fielding 2001). Lumby (2007) has also looked at the views of students still of compulsory school age but attending Further Education colleges.

Within such research students are found to feel that one of the most significant effects upon their attendance is a loss of connection with the school itself as opposed to family issues (Reid 2005a: p.33). In particular, teacher characteristics, relationships and interactions are posited as major influences (Kinder and Wilkin 1998; Kinder *et al.* 1996). Kinder *et al.* (1996: p.14) specifically found that students with attendance issues express disaffection, boredom, loneliness, anger and fear regarding their school life and how school staff respect them:

> *The teachers should talk to you like you're human, not like you're a monster or something…if teachers weren't like that then more people would start going to school.* (Female, Year 11)

> *It's the teachers that cause truancy – not so much the work 'cos the work's usually OK. The teachers' attitude to you, the way they talk down at you – they've got no right*. (Male, Year 11)

Students directly equate school attendance with specific and individual teacher attitudes and approaches. This relationship is not seen by the students as work or curriculum based, or constituted by any formal education or academic learning process, but upon staff attitude and tone of language. The student asking to be treated as 'human' is particularly powerful: recognition as a person is her primary concern.

The comments from the students are essentially and fundamentally auto/biographical in content: their priority is not to reach targets, numbers or even to gain rewards from specific initiatives but a simple wish to have their lives and individual personal stories recognised by others. Their comments are about people, actions, behaviours, attitudes and ability to care and recognise each other as important. This is something that Fielding (2001: p.105) has found is often ignored due to researchers, staff and adults in general not being supported to acknowledge or express subjective and personal thoughts:

> Too often, and inevitably, developments in the field of student voice founder because the teachers and other adults involved do not believe in their hearts, and therefore in the felt realities of their actions, that student voice is important, or, indeed, that some students are important.

Fielding's use of the word 'felt' is particularly poignant as it conveys the subjective aspect of this form of research. His comments are directly in line with the contribution quoted at the start of this chapter from Mathew. Mathew's style of writing, which had previously been in conventional prose, suddenly and powerfully turns into a poetic form. He conveys a need for staff to believe in their own subjective feelings of love and care. It is exactly these subjective elements that the form tutors raised most prolifically as at the heart of their role and raising attendance. They did not mention implementing specific attendance initiatives but profusely the building of relationships and personal trust between themselves, the students and the group as a whole:

> If students enjoy Form Time, then attendance problems decrease. They all want to be there in case they miss something. (Mathew)

> The form tutor is someone who tries to keep them [students] on track. Sometimes it can be difficult to encourage students who often truant and those who are perpetually late but it is down to the form tutor to find ways to work with the HOY [head of year] and the attendance officer to make these things better…It means that you have a special relationship with a group of students within the school, who should respect you and trust you (Lucy)

> If someone is in trouble I give them a chance to get in the door…Students are "good" [in terms of attendance and behaviour] because they want to do well for teachers they have formed a relationship with, not because they are scared of a sanction…(Simon)
>
> I was able to raise attendance by being always there on time myself…I was very proud of my tutees and myself…(Paul)
>
> The things I most enjoy about being a tutor include…A level of interaction not possible in lessons…knowing some background to students, which allows more personal encouragement and direction for the day…being able to mentor them…regular communication with parents (Graham)

Form tutors described how such relationships were not created solely because of their role but based upon their subjective experiences and attitudes to each other's lives and life experiences:

> …the Tutor's attitude and encouragement influences their [students'] mood for the rest of the day. This affects their approach towards teachers down the line…My age and experience, in both educational and private sector employment, enables me to empathise with the student…having been schooled in England, in a deprived post-war environment I could relate to the basic needs of students…[they] need to be recognised, respected as individuals, praised…and, above all, have clear parameters established…(Mathew)
>
> I normally give up my lunch time and after school hours for extra tuition to those who need reinforcement…I always attend African Drumming in the music Department on Mondays at lunch. I become so proud when I sit and drum with some of my tutees…(Paul)
>
> Another thing I have learned being a form tutor…is that the things I say or the opinions I give can have a huge impact. Through this technique I sorted out the relationship between this student and his [subject] teacher…one of the easiest ways [of relating successfully with students] seems to be one of the most difficult to many teachers…to speak to any child as if they are an equal, like their opinion may be valued. This is the best way to get them to listen to you. Sometimes just showing them you care can work…(Tania)

In terms of specific methods and tasks for form tutors, it therefore becomes difficult to use only discrete, quantitative and objective terminology. As one form tutor specifically noted (Tania), on occasions when specific tasks were given to her to carry out in tutor time, these did not work in raising attendance levels or student attitudes:

> As form tutors, we were always asked and encouraged to get students to do…[specific and given] activities in the mornings. I found trying to get a

> bunch of 14 year olds to prepare presentations etc for the mornings as painful as pulling my own teeth out. So that idea fell through the floor quite quickly. I found just allowing students time to chat, get their stuff done, sort out their uniform etc worked far more effectively. The incident reports fell in number…I feel this was due to a good stable set up to the day…(Tania)

Tania suggests that giving form tutors a too specific or prescribed definition of their role could be negative. Similarly, the advice from form tutors who contributed to Lodge's (2002) research included "value them all as worthwhile individuals" and "provide guidance not control" (p.36). Therefore, an *overall* structure and context may be needed for a definition of the role but such a structure needs to still allow the individual to use their own ideas, personality and life-experiences to approach and relate to the students in their own time and relative to their own lives and contexts.

Additionally, Simon stated that although he found the small amount of time he had with students each morning very limiting, he had no wish for an extension of *linear* time: "…I am not arguing for more time as a tutor…". Instead, he had suggestions for a greater quality and recognition of time. For instance, he suggested more inter-tutor group competitions, outings and recognised status from within the school system. In direct opposition to the linear measurement of time recorded in punctuality records and attendance statistics, the form tutors actually describe their time in subjective and phenomenological terms.

The form tutors *used* time in personal ways in order to understand, judge and react to the attendance issues within their group. Time is used by form tutors not just to count the minutes of lateness by a student but also on a very personal and subjective grounding. Many give up their own personal time each day and also use their own personal life history and experiences to find ways of supporting their students, as the comments above have shown. Similarly, many reflect such a use of personal time and temporal context in their understanding of the students' lives:

> It is very important to look at the "personal histories" of students in the form. These often give clues to behaviour and attitude that could otherwise be inexplicable. (Mathew)

Other form tutors (such as Graham) expressly created sanctions for attendance or punctuality issues by restricting the personal time of the students through internal

detentions. It can be seen therefore that the temporal structure of lateness and attendance are judged and interpreted subjectively by form tutors. Form tutors then use these subjective judgements to decide upon which quantitative and specifically coded information to enter into the legal attendance register.

Therefore, the role of the form tutor is now found to constitute a high degree of personal, life-experience and subjective understanding built up between the individual within the role and the students. There is a direct correlation between this and the remarks made by the students seen earlier (Kinder *et al.* 1996) regarding the impact upon attendance of the personal and individual approach taken to students by staff within their school roles.

Consequences of Definition

Defining Subjective Qualities

Although there is a direct connection between the comments from students and those from form tutors, this connection is not being recognised within official attendance or education literature. Such is the difficulty in specifying and defining this subjective connection through discrete and objective terms that it is often ignored or overlooked entirely (as section one highlighted). Nonetheless, there are a few examples of research that do discuss concepts partially related (Kinder *et al.* 1995, 1996; Kinder and Wilkin 1998). However, even within these, the definition of the connection is weakened due to the student comments not being directly put in context with the interrelated comments from form tutors. For instance, Kinder *et al*. (1996: pp.15-16) conclude that schools should:

> …consider strategies – whether pastoral or curricular – which can reverse or prevent these pupil perceptions and their accompanying problematic attitudes and behaviours…It might be worth noting that pupils' accounts suggest that systemic breakdown is often a slow and gradual process, and that many of those disaffected youngsters still in school volunteered descriptions of individual teachers' positive qualities, including empathy and inter-personal skills, humour and 'good' classroom control.

These conclusions are used to form general and overall school-related initiatives rather than role-specific relationship, understanding or identity. This then diminishes the

exact individual nature, approach and ethos of the subjective connection that both students and form tutors express. Thus the potential impact upon attendance is also overlooked. This is paradoxically highlighted through Kinder *at al*. (1995: p.18) who found that school staff (in general) believed students with school attendance issues tended to have very individual issues within their lives:

> *A lot of our kids don't have an easy life out of school. I don't think all staff realise that, and not all staff treat children with respect, which they should – you can't expect them to respect you if you don't give it first (Head of Year)*.

Students are acknowledged as having individual subjective lives but the staff are not and a similar result is found within the study by Cooper and Mellors (1990). So significant is the scale of generalising and quantifying the potential held within the subjectivity of the role, in terms of pastoral and attendance related issues, that some, such as Fielding (2001: p.104), have questioned the overall approach that official education departments have taken recently:

> …the most profound failing of New Labour government policy in education was, and continues to be, its refusal to understand the inadequacy of predominately technical solutions (teaching as delivery) to more profound human challenges (learning as a collaborative making of meaning).

A lack of political and official acknowledgement of pastoral, subjective and relational aspects of education is felt to be a specific and negative influence occurring in schools. This negative feeling is directly supported by the contribution to this thesis's research from Simon:

> This central government strategy [Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments] was justified on the basis that it pushed the available money towards teachers actually teaching in the classroom. In my experience of schools in our area this has meant the role of the Head of Year has become under resourced. Its all very well to focus on teaching in the classroom but it is the Tutors and Heads of Year that support this learning and ensure students are happy and willing.

There is a strong sense of moral misguidance projected: a sense of misjudgement and a failure of education authorities to recognise the importance of pastoral and yet teaching staff roles such as form tutors. The pastoral and subjective support that form tutors can give to students is, here, directly linked to the students' academic achievements, success and willingness to *participate* in education. Although not

directly researching about attendance, Lodge (2000: p.35) also concludes that form tutors are in a "unique" position due to their combination of pastoral and curriculum roles in the school and this can be central to the support of "students' learning". Carnell and Lodge (2002) additionally provide a clear association between form tutors and the success and happiness of the learning students undergo within schools.

However, without official recognition of this link between willingness to participate and actual attendance levels, official attendance policy and direction are not acknowledging such a potential and positive relationship already occurring. Lodge (2000: p.36) interestingly describes the current official recognition of form tutors in context to the school as a whole:

> The most common representation of the secondary school's structure places the tutor at the bottom of something, which resembles a Christmas tree. Consider…(an) alternative representation, which places the tutor at the hub of one set of relationships in the school…In reality the connections are much more complex than shown…because each group…links with each other.

Form tutors are currently being diminished in importance due to a lack of clarity regarding their role constitution, depth and meaning. However, Lodge's research is itself somewhat unclear in detailing exactly what form of tutoring is being analysed in her research. In contrast to her later research (2002), Lodge does not specifically call the tutors 'form tutors' but merely 'tutors'. This publication also discusses merits of tutoring processes involving one-to-one methods as opposed to group form tutor structures. Therefore, much of this publication is difficult to analyse in terms of deciphering the significance of form tutors specifically. Once again, a lack of clarity in terminology, context and definition leads to confusion and an inability to utilise the potential information being offered.

Beyond Education Research

Research in other disciplines is more prolific in content regarding the impact of subjective and personal support for individuals with difficulties in their lives. Identifying professional individuals in key roles in children's agencies and support networks is something that Bell (2002) emphatically argues for. From within the

context of child protection, Bell (2002: p.3) uncovers the positive effect upon a child's life experiences that a *key* individual can have:

> …the studies of children's accounts of their experiences commonly reveal the importance of a quality relationship with a significant adult…

In contrast to the research discussed above, Bell does not lose the crucial importance and influence of individuality but highlights how it is often singular, specific individuals that can be so positively influential upon a child. In particular, Bell (2002: p.9) notes the importance of school individual staff:

> The role of schools and teachers in providing an empowering relationship is also highlighted by this research. Having good relationships and succeeding in school is a major protective factor…

Bell's research shows that children and young people prosper both personally and academically when given support and pastoral care by key individual adults and this reflects the subjective work and approach that the form tutors have commented upon. Similarly, Gilligan (1998) also finds that, from a social services perspective, positive influences can be found by recognising the relationship between education staff and student welfare.

This form of professional work within a key role is also highlighted in medical research, in which the relationship between medical staff and patients is shown to have a genuine and positive effect upon both parties. Reynolds and Scott (1999: p.363) define the 'purpose' of such an empathetic relationship as:

> …initiating supportive, interpersonal communication in order to understand the perceptions and needs of the other person…empowering the other person to learn, or cope more effectively with their environment…and…the reduction of resolution of the problems of another person.

As Reynolds and Scott suggest, this form of relationship is "…likely to be common to all helping disciplines…" (p.364). The difficulty, as Reynolds and Scott point out, is that empathy is not easy to measure, just as the form tutors found it difficult to capture the essence of their work in just discrete or specific terms. However, they do usefully introduce the term of "purposefulness" (p.365). This term brings in a level of conscious (through not necessarily always fully *self*-conscious) decision on behalf of

each individual to create such subjective relationships with each other. Thereby, this relationship begins to be understood upon terms that include subjective but conscious decision processes, providing a potential route through to defining its constitutive meaning and definition. The implications of applying this to the role of the form tutor, students and attendance issues will become a central part of the discussions held within Part II and Part III of this thesis.

Some Concluding Remarks

The definition of the role of the form tutor is extremely difficult to find in official literature and research. The partial discrete definitions that can be found often oppose each other, leaving the role confused and lacking clarity, context and boundaries. Attempts to define the role through objective, discrete and specific task responsibilities do not achieve a clear, precise or productive understanding on their own.

However, the individuals undertaking the role of form tutor attempt to rise above this confusion using their own subjectivity, feelings and life-experiences. It has been shown that some research has uncovered how students state it is exactly this form of subjective recognition and understanding that influences their ability to attend school (see Kinder *et al.* 1996). This aspect of the role of the form tutor is key in creating a productive relationship with students through which attendance issues are not just subjectively reacted to and quantifiably coded within the register but proactively engaged with.

Some research projects (such as Kinder and Wilkin 1998; Kinder *et al.* 1996) have attempted to capture the subjectivity held within the student voice of attendance issues, and occasionally regarding form tutors. However, none have yet been able to find a methodology through which the essence of this subjectivity can be captured without losing the individual component of its meaning: such researchers are currently forming conclusions into general and whole-school based initiatives rather than individual or role-specific clarity. Thus, the critical subjective nature of the role of the form tutor and its consequent impact upon attendance is being significantly overlooked.

This now brings to the forefront a need to find a methodology through which not just quantitative and qualitative elements can be housed but also the second dialectic relationship between role and individuality. Although this latter relationship has now emerged as important, it has not yet been possible to describe or define its implications productively through current approaches to attendance. It will only be through the epistemology and methodology discussed in Part II of this thesis that this relationship will be given a possible context in which to become defined.

The chapter directly following will hence start this journey by opening Part II and beginning the argument for a change in the *way* attendance and individuals are approached and understood. Thus, chapter 3 will examine and present a new epistemological grounding for attendance, which will be taken forward throughout Part II towards a full methodological grounding. The practical implications of this will then become the content of Part III.

PART II

Epistemology and Methodology: Making Time for Identity

'Labels, Numbers and Me'

I have a voice: I am in research, publications, statistics.
You know who I am: 'disadvantaged', 'disaffected'…labelled.

I am the youngster that hides in my room.
The boy who gets bullied, then bullies right back.
The girl you walk past, walk through, every day.
The girl at the bottle shop, not in school, dressed to impress.

Dressed to get attention.
Dressed to make a statement.
Dressed to get noticed.
Dressed to exist.

I am everywhere but are you listening?
I am screaming: I am crying. Do you feel my pain?
I am a number: 58%, 69%, 85%.
Both my number and my existence are way too low.

It is because of *me*
That I am that number,
That is who I am.
That's me.

I don't know how to belong though: Do I belong to anyone?
To my gang, to the bully, to my room, to my number?
I don't think I belong to anyone:
Can I please belong to you?

You see, I don't like numbers.
My number doesn't feel like me.
I don't want to be a number.
I want to be me.

Elhaggagi (2009)

CHAPTER 3

A Change in Epistemology

The world's expressiveness achieves language through symbol as double meaning.
(Ricoeur 1965: p.15)

Part I of this thesis found that school attendance is not only defined through numbers but is also defined, constituted, created and judged by the actions and interpretations of individuals. However, at present such expressive meaning is not being recognised as it is hidden beneath a tradition whereby validity is only attained through quantitative and external data. This is the case despite the failings of such an approach to increase or support attendance levels.

The crucial element of Part I is that in which it was found that students and form tutors are already expressing, using and understanding a far more complex, subjective and qualitative meaning behind the concept and actualisation of attendance. Their comments expressed a deep significance in the identity, attitude, approach and relationship that can be potentially formed between individuals and the effect this has on each other's individual and social identity and actions. Hence, the challenge now is to uncover an epistemological grounding that can capture, and then successfully communicate through an associated methodology, this dual essence of potential meaning. Thus, Part II will reveal and discuss the further dialectic relationships in attendance between individual identity and social role as well as ethics and morality.

Specifically, chapter 3 will begin this challenging journey by arguing that the epistemology found within the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein (1953), and related theories from McDowell (1996, 1998b,c) provide the grounds upon which attendance can genuinely hold the dialectic content needed.

An initial philosophical input is required at this stage, as the journey being taken now requires a change in the very underlying assumptions that surround the creation and analysis of meaning within attendance. Thus, philosophy is needed to describe and show how attendance is deeply rooted in the very essence of how individuals affect

each other's intentions and actions through complex communication methods of both verbal and non-verbal meaning. The world does not express its vast meaning through data and statistics alone: it also finds expression through action, interaction and double meaning as it occurs between individuals in social groups in the world itself, as Ricoeur's statement above alludes to.

By allowing this specific epistemology to ground attendance, two significant results will be shown to emerge. Firstly, it will become possible to see forms of hidden and double meaning within attendance, based upon Ricoeur's philosophy (1955, 1965, 1975). By recognising the human ability to understand hidden meanings, such meaning can then be used in positive, imaginative and active ways within attendance. Secondly, the importance of interpretation and judgement will be shown to emerge. In terms of epistemology, interpretation will be argued to show *how* individuals relate and portray the differing forms of meaning, thereby affecting each other's self-identities, self-meaning and physical actions.

On a practical level, such epistemological grounds will be argued to be expressed through the actions and intentions of form tutors as seen in Part I: form tutors combine individual qualitative understanding of students whilst simultaneously quantitatively marking and recording data within the attendance register. In line with this, the intention of this chapter is to present a philosophical grounding that is applicable to one specific practical and real situation: that found within school attendance.

Within this scope, the surrounding pure philosophical arguments will only be discussed where particularly relevant. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the work of Wittgenstein, Ricoeur and McDowell are all situated within significantly large and international philosophical contexts. Luntley (1999, 2003d) for instance, offers a broad analysis of this wider context as well as an intensive analysis of Wittgenstein's later work. Further, arguments for and against Wittgenstein's theories are thoroughly rehearsed and practiced within modern day philosophy (Crary and Read 2000; Bloor 1997; Kripke 1982). I have also already examined closely the theory of meaning, epistemology, methodology, time, consciousness and identity from Wittgenstein, Ricoeur and McDowell (Marshall 2001a,b,c; Elhaggagi 2006a,b,c and 2007). The following sections will therefore only draw upon such contexts and theories once more, when specifically applicable to the issues at hand.

Introducing a Philosophical Approach

> I wanted to put that picture before him, and his *acceptance* of the picture consists in his now being inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at things.* (PI 144)

In this section the case is made for a change in the "way" the concept of attendance is approached, using a different "set of pictures". It will be argued that there is a need to see areas of attendance that are currently hidden from view. Combining the traditional understanding of attendance with the uncovered subjective elements will allow for greater truth and meaning to appear. In allowing this process to occur, the role of individuals and subjectivity, specifically with regards to form tutors, will become more apparent.

The Involvement of People

As Part I has shown, the majority of attendance publications thus far analysed have relied upon codes, data and numbers to communicate objective and purported unequivocal meanings. However, as the comments from form tutors and students in chapter 2 highlighted, attendance is also a concept that is far more complex, intrinsically involving *people.*

School attendance only exists as a significant concept due to the Foster Education Act of 1870, which brought about compulsory education. Therefore it is a concept that is definitively bound by social constraints and agreements from individuals. Furthermore, attendance is about the dynamic actions and intentions of children (and parents) as they decide whether to attend school and the actions of school staff as they react to these decisions and individuals.

In general, the dialectic relationship between objective, quantitative data and subjective, qualitative information is one that has occupied the content of centuries of philosophical thought from Plato (399BC) and Descartes (1641) to Davidson (1967, 1987), Frege (1892) and Russell (1905). Martinich (1996) provides a useful and accessible collection of papers regarding such philosophical dilemmas. The involvement of people, who are subjective and opinionated, is often seen to create

validity issues for meaning within a world where people themselves assume truth relies upon external objectivity. Such objectivity, in order to maintain priority over truth, relies upon the reduction of our own human 'interference'.

Both philosophically and in terms of school attendance, the issue becomes how to decide which side of the dilemma should attain priority: should the quantitative statistics regarding attendance remain the definitive constitution of the concept or should the qualitative information from the people involved now be given priority?

The former and current approach simplifies the path to truth, as the complexities of human interaction, language, thought and consciousness can be ignored or minimised. However, this leads to conclusions about attendance missing crucial content potentially derived from individuals and their identities. It has also been shown that this approach is not working in identifying and then supporting the actual issues arising within attendance.

However, if subjectivity is allowed to attain a prioritised level of power over meaning, a Cartesian reliance on individual mental consciousness may prevail (Descartes 1641). In terms of attendance, this would mean rejecting all data, statistics and analysis based on social, physical or numerical patterns. The truth about school attendance would be reliant upon each individual's thoughts. This obviously brings with it fatal flaws for practical use and social cohesion. School attendance does involve individuals but it is also a socially derived concept and one that involves numerical groundings.

Therefore, attendance requires an epistemology that can allow both objectivity and subjectivity to gain prominence. However, it becomes a quandary, reliant upon further meta-philosophical thought, to then find a bridge to relate each concept to the other. Thus, the dialectic relationships enter a circular and spiralling journey of unending philosophical and meta-philosophical debate.

The Influence of Philosophy

School attendance need not fall into this philosophical trap. The above arguments are a form of philosophy that philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953) fiercely warn

against. Wittgenstein argues that genuine philosophy should not be allowed to have a constitutive part of the concepts it describes:

> Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains not deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us. (PI 126)

It must be noted, that the term 'hidden', differs here to the 'hidden' that Ricoeur refers to in his theory of double meaning (1965) discussed below. The 'hidden' that Wittgenstein is using refers to that which remains hidden even when our eyes are opened to the world around us. Individuals should not be afraid to admit that they cannot explain everything: some explanations are beyond human capability. However, Ricoeur uses the term 'hidden' to refer to meaning that *can* be uncovered and is only hidden whilst we are not looking at the world directly. This form of 'hidden' meaning can be used within imaginative methods such as metaphors and play on words to create double meanings and clever use of language and communication.

Wittgenstein therefore argues that philosophy should merely help to open the eyes of individuals to what is already in front of them and should not look to produce new concepts. This is against the traditional understanding that philosophy, as Hutto (2005: p.1) describes, should "add to our existing stock of knowledge and to provide, by that route, a deeper understanding of the world." Hutto goes on to "discredit" such philosophical trends and in doing so provides an extensive overview of this internal philosophical predicament.

Upon Wittgenstein's epistemology, explanation becomes redundant, as description alone in its fullest sense, is all that is needed. Philosophy should provide a path to meaning through description of the world and not through reliance upon meta-language or concepts existentially separate to the world:

> Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it.
> For it cannot give it any foundation either.
> It leaves everything as it is.
> It also leaves mathematics as it is…. (PI 124)

This is at the centre of the ethos surrounding Wittgenstein's epistemology, and specifically McDowell's (1996) reading of it. Meaning is brought back into the very nature and existence of humans as they actively live as social individuals within the world. In every-day and practical life, individuals live within a combined subjective and objective world with no issue becoming apparent. As McDowell (1996: p.84) describes, meaning to humans is "second nature". Meaning is derived from naturally connecting to and seeing the meaning within the cases presented before us: such as the comments from students and form tutors about what is already actually happening.

True philosophy is not redundant therefore: instead, it becomes about increasing awareness and openness to the natural activity and creativity of meaning immanently occurring and surrounding the multiple, complex and intricate interactions between individuals, social groups and the world (McDowell 1996). For concepts such as attendance, meaning is shown to be possible even though it *involves* people and is not just *about* people.

Forms of Meaning

This section will present the argument that from this epistemological grounding, complex and immensely influential subjective forms of meaning emerge. The balanced approach required enables forms of meaning to be uncovered that are specifically and intricately social and individual, free, active, immanent and ethical in nature. It is then these forms of meaning that can be revealed alongside, and in relation to, traditional quantitative meaning within attendance issues and thereby used to create positive progress forward.

Social Individual Meaning

In what becomes relevant to the dialectic relationship between individual identity and social role, Wittgenstein vehemently argues against providing individuals with supreme or Cartesian power over truth within his Private Language Argument (PI 243-315). It is only through others in the world that we obtain certainty about meaning:

> …to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it (PI 202).

Therefore, although the impact and significance of the individual within attendance does need to become officially recognised, the external, numerical and social content must not be rejected entirely. Some philosophers (Bloor 1997; Kripke 1982) have attempted to read into Wittgenstein's theories a form of social dominance. However, Wittgenstein himself states that such social arguments are based on a "misunderstanding" (PI 201). Luntley (2003b, 2004) similarly argues against the dominance of social power through highlighting the influence and creativity possible within meaning that comes directly from individuals as they attend to the world. Social groups, such as schools and governments, cannot hold definitive truth over individuals entirely.

On the other hand, official and relevant social recognition is fundamental to individuals in order for them to obtain and understand their own identities and social roles. As Cooper and Mellors (1990: p.319) find, the linguistic term used to refer to individuals has a profound effect upon how they are then socially treated and identified. For example, although there is no specific attendance code for truancy, this popularly used term can determine the level of support individuals receive:

> Unlike school refusal, clear conceptual frameworks are absent from the literature on truancy. However, truancy is more widespread than school refusal but it is a condition considered to be less amenable to clinic-based treatment and any treatment is likely to receive less co-operation from the truants themselves and their families compared to school refusers.

The social label that students are given is used to project the individual into one particular life-path. If they are labelled school-refuser, they are most likely to be given clinically led treatment and agency support. If the 'truant' label is used, such support, understanding and recognition disappear: social labels carry active, immanent and influential meaning upon individuals. In this way, social and positive acknowledgement of existence by the relevant social group affects how an individual is both treated by that group and how they are identified as an individual.

If social meaning is given dominance entirely over individual identity however, this can lead to the absorption of individual roles (such as 'form tutor') into general terms (such as 'school staff'). General lack of recognition that a specific *role* exists diminishes the existential confidence and identity that is then epistemologically possible for the individuals involved to obtain from within the role. Form tutors are not just individuals but also a professional group who represent one face of the social group that is the school. Therefore, individuals and social groups become linked together definitively and fundamentally through this epistemological combination of individual identity and role.

However, in positive scenarios, individuals in social groups have an opportunity to use this intricate dialectic relationship in "scaffolding" the sense of belonging in other individuals (Luntley 2003d: p.93). Luntley (2004: p.3) also finds that:

> In learning from experts we often learn by an apprenticeship in which we observe and try to emulate the details of their performance…What we take from observing…is not a proposition in the linguistic sense…[but] attentional skills that provide the couplings, the propositional components, that will figure in the propositions made available to us by employing those sorts of couplings.

Additional areas of Wittgenstein's epistemology (PI 66 - PI 67) further highlight this potentially supportive and encouraging element:

> …we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail…I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"…And I shall say: 'games' form a family.

Therefore, meaning is found in social use but also in our natural ability to individually and immanently see the similarities in the elements within the world (Luntley 2002). Wittgenstein uses the terminology of families, games and similarities. The language is of belonging, activity and immanency, not of social, physical or quantitative control over individuals. As such, this form of meaning is constituted by an active, ongoing, immanent and dynamic balance of individual and social interaction; within this, communication is enhanced by positive relationships between individuals that support and guide joint attention to the world in order to "see the world aright" (Luntley 2004: p.1).

Unbounded Meaning

Meaning is no longer required to be either Platonic or entirely socially constituted. In contrast, meaning contains the active, immanent, dynamic and unpredictable nature of individuals and social behaviour in the world. Within the world, meaning is intricately laced with freedom and unbounded definitions (PI 69):

> We DO not know the boundaries because none have been drawn…So, we use the phrase "This *and similar things* are called 'games'…"

However, the fact that boundaries have not been drawn prior to an engagement with the world does not prevent such boundaries existing immanently in the world through the dynamics of that engagement itself (PI 241):

> It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in forms of life.

McDowell (1996: p.25) also states: "How things are is independent of one's thinking…". Forms of life are based within an objective world. Wittgenstein is therefore not advocating an epistemology that removes from meaning any form of external or objective structure, even though this is a common conclusion to come to (Hutto 2005). McGuinness (1982: p.32) also interestingly states:

> The correct interpretation – or rather, as we must say, a correct interpretation – will be one that says something to the patient.

Wittgenstein does argue that meaning is found within both practical and context-specific life situations and with this comes a certain level of unbounded meaning. However, the world and its objectivity do not drop out of the picture even of interpretation quite as simply as perhaps McGuinness is alluding to. As McDowell (1996: p.91) argues, it is through human 'second nature' that individuals engage with the meaning and this second nature is a part of the objective world:

> The position is a naturalism of second nature, and I suggested that we can equally see it as a naturalized Platonism. The idea is that the dictates of reason are there anyway, whether or not one's eyes are opened to them…

Meaning may be unbounded but it is not unstructured: by opening 'one's eyes' to the world, one is enabled to share with others conceptual content gained from an entwined and dynamic activity between individual, social group and the world. The potential of meaning is so great, that individuals come together in active engagement to share not bounded and distinct exactness of meaning but 'this and similar things'.

Interesting and relevant in relation to attendance issues, is Nyiri's (1982: p.60) discussion upon Wittgenstein's approach to the possibility of groups and individuals acting in a way that go against predicted, socially accepted or understood behaviour:

> …the picture of a different order is always combined by Wittgenstein with the picture of a different society, that he therefore regards as truly sick only those modes of behaviour which would not count as normal in *any* society…

The actions of an individual, such as not attending school, may not be out of 'insanity' or 'feeble-mindedness' (Nyiri 1982: p.60), but through an inability to yet belong to the social regularities required. Individuals who do not yet see the same similarities in the world are not necessarily wrong, but could be seeing the world from a different perspective or socially shared understanding.

Accordingly, to change individuals perspectives is not necessarily to force social understanding upon them but to actively support and enable them to engage with the world from the same perspective and shared understanding that the social group is achieving: this is a relationship between the individual and the world first and foremost but achieved through social support. McDowell (1996: p.35) declares:

> When the specific character of her thinking starts to come into view for us, we are not filling in blanks in a pre-existing sideways-on picture of how her thought bears on the world, but coming to share with her a standpoint *within* a system of concepts, a standpoint from which we can join her in directing a shared attention at the world, without needing to break out through a boundary that encloses the system of concepts.

This illustrates how individuals support others in learning and judging the world. A 'joint attention' is possible so that shared meaning is found. This is the epitome of a successful understanding of meaning, identity and understanding being developed between individuals within their social group in the world. This is reflected in the connectivity that individual form tutors are already bringing to students and their wish

to be a part of the education 'game'. Through use of unbounded meaning within a structured world, practical work can enable individuals to connect with their schools and tutor groups rather than being forced to choose alternative groups with which to see similarities in the world.

Hence, form tutors also have a certain level of responsibility: they must couple with the world and each student correctly in order for their interpretation and coding of student's actions to be meaningful. In parallel, the education system has the same responsibility towards the role of the form tutor, recognising the individual lives involved and allowing them to feel a part of the 'family' of the school in which they work. This has profound implications for the training levels needed for form tutors as well as the time and support they need in order to maintain levels of 'family' closeness within their tutor groups. This ethical discussion will be taken further regarding methodological issues within chapter 5 and regarding practical application in chapter 6.

Thus, it has been shown that meaning is deeper than the surface appearance of the world and deeper than the social conversations of individuals. Meaning is, therefore, fundamentally unbounded and yet structured, objective and yet subjective, individual and yet socially constituted. Meaning is a combination of elements and can be formed through active, dynamic, immanent and unbounded means. Wittgenstein reminds us that philosophy's job within this is not to explain these forms of meaning but to show how to see them more clearly: to see the similarities and see what was previously hidden but is potentially crucial.

The Epistemology of Judgement and Interpretation

To make a judgement or an interpretation is to understand the possibility of alternative choices: it is an ability to imagine the world and the individual's place within in it other than how it is at present. This involves skills of temporal and spatial self-conscious awareness that requires the individual to understand the self not just in time and space but also potentially throughout possible times and spaces.

The content of this thesis will have to assume much of the philosophical debate concerning levels of self-consciousness (Armstrong 1981; Davidson 1967, 1987;

Dretske 1993; Eilan *et al.* 1999; Elhaggagi 2006c; Marshall 2001a; Ricoeur 1969, 1992; Shoemaker 1996) and the existence of the surrounding issues of states of mind (Burwood *et al.* 1998; Child 1996; Heil 1998; Nagel 1974, 1989; Ryle 1968; Rosenthal 1991; Searle 1994; Turing 1991 and Fodor 1987). However, specific elements will be discussed whenever relevant and taken forward to methodological and practical applications within the remaining chapters.

From this grounding, interpretation and judgement are found to be specifically influential within attendance, from the interpretation and judgements of codes to the judgements made by students and families regarding whether to attend. However, it is a matter of concern that currently with each level of official interpretation, quantitative and qualitative information regarding attendance is subjectively re-evaluated on an increasingly removed relationship from the original qualitative actions taking place. The judgements and interpretations of character, context, history and personalities used by form tutors to judge student absences are removed as each layer of codes and data is created and derived. McGuinness (1982: p.32) comments upon Wittgenstein's understanding of a similar process of interpreting dreams:

> In any such interpretation there is something lost, namely and precisely the richness and indeterminate character of the original dream.

Similarly, in a need to objectify truth, the critical subjective, context-specific and immanently occurring meaning of attendance is being overlooked.

Epistemological Definitions

However, by seeing Wittgenstein's theories of interpretation through Ricoeur's understanding of double meaning, a positive aspect of this difficulty is found. Ricoeur and Wittgenstein's theories on interpretation can at first be thought of as contradicting each other. Wittgenstein's epistemology argues that we see the world directly and immanently: there is no room for meta-interpretations:

> …there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation,* but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases. (PI 201).

Ricoeur (1965: p.15), on the other hand, crucially argues that the concept of interpretation and the human ability to apply judgements to this world is due to a natural ability to see "double meaning". The particular significance of double meaning itself will be discussed in the following subsection of this chapter. Specifically here though, it could be seen to require a secondary level of interpretation, contradicting Wittgenstein's epistemological grounding.

However, the significance of Wittgenstein's argument is the immediacy with which individuals see, and are a part of, the world. Individuals need not explain their first "coupling" (Luntley 2004: p.3) with the world with more meta-interpretations or meta-language. Crucially, this does not deny the depth and complexity of that first interpretation, or its ability to hold double meaning. There is no need for a philosophical existential understanding of interpretation but only an understanding based upon description and use in specific contexts:

> …any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning (PI 198a).

Interpretation cannot be given reified existence as an element or procedure in its own right. Such reification would merely add the meta-language that Wittgenstein so strongly argues against. This is in parallel to Wittgenstein's argument that an individual's interpretation on the world cannot produce meaning without support from the world and social elements.

This is highlighted further by his description of how an individual interprets a sign, which is crucial to attendance as it describes how individuals understand quantitative codes such as those within registers:

> …a person goes by a sign-post in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom…To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions). PI 198 – PI 199.

Understanding codes, patterns and signs requires more than just an individual: meaning is a combination of social, individual and external elements. Social customs and games, based within the objective world, house our individual interpretations and judgements. Adhering to Wittgenstein sees interpretation as void of any existential

properties but this does not stop it from being used as a description of the process that happens when individuals couple and judge the world, including other individuals, which are in front of them.

McDowell (1996: p.25) is careful to also remind us that the content of this shared experience is not separate to the experience itself: experience holds already conceptualised content. Accordingly, a philosophical reasoning or bridge is not necessary to join experience and truth back together. Therefore, Wittgenstein and Ricoeur are actually arguing for an epistemology, and ontology, based upon a direct, immanent, integral understanding, interpretation and judgement of our lives within the world: individuals are a part of the world and the world is a part of individuals.

Hidden and Double Meaning

Through understanding the complexities and subjective nature of judgements and interpretation, the importance of non-verbal and imaginative ways of communicating become apparent. Wittgenstein (1953: PI 78) and Ricoeur (1955: pp.308-309) openly argue for an epistemology that recognises the influence of such meaning. Ricoeur states:

> Our bodies and expressions are examples of our intentions and ideas. We are living in and within the world. We are a part of it and at the same time expressing it and our own intentions and thoughts on it: "continual transcendence".

Humans have the ability to couple with the world naturally and to understand concepts further than that which can be put into language. This is exactly what Ricoeur is stating in the above quotation. From this the concepts of 'one interpretation' and double meaning become entwined necessarily. Due to unique levels of self-consciousness (Marshall 2001a; Elhaggagi 2006c), individuals are able to not only understand that this form of meaning exists but also use it for their own benefits in many ways, from lying to comedy.

Therefore, judgements and interpretation may be based upon meaning beyond verbal means: "…one can know something and not be able to say it…".(PI 78). Luntley (2004: p.4) states:

> The conceptually articulate are not people with a lot of words at their disposal, but with finely discriminative capacities for coupling.

Some forms of judgement and interpretation are hence difficult to formalise into words even when individuals understand their content. Meaning is rich with double and hidden meanings: the act of understanding a meaning is as much a part of meaning as the subject of the understanding itself. As Ricoeur states (1965: p.9) a symbol is more than that which is signed towards, it encompasses the human action of understanding that sign:

> …a double-meaning linguistic expression that requires an interpretation, and interpretation is a work of understanding that aims at deciphering symbols.

Upon this definition, symbols and meaning are seen to be active, dynamic and alive. Interpretation becomes the human act of understanding a concept beyond that which is merely given. Understanding cannot be gained purely through quantitative elements as such elements themselves require interpretation from an individual. Ricoeur (1965: p.7, p.31) argues:

> The dream and its analogues are thus set within a region of language that presents itself as the locus of complex significations where another meaning is both given and hidden in an immediate meaning. Let us call this region of double meaning "symbol"…
>
> ...The revealing power of symbols opposes symbols to technical signs, which merely signify what is posited in them and which, therefore, can be emptied, formalized, and reduced to mere objects of a calculus...

Understanding and interpretation are shown to be the encompassing 'locus' from within which individuals can locate their relationships with each other and the world: "To mean something other than what is said – this is the symbolic function" (Ricoeur 1965: p.12).

The effects of this are found not just as a *result* of such philosophical theories but as a part of their content, creation and expression also. Wittgenstein is famous for his admiration and devotion to Dostoyevsky's *'The Brothers Karamazov'* (1880: p.43). Within this, the character of Elder Zosima is described as follows:

> Of the Elder Zosima it was said…in the end he had acquired a perspicacity of such subtle depth as made the first glance at the face of a stranger who had come to him sufficient for him to be able to guess correctly the reason for his arrival, the object of his need, and even the nature of the torment that was racking his conscience….

Elder Zosima embodies the "especial quality of his soul" (p.43) that Wittgenstein appears to be arguing for in terms of philosophy's role in allowing individuals to clear their minds of the clutter of meta-terminology and theories. Elder Zosima's quiet, reverent, direct and entirely focused and devoted attention to the world and each individual allows him to see clearly the complex and symbolic characters, lives and meaning around him. Elder Zosima himself becomes a symbol, expressed through fiction, of Wittgenstein's philosophical approach and desire for reinstating the human race's ability to naturally understand each other without reliance upon codes, formal logic and linguistics alone.

Part of meaning can thus be potentially hidden from formalised view and come from individual outward expressions, not just words or codes. In parallel with Wittgenstein's argument upon expressions of pain being outward and not inward (PI 258 onwards), Ricoeur (1955: p.307) argues:

> …by means of expression, my body displays the inside upon the outside; as a sign for others, my body renders me decipherable and offered to the mutuality of consciousness.

In practical life, individuals communicate all these forms of non-verbal and complex meaning with no more confusion evident than in traditional verbal communication. As with objectivity and subjectivity, the given and hidden meanings are a part of each other. It is only through over-philosophising and analysing this form of meaning that difficulties in explanation become apparent (Wittgenstein 1953: PI 88 – PI 100).

This strongly infers the now critical and unavoidable importance of the subjective element of meaning and understanding and does so by showing that individual action and approaches to situations, not just verbal communication or data, form this subjective element. The consequences of this are far reaching, as Ricoeur (1955: p.309) uncovers: "The mute look is caught up in discourse which articulates the meaning of it…".

Even silence is a form of communication. Negation of physical sound does not mean negation of meaning. A look can speak volumes without the need for words. Therefore, when individuals look to the world and to others for similarities in order to judge actions and identities, they find it in given as well as hidden meaning. The smallest of actions by individuals can change the way others judge their meaning and therefore how they then consequently judge themselves:

> No doubt the tone of voice and the look with which they are uttered, and much else besides, will also be different. (PI 21)

Correspondingly, meaningful symbols can be paralleled to attendance registration marks, which tutors then see as "heuristic" (Ricoeur 1965: p.39) and meaningful in an individual way. Registers 'give' and 'hide' meanings, with the latter requiring natural human interpretation for meaning to be actualised. The act of taking the morning legal register, by form tutors, is as much a part of the meaning behind the code inputted as the student whose behaviour it is meant to represent.

This also shows that the behaviour of students, who do not attend school regularly, holds meaning in itself. This meaning should not go unnoticed and covered up by numbers and quantitative data alone. There are also crucial elements within the relationship then formed between students and form tutors. Communication is not just formal words but the way they are expressed, as evidenced by the comments from students discussed in chapter 2.

Therefore, by seeing interpretation as explained by both Wittgenstein and Ricoeur, it has been possible to understand its essential place in any science, research or concept that involves human individuals. To some extent this could be argued to be all sciences and all research. As Ricoeur (1965: p.48) argues, individuals cannot separate themselves from even this form of interaction in the world:

> …the philosopher does not speak from nowhere: every question he can pose rises from the depths of his Greek memory; the file of his investigation is thereby unavoidably oriented…

This has profound implications for the ethics and methodology of this thesis and this will be brought forward to chapters 4 and 5. However, this subsection has shown how interpretation and judgement are not passive or philosophically separate concepts that add onto the objective world and mask the individual ability to see truth. Instead, they combine in and within our objectivity and meaning and guide individuals to the truth they actually seek.

It has also been argued that individuals within social groups in the objective world achieve non-verbal meaning and double meaning through interpretation. The possibility and actualisation of non-verbal meaning has shown the importance of behaviour, such as tone, expression and subtle intention, to all our actions within the world. Others can understand these elements in the same way that objective and physical elements are seen and understood. The consequences of this upon the issues of identity will be addressed further in chapter 5.

Some Concluding Remarks

> The world's expressiveness achieves language through symbol as double meaning. (Ricoeur 1965: p.15)

The world holds expression and achieves language: it is at the centre of human epistemology. However, within that world we are unique individuals who can interact with the world on an active, living and dynamic footing. Meaning is richer than words, numbers and statistics. Through judgement, interpretation and double meaning, individuals communicate on a deeper and higher level. The world's meaning is complex and entwined in a communicative relationship with those that are there to interpret and judge it.

In terms of school attendance, it is vital not to allow the quantitative data, targets, numbers and percentages to become the only content understood. All of these areas are created by individuals; this is achieved through students' actions when missing school and through the actions of staff as they code and interpret each absence. Interpretation and judgement are essential parts of attendance. It is only when this is fully realised and actualised that the true nature of attendance can begin to unfold and

the true identity, role and understanding of the individuals involved start to be unravelled.

Data itself can only provide a whole meaning once it has been read and understood by an individual. Likewise, people themselves need to be heard, seen and listened to before they can be understood and their choices and decisions objectified. Therefore, instead of invalidating arguments, the subjective element of attendance brings about, through interpretation, judgement and complex forms of meaning, the complete and whole meaning that is being missed at present. In order to gain validity as is required, subjectivity has to be embraced and brought into the picture in a complete and integrated way.

By allowing the dialectic relationship between subjectivity and objectivity to come together, it is possible to see the complex ramifications it has on ethics, responsibility and research itself. As the world gives forward the potential for meaning, individuals step up and embrace such potential and actualise it by the processes of interpretation, meaning and judgement. This ethical element will be discussed in detail within chapter 5.

The codes within a register, the inputting of those codes, the physical, mental and social act of attending school: all of these concepts have both given and hidden meanings. Currently, the official literature provides coverage only of the *given* meanings. It is time now for the *hidden* meanings to be given the significance they are due and so, chapters 4 and 5 will now take this epistemological grounding onto methodological applications of time and identity within school attendance.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology Part One:
Narrative Methodological and Temporal Structures

'What is ten minutes?'

To my form tutor on a good day, ten minutes is nothing:
A code in the register as late but present.
On a bad day though I'm late and truanting.
Maybe tomorrow I'll just keep on walking.

To me, ten minutes is the time to think:
It's my time and mine alone.
The morning is full of other people's needs,
But that journey to school is my ten minutes.

Most days I dream a whole year in those minutes:
A different world, a different place, a different time.
Reality and confusions slip away.
My time can take me anywhere: I need my ten-minute identity.

Elhaggagi (2009)

The following two chapters will argue that it is through narrative methodology that a practical and accessible route to capturing the complex and yet significant meanings held within attendance can be found. Narrative methodologies are able to promote the significance of subjective individuals whilst still enabling understanding to be constituted by external, statistical and numerical elements, achieving this through the epistemological requirements outlined in chapter 3.

Narrative methodology is becoming an extremely wide-ranging and diverse collection of grounding ideas and as such it is not easy to find a core assimilation or understanding. Despite this, there is a common belief that underlying commonalities are found in an openness to reflexivity, creativity about structure and content of qualitative research and the ethical and influential position of the researcher (Smith and Sparkes 2008; Stanley and Temple 2008; Tamboukou 2008).
From within such an understanding, these two chapters will focus on the practical and theoretical qualities that emerge regarding narrative, and auto/biographical aspects of narrative, from the works of Ricoeur (1955, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1986,

1988, 1990) and the transition from Wittgenstein's epistemology to the practical implications of school attendance.

It is precisely the inability to identify the definition of narrative in words that allows such a methodology to house the epistemology and ontology of human lives, times and identities, as will be outlined through the narrative structure and freedom of time in this chapter and that of identity and ethics in the following chapter. Alternative and complimentary theories upon narrative methodologies will be outlined and discussed whenever appropriate within the chapters.

Specifically, this chapter will rest upon Ricoeur's theories on judgement, historical time, fictional time, narrative mimesis and narrative emplotment. From this, the creative, dynamic and active epistemological ideas seen in the previous chapter will be enabled to move onto narrative methodological grounds. Time will be given, specifically by narrative, the freedom to connect with the dynamic and temporally diverse content of human auto/biographical lives and experiences.

The dialectic nature of time becomes a part of this narrative configuration: the temporal freedom needed relies upon the very structure and boundaries of narrative time that humans endeavour to break free from. Thereby, concepts that relied previously on just external or linear time frames with little or no input from subjective phenomena, such as attendance, now can be understood positively and productively through embracing this dialectic combination of temporal elements.

Finally, this chapter discusses how the concepts of narrative time affected and continue to affect this thesis itself: from its creation and meaning to its content, ethos and direction. Thus, it will be shown in practice how such temporal elements influence the lives of individuals as they attempt to understand complex concepts, such as attendance, and the people who make such concepts possible. Chapter 5 will then continue with an extrapolation of narrative methodological elements but will specifically look at how the formation of identity, individual roles and ethical responsibility emerge.

From Epistemology to Methodology

Lives are lived through time but made intelligible through narrative. (Erben 2000: p.383)

Individuals live their lives through time but such time is not always easily coded or quantified: due to being a part of the lives of subjective individuals, time definitively and essentially cannot escape subjective content. Narrative, biography, autobiography, identity and time are inextricably linked together. As Erben (1998b: p.13) states:

> The fact that lived time is finite and that our subjects (and we ourselves) have been born and will die is the backdrop against which all life is lived. In short, *a life that is studied is the study of a life in time*…human identity is narrational, lives being composed of the narratives by which time is experienced.

As the poem at the start of this chapter describes, ten minutes may be assumed to be linear, quantifiable, external and objective. However, ten minutes in the life of an individual has the potential to be much more. Understanding how time and individual lives interact will open a path to understanding not just the actions and intentions carried out within attendance but also how individuals can positively and productively support the meaning found within each other's time and life narratives.

It is through understanding the overall content and direction of Ricoeur's extensive, complex and far-reaching arguments upon the reconfiguration of time (1955, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1986), by bringing phenomenological, traditional, historical and fictional time together through narrative time, that the intricate relationship between time and human lives will be uncovered.

Rediscovering the Dynamics of Narrative Time and Attendance

The immanency in which meaning and communication is built between individuals, as the previous chapter has shown, is reliant upon an active, flexible and ultimately adaptable grounding. Time therefore needs to be approached as potentially adaptable, subjective, phenomenological and, in use, unpredictable. Individuals may use time in linear formats to create an overview and structure but within this, individuals move and journey between temporal events to immanently and personally judge, imagine and interpret the context of events and each other in a larger, more complex temporal grounding.

How the first legal register of each day is completed by the form tutor is not, therefore, just a matter of which students are present in school: it is in fact created from multiple subjective and temporally affected judgements, interpretations and interactions. Each individual comes to the group with their own experiences, understandings and context and therefore contributes to the group meaning and identity. However, it is also these elements, based within and through time, that ultimately affect how the interactions between form tutors and students take place. This in turn affects the codes, initiatives, reactions and judgments made.

Narrative methodology becomes essential, not just helpful, in the quest to understand attendance more accurately. Narrative methodology is about how life experiences are created, portrayed, relayed and understood within complex and yet significant temporal aspects. Such methodology is not just about written fictional stories: it also concerns the temporal structure, content, delivery, potential meaning and dynamic communication paths involved and created within the active process of life stories and life experiences. As Erben (1996: p.171) notes:

> By narratives we mean the types, varieties, and patterns of the accounts or stories that compose life-course experiences.

Time and narrative are intricately interwoven and are expressed together through the human lives of individuals. Meaning that concerns the life experiences, actions and intentions of individuals (such as within attendance) become intrinsically laced with temporal and narrative elements (Elhaggagi 2007; Erben 1996, 2000; Ricoeur 1984, 1985, 1988). Ricoeur (1984: p.52) argues:

> …time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains it full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.

Education in general is closely related to such narrative definition. Seen as the life path, journey and the progression of individuals over time, narrative expresses the goal to which education seeks to nurture and support. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: pp. xxii - xxiii) find that:

> Educators are interested in life. Life, to borrow John Dewey's metaphor, *is* education…education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined.

Education is, from this viewpoint, naturally formed upon a narrative and auto/biographical basis. Education is about learning how to understand one's own and other people's life experiences. Through this understanding, the meaning in the world becomes unlocked and learning can take place.

Subjective experience is not a new concept to education or the philosophy of learning (Vygotsky 1934). Wittgenstein (1953) also advocates a flexible and dynamic route to learning through his notions of language games and resemblances. As Luntley (2003b) discusses, within an email correspondence, with respect to Wittgenstein's epistemology and education:

> …anything in education that encourages creativity, imagination is a good thing…because they are core elements to concept acquisition…Witt's [sic.] term of art – 'language game' already points to the playfulness and open-endedness of concept mastery.

This form of active relationship within education becomes further evident in discussions of dialogue, as Metcalfe and Game (2008) discuss in detail. Dialogue with the world, including other individuals, makes individuals who they are on an active, open level. To understand the actions of individuals is to understand the story, over time, from which they act and belong. Learning is not assumed to happen by looking *at* the world but by *living in* and *through* the structure of that world, supported by other individuals.

Although official attendance materials do not overtly utilise the methodology of narrative at present, narrative research has brought the issue of disaffected students within education into discussion on occasion (Erben 2000). It is, arguably, when such narrative temporal structures breakdown that individuals find themselves unable to access this form of learning and ability to be 'living in' the world around them.

Attendance finds itself as the legal measurement and understanding of whether individuals are physically accessing this temporally active learning process. Attendance is fundamentally about the interaction of individuals and their experiences through and in time. Using narrative to pull these aspects together into one methodology is not just useful, practical and pragmatic but it is an essential part of the

constitution of attendance. In this respect, the methodology becomes a reflection of the active concept at hand. Stanley (2008: p.436) interestingly suggests that:

> Narrative inquiry provides a methodology, a set of broad procedural ideas and concepts, rather than a pre-set method or specified technique, and it encourages responsiveness to the dynamics of the research context.

Narrative methodology utilises the flexibility and fluidness of meaning and time, found in Wittgenstein's epistemological groundings, to ensure that the complexity and breadth of individual experience and social interaction is given freedom and space for expression. It is not possible to understand a life or individual experience within time without doing so through narrative modes: narrative is the act of understanding life experiences within the social and temporal context of the individual. By understanding the temporal elements and abilities held within narrative methodology, an understanding of the temporal factors at play within attendance will become apparent and therefore available for use within positive moves forward.

Liberation of Subjectivity through Narrative Time

The crucial temporal elements of Wittgenstein's epistemology have been shown already to be the immanent, dynamic and free realm in which meaning must be understood and described. Individuals are actively engaged at all times within and upon time and therefore time becomes liberated by the freedom and activity that humans bring within it. As narrative methodology is constituted by the auto/biographical life experiences of individuals, it essentially contains the ability to house this freedom and temporal dynamics.

However, to achieve this, narrative time must accept a liberation of subjective content and relinquish any previous reliance upon purely external, linear and traditionally quantifiable scales. From Einstein (1954) to the recent BBC2 'Horizon' programme ('Do You Know What Time It Is?', 2008), the idea that time can be both linear and relative is not new. Hoerl and McCormack (2001) have discussed similar theories regarding time. However, here I will concentrate specifically upon the extensive arguments from Ricoeur upon the nature of narrative time and the liberation of subjectivity finally housed within a human and yet still objective concept of time.

Ricoeur argues for a concept of narrative time that is not existentially or conceptually separate from our own existence or, in contrast, something only created through human terminology or action. As fitting with Wittgenstein's epistemology, time is something that is both quantitative and qualitative. In relation to this, Ricoeur (1984: p.62) introduces the term of 'within-time-ness':

> …within-time-ness or being-"within"-time deploys features irreducible to the representation of linear time….already something other than measuring the intervals…

This is crucial as it shows how a phenomenology of time exists prior to that of linear time and conventional methods of measuring it. As Ricoeur (ibid) continues:

> It is because we do reckon with time and do make calculations that we must have recourse to measuring, not vice versa.

Individuals' active, fluid, dynamic lives are within time as time is itself within our active and dynamic lives. The liberation of subjective elements, through narrative time, allows an understanding to be reached upon how common phrases such as "have the time", "take the time to" and "to lose time" (Ricoeur 1984: p.62) come to be formed. Form tutors stated within their contributions a wish to have time to care and work more closely on their pastoral elements of school life. However, at the same time not one asked for more linear time: Simon particularly stated that more traditional time was not the answer yet he did need more time of some form to create a sense of belonging within the group.

Ricoeur's terminology and epistemological concept of narrative time now forms a descriptive and clarifying role in how this seemingly paradoxical feeling from the form tutors is possible. Diachronic temporal aspects inject non-linear and subjectively based temporal elements into the linear time that is most often assumed. It is the ability of narrative methodology to recognise these elements as specifically part of the life paths and journeys of individuals, which allows it to methodologically, and not just theoretically, capture the temporal elements of subjective lives.

Past, present and future events become entwined together not just through their linear relationship but also through the subjective individuals experiencing, judging and anticipating events within each time. "Now" therefore, becomes a relative term that is

too often disassociated from the living, human context it is taken from and attempted to be housed instead within the existentially separate form of an "abstract moment" (Ricoeur 1984: p.63).

Judgement, Interpretation and Time

The flexibility of human lives within time is accentuated and based upon individual ability to be creative within time through intricate and complex self-conscious and conscious abilities. The complex and subtle variances of such aspects are not just multifarious but are essential to the human ability to exist so intricately within time (Eilan *et al.* 1999; Elhaggagi 2006b, 2007; Fivush 1998; Hoerl and McCormack 2001; Marshall 2001a). In the following chapter, I will extrapolate relevant areas of this self-conscious element in terms of individual identity. However, this chapter still relies upon these elements in terms of how individuals generally communicate and interact with the world and each other upon temporal grounds, as Ricoeur's work upon metaphor and interpretation has already been shown, and will continue below, to highlight.

Following on from the previous chapter's epistemological discussion of judgement and interpretation, it is seen now how subjective and reflective abilities within time become significant for methodology. Ricoeur (1984: p.66) crucially highlights that the process of drawing linear and non-linear time together into the form of a story, or plot, is related to Kant's ideas on 'the operation of judging'. The act of "configuration" that takes place to bring together these temporal concepts requires a form of judgement upon the events in order to break them free from merely linear temporal succession.

Attendance itself is not just about static, external and isolated situations. Each code entered into a register is both a temporal act by an individual and an act about an individual: the code becomes a representation of one individual's judgement over another's actions and context-specific intentions. A form tutor may authorise a dentist appointment for one student due to no concerning background situations but may not authorise a similar appointment for another student with a different life context. Similarly, holidays may be authorised for a student in Year 8 with no history of low attendance but unauthorised for a student in Year 11 who has statutory exams

approaching. Form tutors also make these decisions from their own individual temporal contexts. Erben (1996: p.160) argues:

> We are joined to the past and to the future because it is a constituted feature of mind to have memory and to have projection.

These judgements and interpretations of time, events and lives require imagination and temporal freedom in order for different scenarios to be 'tested' by the individual. As Ricoeur argues, human individuals have a natural ability for understanding meaning through imagination as found so often in use of metaphors and double meaning.

Individuals generalise from their experiences by understanding a concept in relation to that which has gone before. In such a way, quantitative sciences can be seen through Ricoeur (1955: p.25) to be as indebted to subjectivity as are the qualitative social sciences: both methods rely upon individuals making judgements based on comparison with what has gone before:

> Neither is there a physics without physicists, that is, without trial and error, groping in the dark, abandonments, and unparalleled discoveries…To reflect on the historian's subjectivity is…to search out the subjectivity which the historian's craft calls into play.

Generalisation is only possible through an understanding of historical time and a reflection on the present's position within that time. A comparable situation is developed in which the judgements made by form tutors can be placed in relation to that of the activity a historian undertakes. Historical time (Ricoeur 1955, 1988) is complex enough to warrant an entire thesis, particularly regarding how it may be understood and utilised regarding attendance. However, the most crucial need is that such a concept of time is now given prominence and is not dismissed as "…what is done, unchangeable, and past" (Ricoeur 1988: p.216). For instance, such is the freedom of historians to travel temporal content that they can place themselves within a different 'present' time and see relative pasts and futures. As Ricoeur discusses within his conversation with Antohi (Antohi and Ricoeur 2005: p.14):

> I say that what makes the greatness of the epistemology of history is that it can make use of a variation of scales. There are thus cases in which the historian teaches the philosopher, by helping him treat the problem of determinism and indeterminism.

To the historian, time and truth are constituted by "the expectations, the ignorance, the forecasts and fears of men of that time, and not of the things which we know happened" (Ricoeur 1955: p.28). This is the "rare gift" that such historical analysis offers through "temporal imagination" (p.28).

In this way, social, linear and phenomenological time become entwined within individual use of memory, as Brockmeier (2002: p.15) highlights:

> …individual memory [is]…an inextricable part of an overarching cultural discourse, the discourse of cultural memory.

The contributions from the form tutors discussed in chapter 2 illustrated evidently how past memories, feelings and interpretations continue to live on within the individual's current life and judgements upon the future: feelings upon their own historical life experiences were continually brought to mind and affected not just that individual's current life but also that of other individuals: bringing together autobiographical and biographical time and influence. The stories from the form tutors were not necessarily significant in terms of external normative power, such as whether the memories were 'correct' (see Brockmeier 2002a,b), but in terms of how they affected the form tutors' actions, future beliefs and judgements.

Historical time is not the only concept brought back into living and dynamic importance through Ricoeur's reconfiguration of time: fictional time (Ricoeur 1988) is also given distinction. Fictional time involves a multitude of elements within its own description and implementation. Such time is not constrained to the pages upon which classical stories are written, but involves imagination between authors, narrators, readers and characters, as can be seen through Wittgenstein's own devotion to Dostoyevsky (1880) and his symbolic characters and meaning.

Through imagining what might have been, individuals use fictional time to 'test' how the past may have been different and could have affected the present and future in different ways. Fictional time therefore is ultimately related to historical time and both are animatedly part of the narrative time of individuals' past, future and present. Ricoeur (1988: p.192) argues that:

> In this interweaving, this reciprocal overlapping, this exchange of places, originates what is commonly called human time, where the standing for the past in history is united with the imaginative variations of fiction, against the background of the aporias of the phenomenology of time.

Such theories and reconfiguration of time are not only sound in relation to Wittgenstein's epistemology, but they provide a methodological route towards understanding real life methods and actions between individuals in social groups. In parallel to Ricoeur, Brockmeier (2002b: p.18) argues:

> What binds individuals together into a cultural community is the centripetal force of a connective structure that organizes a considerate body of thought and knowledge, beliefs and concepts of self: that is, a worldview rooted in a set of social rules and values as well as in the shared memory of a commonly inhabited and similarly experienced past.

These ideas help provide a description of how the temporal *feelings* from students and form tutors combine together within the socially structured tutor time to result in attendance registers: the codes are no longer the sole 'meaning' of attendance but are a socially formalised view of very individually created meaning from within many temporal scales of interpretation.

Within this, scales of time become apparent that cross individual and social boundaries (Wang and Brockmeier 2002). The form tutor may see a microhistory of each individual, the headteacher a larger microhistory of the school and the DCSF the macrohistory of education itself. As Ricoeur discusses (Antohi and Ricoeur 2005: p.13):

> One does not see the same things on different scales: what can be seen on a large scale are the developing forces. But what can be seen on a small scale—and this is the lesson of microhistory—are the situations of uncertainty within which individuals…attempt to orient themselves…Therefore, when you write macrohistory, you are more likely to work with determinisms, whereas when you work on microhistories, you have to engage indecisions, that is to say, indeterminism.

Thus, autobiographical memory and time is inextricably linked to biographical time and therefore to social and cultural time and memory, bridging the gap between micro and macrohistorical settings. Initiatives which are designed to influence the behaviour of individuals within the microhistorical setting must include an acceptance and

understanding of the flexibility that individuals bring to meaning and not subsume such content within merely the larger, more determined macrohistorical context. Positively, an understanding of such temporal complexity can show the beginnings of more overt practical methods that could be utilised within attendance matters, and form times, to tackle attendance.

Judgements and interpretations thus depend upon historical, fictional, subjective, external, social and scaled time. Attendance needs to be approached temporally as such, with individuals enabled to traverse, exist within and research upon this temporal "path" freely (Antohi and Ricoeur 2005: p.13). It is my contention that the determinist, static, unequivocal approach used with the data and statistics needs to be combined and based more closely upon the indeterminate, fluid and subjective actions taking place between individuals themselves. Ricoeur (ibid) captures this well:

> There are those who sometimes want to lock me into the purely theoretical and abstract discussion: "Are you a determinist or indeterminist?" I answer, well, let us work at different scales of human history, and you will have both answers.

Conversely though, such positive and optimistic views upon the use of narrative methodology to bring out the importance of subjective interpretation and judgement must be carried out with caution. The historian "emphasises the rationality of history" (1955: p.26): The historian has a *choice* and a "judgement" (p.26) over which events are deemed important. The historian therefore has an integral part to play in the content of historical analysis. As researchers, form tutors, teachers, students and education policy makers alike, the responsibility of obtaining this freedom of time and subjectivity comes with a heavy ethical and moral price. These ethical implications, found within and as a consequence of Ricoeur and Wittgenstein's theories, will be further discussed in the following chapter.

The Boundaries of Narrative Time

Although narrative methodology sets free many of the restrictions that traditional temporal understandings have placed upon attendance, narrative time is not wholly unbounded or unstructured. In fact it is the temporal structure of narratives, containing the freedom, flexibility and dynamics of epistemological meaning, which provides a

crucial insight into how narrative temporal organisation and perception can lead to a constructive flow of meaning.

In addition, this also creates the influential ability of individuals to connect with the world and each other successfully in order to see similarities and make social comparisons between factors. Thus, narrative time utilises the metaphorical experience and use of imagination that Ricoeur advocates as well as Wittgenstein's epistemological arguments.

Narrative Plot and Mimesis

It is because human individuals can see and imagine time structured, that they have the freedom and safety to move within this structure to input creativity, judgement and interpretation (Marshall 2001a). As Ricoeur (1984: p.'x') finds:

> …The productive imagination at work in the metaphorical process is thus our competence for producing new logical species by predicative assimilation, in spite of the resistance of our current categorizations of language. The plot of a narrative is comparable to this predicative assimilation. It "grasps together" and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events….

Tutor time is, in itself, arguably a good example of an assimilation of synchronic, linear, and traditionally structured time as well as potentially complex, multifarious and diachronic temporal content. At present, it is the temporally structured time that is relied upon to create a basis from which exact linear temporal monitoring and comparisons can be made. Punctuality time limits and attendance statistics rely upon the static, repeated and constant nature of tutor times. Attendance is partly defined upon numbers of days missed over time periods, attendance registers taken at specific and legal time intervals as well as statistics collected over school days, weeks, terms and years. Attendance is intricately laced with temporal aspects that are clearly and indisputably connected to traditionally structured temporality.

However, as the creator of the first legal register of each day, form tutors are responsible for much of the official attendance data collected. Such content is fundamentally rich and complex in temporal concepts, incorporating traditional, epistemological, subjective individual and social elements. In combination with the

students, the form tutors therefore also bring forth diachronic temporal content, which in turn affects and is affected by the synchronic timings of tutor time. Tutor time is a combination of these temporal factors, specifically regarding attendance issues.

Ricoeur's terminology surrounding plot becomes paramount at this juncture. Ricoeur argues that the plot of a narrative brings together separate events, people, lives, stories, time and meaning and finds the similarities that then make one whole story. This is exactly parallel to the achievements of tutor time regarding attendance issues. School attendance needs to be understood on a paradigmatic and a syntagmatic level in order to obtain full meaning: It is through temporal structures comparable to that of narrative plot that such is being achieved.

The term of plot, as utilised by Ricoeur, is in fact incorporating complex and intricate concepts all of which are interacting together to create such a structured and yet free process. For instance, plot requires a form of linear progression, from start to end, and yet allows imagination, double meaning and metaphorical activity to take place, all of which enable meaning to remain paradoxically and potentially unending, free and immanent.

Ricoeur (1984, 1988) describes the interrelation and interaction between these temporal and structural elements, brought together within the plot of a narrative, through the concept of mimesis. To briefly summarise what is, in fact, a very complex concept, mimesis describes the process of how individuals understand and connect to narratives through a temporal structure and methodological process. Mimesis shows how a narrative can take an initially shared basic understanding of the world between individuals and take it through active transformation, change and adaptation whilst dialectically creating and forming cohesion of meanings and understandings. Mimesis describes the active ability of narrative to carry out this process whilst additionally allowing the author, audience and narrative itself to go further than its own immediate content may have initially shown possible.

Directly parallel to Wittgenstein's epistemology, Ricoeur's argument is that the process of mimesis brings together phenomenological, linear and traditional temporal content and lays them out for complete understanding to be gained through then being able to see the similarities and metaphorical potentialities within and through the

narrative structure and plot. Mimesis does not provide meaning through adding further explanation to a story but is an active process through which meaning is described and presented for further dynamic and creative understanding. As Kenny (1982) discusses, it is this form of approach that Wittgenstein argued for as the sole purpose and use of philosophy.

Ricoeur's three levels of mimesis are not related purely in linear terms but are cyclical, transitional and mediated between each other. In summary, Mimesis$_1$, is the pre-understanding of the world with which individuals come to a narrative. This is the social, cultural and human epistemological grounding through which individuals apply second nature to understanding. Mimesis$_1$, is the base of the already configured practical experience upon which a narrative rests, equivalent to the language games from Wittgenstein. Ricoeur (1984: p.55) argues:

> …every narrative presupposes a familiarity with terms such as agent, goal, means…on the part of its narrator and any listener.

The individuals involved begin the journey of the narrative from this starting point. The term 'journey' is specific for it involves active, fluid and dynamic participation from all the individuals including the narrator and the audience if applicable. This journey is comparable to the temporal journey form tutors describe: the beginning of each academic year, or the beginning of a new tutor group, feels like the start of a recognisable and yet distinctly new journey (Graham, Lucy). The group come together upon a shared understanding of what tutor time is and yet, as a new group of individuals, start a journey with immanent meaning and no set or pre-defined course of actions to follow. Thus, although grounded boundaries are present, the meaning held within the journey is still felt as new.

Mimesis$_2$, is the composition of the plot: it is the dynamic ordering of the actions for meaning to become progressive and apparent. Mimesis$_2$, holds onto the identities of the individuals who started on the narrative journey whilst allowing each individual to experiment with ideas and be creative and open to new possibilities. It this unique form of temporal ability that tutor time can offer students due to its formal and temporally structured basis and yet pastoral and personal constitution.

Mimesis$_2$, also allows a narrative to maintain a linear progression from Mimesis$_1$, onto Mimesis$_3$, whilst still representing individual experiences within different phenomenological times. Meaning is given to individuals' actions due to causal and not just linear relationships. The individual becomes meaningful and significant within and over the plot of the larger story being told.

This has direct implications for attendance issues. The linear quantitative need of attendance can remain whilst the importance of the individual's own story can still come through. This allows not just for the story of the individual students to become apparent and heard but also that of the form tutors who are participating in, steering and holding together the narrative journey taking place.

Finally, Mimesis$_3$, is "the postunderstanding of the order of action and its temporal features" (Ricoeur 1984: p.65). This brings the previous mimesis stages into actual, real experience and brings in the narrator's, audience or reader's impact upon the narrative. Mimesis$_3$, allows the narrative to take on new meaning, which may not have been originally obvious, and holds within it the freedom of meaning to become actualised through the activity, creativity and engagement of individuals within a narrative structure. Such activity involves not just the individuals inside the story but also those surrounding the narrative, as Ricoeur (1984: p.46) argues:

> …the mimetic activity, does not reach its intended term through the dynamism of the poetic text along. It also requires a spectator or reader.

Thus it is the structure of narrative time, through mimesis, which provides the safety for the liberation of subjectivity within time to exist and emerge. The circularity of mimesis provides a journey from a shared initial understanding through new concepts, towards a new pathway and future. The author may support and nurture this process but ultimately, it is the reader who takes the story on to new meanings and new beginnings.

Following the Structure of Time

It is critical here to point out the distinction Tamboukou (2008: p.284) makes between sequence and process. Narrative time cannot be analysed as specific events only set

within a linear sequence: narrative time holds within it the more complex ability to capture temporal content as a *process* constituted by past, present and future intermixed. Likewise, Watson (2008: p.335) states that narratives cannot be broken into isolated stories:

> …we cannot think of our lives as a series of basic events…that we can abstract and put together in different ways. Instead, every time we re-tell a story we create a new narrative….

Meaning, and therefore the structure of time, is constantly changing and flowing. Narratives within this structure "…cannot 'represent' some reality. It can only re-present…" (Watson 2008: p.336). The meaning within the structure of narrative time is not, consequently, found within a simple linear line. This is directly comparable to the findings of Head and Jamieson (2006), who argue that individual students also do not walk the path of life in straight lines but may progress through spirals and zig-zags. Understanding and researching such lives, whether for academic or policy-driven purposes, must therefore take this shaped structure of time into consideration.

Temporal positioning within a sequential or linear scale cannot always provide the clearest or most accurate method of discerning meaning from an event, such as in attendance. Meaning and time are intricately linked through the lives of human individuals. The act of reading, understanding, listening or hearing another's story brings to that story new meaning that cannot be placed within the original linear time. Narrative, at this point, becomes essentially ontological as well as epistemological. Seaton (2008: p.296) captures this circular journey when she writes:

> I do not mean for Diana's story to flood beyond her control…but rather to channel this story into something meaningful and powerful – to carve out a new course for a terrible story so that it might carry its readers and listeners to a place of new understanding.

In the act of "following a story" (Ricoeur 1984: p.66), successive linear events obtain a rich and deeper meaning shared between all the parties involved. Meaning is found not in the passive print of a story but in the act of writing it, listening to it, reading it: in the act of following it. It is the active involvement of form tutors as they listen and interact with students, which can bring this process of configuration to the linear attendance statistics collected. Ultimately, individual life stories constitute the concept

of school attendance. The students, school and form tutors all have their own stories and each one has its own "end point" (Ricoeur 1984: p.66). However, each one also plays a part in each other's story in a greater narrative of school attendance; thus autobiographical stories become inextricably linked through narrative time to biographical stories.

Some Concluding Remarks:
The Temporal Complexities of Writing This Thesis

The narrative temporal concepts that have emerged within this chapter have had a notable effect upon the methodology that surrounds the actual writing of this thesis. Merely a passive and linear structure of content could not reflect the richness of meaning that became apparent. By convention the contributions and stories from the form tutors should have appeared at the end of the thesis as the 'result' of the practical research. Ultimately though, their contributions held more meaning than merely such a 'result': just as the student's stories hold more meaning for the form tutor than just a code in a register.

The form tutors' stories are a part of the research process, reflections and understandings of the grounded theories and literature. Therefore, to allow such complex and rich meaning to be accessible and housed correctly, this thesis needed to start by including content from its own ending. As Tamboukou (2008: p.290) states:

> …the project of narrative analytics focuses on the process of how narratives evolve as stories…meaning emerges in the flow of narratives rather than in their sequential structure.

It was important that the form tutors were thus "a narratable subject constitutive of…desire for…stories to be told" (Tamboukou 2008: p.290). Their movement and journeys needed to be a part of the movement and journey of this thesis, allowing their work to become an integral part of the methodology, ideas and content of each chapter.

It also became clear that as I am not a form tutor, there needed to be space for actual form tutors to take forward the ideas and content of this thesis into their own understanding and practical realm. I cannot expect or wish to hold the complete

meaning possible regarding this complex and significant role. This thesis must not attempt to assume that it is temporally complete in meaning concerning those who were involved in its content or by those that subsequently read it.

An ethical and moral element of time emerges from this need to constantly bear in mind the relative and subjective nature of its constitution. Just as most form tutors attempt to respect and understand their students on an individual basis, so this thesis must respect the journeys and lives of the form tutors. These ethical elements will be brought into the picture more extensively within the next chapter.

The act of Mimesis$_2$, bridges the shared basic initial understanding of the concepts involved in school attendance with the final release of meaning regarding attendance and form tutors. This has become a critical part of shaping the thesis. Part I could not have been completed without the final freedom that will be found in Part III, for meaning to set anew the ideas that needed releasing. Likewise, Part III required the process of Part II to understand the initial shared understanding of attendance from which the form tutor stories originally emerged. Consequently, Ricoeur's narrative structure of mimesis and emplotment has become critical not just in terms of the methodology behind the research but also the creation and practical writing of the thesis itself.

Narrative time therefore has shown how temporal understanding is rich in diversity, subjectivity and external qualities. It is through reconfiguring the approach and understanding of time that narratives bring together such a range of elements and present them as a whole story, ready for meaning, judgement and interpretation to potentially and creatively continue. Through understanding time this way, those working within attendance can begin to build methods and initiatives based upon a more complete understanding of the scales, times and influences affecting the judgements of individuals.

The following chapter will argue that it is also through narrative methodology that a genuine understanding of how identity, as individuals and through social roles, is formed. This will have profound implications not only for the sense of identity students feel but also with regard to form tutor identity as individuals as well as their

effect upon student identity. The deep and significant ethical implications of this will be discussed in detail within this next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Methodology Part Two:
The Description and Prescription of Narrative Identity and Roles

'Feel Meaning'

Hear lives told: Hear their stories.
See People. See Meaning. See Truth.
See the concept of school attendance
For what it really holds.

Elhaggagi (2008)

This chapter represents the final stage of Part II, examining the application of philosophical and methodological theories upon the content and meaning of attendance. As such, this chapter will focus upon combining the issues raised within the previous chapters within a closing discussion and exploration of individual identity and role. The following chapter will conclude the thesis with an examination of how such applied philosophy, methodology and theory actually exists in meaning, content and influence upon attendance, the individuals involved as well as the act of carrying out research upon such concepts.

Ultimately, this chapter will argue that it is through acknowledging and understanding the auto/biographical elements of identity (Ricoeur 1990), as well as that of narrative time seen in the previous chapter, that a complete, practical and integral methodology is achieved to approach and understand attendance. The 'individual' has already been argued to be the missing element of attendance due to a lack of understanding and acknowledgement of subjectivity, phenomenology and individuality within official approaches and temporal understandings. This chapter will propose that these elements cannot be just 'placed' back within attendance but must be fully incorporated in an understanding of the *act* of implementing such elements.

The most immediate need for this discussion comes in terms of the form tutor, who has been both central to the motive, content and drive of this thesis as well as the one

element that has still lacked specific designation and clarification. Chapter 2 attempted to find the meaning of being a 'form tutor' but only confusion, lack of definition and lack of acknowledgment was found. Although form tutors themselves felt and put forward strong arguments regarding their influence and place within attendance, this drive, enthusiasm, heart-felt determination and individual understanding was not reflected in the official literature. However, having now discussed a new approach to attendance through Wittgenstein's epistemology and the narrative methodological structure of time from Ricoeur, a new understanding of form tutors role and individuality with respect to attendance can be formed.

Such an approach, based upon Ricoeur and Wittgenstein, allows for a base understanding to be formed of the distinction and yet unity of *what* and *who* an individual is. This will allow an individual to be partially described in separation from the role or substance to which they are adjoined, therefore bringing to attendance potential content and meaning not just from the role of the form tutor but also the narrative, auto/biographical content gained directly from the individual.

Auto/biography will become paramount in direct relation to, and constitution of, both description and prescription of individual actions, relations and interactions. As individual life stories and experiences become understood as influential to attendance (as well as individual roles), so too does the effect of biographical elements upon other individual life paths and experiences: autobiography and biography become entwined fundamentally together not just through narrative temporal structures but now through narrative identity also.

Form time is therefore not just a time for coming together as individuals to register attendance but a coming together of individuals all of whom interact with and involve each other in complex auto/biographical relations. Thus, attendance, in terms of belonging to and achieving attendance within a social group, becomes constituted by auto/biographical elements, communication and interactions.

From these *descriptive* distinctions and clarifications upon narrative identity, the *prescriptive* consequences will be addressed in terms of the individual, the role of the form tutor and attendance generally. Both from Ricoeur and Wittgenstein's theories, it will be shown that the identity of individuals, their roles, actions and *who* they are, are

found through the active interactions and use of meaning between individuals. Therefore, an essential and fundamental ethical and moral relationship is created.

By utilising knowledge of how individuals personally affect each other, it will be possible to describe, and then prescribe, how such effects can lead to the growth (or negation) of individual self-understanding, self-esteem, self-respect, social belonging and identity, parallel to the ideas discussed by McCreery (2004). Thereby, both morality and ethics affect and influence descriptions and prescriptions of individual identities, roles and institutional actions. Hence, narrative will prove to be the mediating, cohesive and unifying concept that brings together the description and the prescription of roles, identity and character of individuals as well as institutional responsibility towards these individuals: "Description, Narration, Prescription" (Ricoeur 1990: p.312).

Describing **the Self and Role through Narrative Identity**

Describing the role of the form tutor is a complex issue. This section will approach such a task through Ricoeur's (1955, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990) extensive theories on narrative identity. This will aid in ensuring the epistemological and temporal methodological requirements of previous chapters are adhered to. From this grounding methodological framework however, further approaches will be recognised as possible to flourish and their consequent potential importance for future research paths acknowledged.

Through Ricoeur's theories, it will be shown how identity can profoundly affect attendance through understanding of social roles and dynamic, relational individuality. The role of the form tutor, and the individual who carries it out, will be shown to be both separate and entwined with each other. This mirrors the epistemology of Wittgenstein in terms of objectivity and subjectivity as well as Ricoeur's temporal theories of narrative time.

Potential Approaches in Describing the Role of the Form Tutor

As chapter 2 has already shown, describing the role of the form tutor is extremely difficult due to the lack of official context, literature and education policy within

which to find such a role defined. As the role is specifically not required to be academic in content or direction, the form tutor may take the role of narrator of the group's story, group facilitator, leader, container, director, mentor, supporter, friend and communicator of attendance achievements and difficulties. This is all whilst assessing the group and the individuals regarding attendance levels, actions, absences and approaches in order to complete the legal register. Consequently, the form tutor has to be prepared to step in and out of various roles each and every day in order to achieve group and individual security and, specifically, identity.

Ultimately, in discussing this role and the individuals within it, this chapter could be approached in many different ways. As de Kock *et al.* (2004) discuss, analysis of teaching roles in general have been approached historically from a multitude of directions depending greatly upon the philosophical, sociological or theoretical context in which the analysis is taking place. Applied philosophical arguments could be used (Vygotsky 1934) or alternative pure philosophical approaches could be undertaken (Foucault 1969; Davidson 1967, 1987; Shoemaker 1996). Further, sociological or political arguments could be used (Bourdieu 1977; Grenfell and James 2004; Plamenatz 1963a,b; Plato 399BC; Trigg 1997). Smith and Sparkes (2008) also offer an interesting account of identity through individual and social contrasts. On the other hand, a practical approach could be taken discussing localised organisational and psychological scenarios (French 1997, 1999, 2000; Newton *et al.* 2006; O'Connor and Hirsch 1999).

However, each of these further approaches brings about unresolved, meta-philosophical, dialectic arguments between society and individual power and mental and physical entities, the difficulties of which have already been discussed in light of Wittgenstein's epistemology. Thus, the initial approach needed for the analysis of role and individuality within attendance is contextualised within an epistemology that emphasises the relationship between the individual and the world directly (most obviously seen through Luntley 2003d) and yet places this relationship within an immanent, active and dynamic social context.

Wittgenstein is neither as socially biased as Vygotsky's (1934) theories of 'webs' nor as individually centred as Piaget (as argued in Marshall 2003/2004). In line with Ricoeur, Wittgenstein finds a balance that incorporates the necessity of both elements

without losing the individuality and distinctness of either. Therefore, the discussion that follows must be approached through a methodology that allows for this balance to continue.

Many of the approaches described above, plus potentially more, are not being entirely dismissed however; the content of many may become significantly interesting regarding attendance in future projects. However, given the scope of this thesis, such approaches are not yet applicable. Instead, the priority is to complete the initial methodology set up within chapter 4 to also achieve the recognition and clear understanding of *who* the individuals are that are acting, living and creating the concept of attendance through their lives and roles. Only from this basis, can the alternative approaches achieve a base upon which to build.

Identity and Selfhood

It is at this point that a discussion of Ricoeur's theories upon the concepts of idem (sameness) and ipse (selfhood) in terms of individual identity becomes paramount. In a continuation and yet progression of his narrative temporal descriptions, Ricoeur (1990) argues that it is only through combining analytic philosophy and hermeneutics through analysis of language, action and personal identity that genuinely understanding the individual within life and life's narratives can be achieved.

Ricoeur builds upon a skeleton formed from centuries of philosophical thought. However, he does not just place the flesh upon this skeleton but human life itself and he achieves this through a methodology parallel to, reliant upon and complimentary to Wittgenstein's later philosophy (Elhaggagi 2006b, 2007). Therefore Ricoeur provides a unifying relationship between the theoretical ideas of Wittgenstein and the practical, real situations occurring within attendance. Thereby, Ricoeur gives to Wittgenstein's philosophy the methodology it needs to reach its goal of describing life itself rather than creating meta-level philosophical creations.

Ricoeur's argument is based upon the premise that individual identity is a further dialectic combination of elements: the self is *what* an individual is in terms of permanence over time (sameness or idem) as well as *who* the individual is (ipse or selfhood). Within this, the elements of the self are found not just internally to the *'I'* of

the individual (Shoemaker 1996) but to the active relationship that '*I'* has with others. In an exact parallel reflection of narrative temporal dialectic forms and Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, this combination of self-identity is formed from an active, evolving and dynamic relationship between the ipse and idem of individuals together in the world.

Thus, individual identity grows from an understanding of the temporal dynamics found already within narrative temporal structures: the idem of individuals is their permanence over time, through which individuals re-identify and acknowledge each other's existence. Idem reflects the actions of individuals over time and *what* the individual is and does. In terms of attendance, this can be compared to the approach taken most traditionally towards students: students are labelled and physically coded according to *what* is done and not *who* those individuals are. Even the actions of the form tutor, through taking and completing the register, is formed into a re-identification act of each student and an act of interpreting others' actions rather than a reflection of the actual situation and context surrounding each situation.

Idem does allow for this form of numerical identity (Ricoeur 1990: p.116) however, and therefore provides an essential route through which other individuals (and the self) can measure and assess the continuing and evolving actions of individuals. Nevertheless, such re-identification is contextualised heavily within the passing of linear time and therefore becomes partially restricted in accuracy if taken in total isolation. Thus, the meaning of concepts and individuals through idem alone can give way to the traditional arguments discussed in chapter 4, whereby time does genuinely affect the accuracy of truth and identity possible to determine.

However, by understanding the self as potentially more than this, Ricoeur brings about the relationship between idem and ipse. Ipse, in response to idem, reflects *who* the individual is in defiance of linear temporal progression and specifically denotes the self in terms of character, constancy and, as Ricoeur (1990: p.118) states, 'keeping one's word'. Ipse is particularly crucial to attendance for multiple reasons. The character of an individual is given an opportunity through ipse to reflect *who* someone is across time in combination with *what* an individual is. The character of an individual brings together elements of idem and ipse through re-identification of

individuals from their dispositions, habits and traits. Character is deemed in this way to be the ""what" of the "who"" (1992: p.122).

These character traits are attached to ipse as well as idem, thereby bringing to the interpretations and evaluation of individual actions a method of incorporating the self that enables action to become human. The *'use'* of Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, the immanency of McDowell's theories and the natural desire in humans to find meaning in individuals beyond that which passes through the linear path of a story, is given recognition and status within Ricoeur's theory of character and ipse.

Thus, the meaning of the students' comments regarding the impact of staff characters and attitude becomes not only clearer but also far more complex and deeply rooted. Within the character of staff such as form tutors, students are presented with, influenced and affected by not just the actions of another individual but by *who* that individual is. It is the character of an individual staff member that students either attach to or rebound against. The subtleties of character, trustworthiness and approach to others, whether it be through a smile of recognition to a suffering individual or an overt verbal appraisal of another's actions, can have significant influence upon another's actions, self-respect and self-esteem. Form tutors bring to their positions such individuality and therefore are in a position to interact with the students through such individuality and subtle behaviours and actions.

In addition to this, Ricoeur unravels the even deeper sense to which ipse is a part of the self. As opposed to the element of character, Ricoeur (1990: p.124) also argues that 'keeping one's promise' is an example of ipse at work with no interaction or involvement from idem. Through the act of a promise to another, the self proclaims a constancy of self that is greater than *what* it does but becomes primarily about *who* it is.

Thereby, the self defies linear time as individuals can keep their word regarding a promise even if they change their opinions (Ricoeur 1990: p.123). A promise can stand through the changes of linear time and through the changes in a person's character, thus providing the self (and others interacting with that self) a firm grip upon constancy and permanence despite the progression of linear time. The self becomes identified and found within time: both in terms of the "perseverance" of

character and the “constancy” of keeping one’s promise (Ricoeur 1990: p.124). Consequently, the narrative temporal arguments of the previous chapter have progressed and now incorporate, house and provide a base for a form of narrative identity.

In terms of the form tutor and their role, such discussion instantly provides a way to understand the complex and intricate relationship that is contained within the combination of the individual and the role they carry out. This is further extended through Ricoeur’s argument that what an individual is or does can and is affected by temporal passing: the physical substance of an individual changes over time just as the role through which their actions are assessed changes with context, situation, time and interpretation. There is perseverance, as Ricoeur describes, within these changing elements that enables a self and a role to remain re-identifiable over time even whilst the changes take place. Nevertheless, taken in isolation, this form of re-identification of role and self cannot attain to the level of human depth, feeling and permanence beyond linear time that seems so persistent in driving centuries of academic argument concerning the human disposition and complex constitution.

Through Ricoeur’s description of character and ipse however, the inseparable relationship between the physical substance, actions and role of an individual with that of who they are is discovered: the form tutor and their role are not two different entities but are joined together through the identity of the self in narrative time. It is a self that performs the actions of the role through linear time, it is a self that provides the physical ‘substance’ of a human being to take on the role and it is this human self that gives to that role the constancy, character and temporal power of promise through which the individual is set free. Through each role, the form tutor is re-identifiable both as an individual and as part of the role. However, individual form tutors never lose their individual identity entirely to the definition or actualisation of their physical form or their professional role: individuals remain permanent over and through linear time’s passing through the act and intention of keeping promises.

Therefore, a teacher may bring the same individuality to their teaching role as they do to their form tutor role; however as these roles differ, so will the actualisation, application and significance of such individuality. The teacher may bring individuality to learning, curriculum content and classroom behaviour, whilst the form tutor may

bring individuality to the process of coming together each morning to register attendance at school.

The Relationship Between Narrative Identity and Narrative Plot

It must be remembered that such an identity is contextualised within a narrative: individuals and their roles are always already constituted by socially constructed and narratively temporally structured means. The character of an individual, through idem and ipse, performs action within a "narrative plot" (Ricoeur 1990: p.142). It is in a plot, that character finds perseverance and re-identification: by telling a story (by the act of narration) character is given this temporal identity. The temporal ability of a plot to narrate progress and change and yet hold identity as 'that story' or 'that theme' is found in the characters involved intimately with the plot (Ricoeur 1990: pp.141-143).

In line with the epistemological, methodological and directed approach required, a role can be affected by the plot: a plot can carry a character's role along and influence it by way of factors impacting upon the individual. However, with narrative, the character is not just a *what* but involves a *who*. It is the *who* of character that can determine how the character reacts to the impact of the plot, in turn allowing the *who* of character to influence the plot to some degree.

This highlights the power and influence that individuals and roles have over and within the plot around them. Once again, the plot may attempt to dictate a temporal progression and change and yet an individual may choose to hold their word over this temporal passing and therefore defy the impact of a plot's influence. At this point, the individual becomes just *who* and not *what* at all. The describable has become constant within time reliant on the *who* and not only on the perseverance of the *what* (idem) or even the *what and the who* (character) together.

Therefore, it may be possible to describe the role of the form tutor in terms of general actions in isolation to any particular individual. However, a complete description also requires an understanding of how individuals can potentially bring to their role an element of constancy across time. When it is now asked *who* took the register, *who* judged the absence, *who* decided on that code, attendance analysers must genuinely look to the person within the role as well as the overall 'role' itself. Just as the *truant*

is not just a role, label or description of assumed behaviour but also a person who can change their role and identity (or even the identity of their role) and yet remain the same person, a form tutor is likewise defined. A form tutor can contribute to, shape and form their role into difference constitutions and directions and yet remain the same individual. In turn, the role can shape the individual and change their life decisions, constitution and understanding.

As it has been seen above, through this identity both individuals and their role subsequently have an impact on and are affected by the plot of the narrative. Hence, individuals such as form tutors can, as individuals and yet through their role, potentially change the flow and direction of the progress of attendance in their tutor group. The individual is given the opportunity to use character and selfhood to influence the external and social factors affecting his or her position within the plot. This has ethical and moral implications that will be outlined further below.

In turn, the identity within the story of attendance given to individuals and their roles can significantly alter the behaviour and self-identity of the individual. Being described as a truant or not being described at all (such as the role of the form tutor) can shape how individuals believe themselves to be in terms of identity. Therefore, when the story of attendance, under the official approach, allows the role of the form tutor to become vague and ill-defined, the role has to rely more heavily upon the *who* only and the *what* becomes hazy and indiscernible. At the same time, the official approach at present does not recognise the *who* of this role and therefore the entire role disappears from attendance initiatives. Action, for form tutors and students alike, is threatening to become agentless within attendance.

To put the role of form tutors (and students) back into the narrative plot and story of attendance is to put back the characters and roles of the individuals. To then recognise that individuals carry out these roles is to reflect the relationship between the characters, individuals, roles and plot within the narrative of attendance. Interestingly, by doing this with respect to form tutors, this enables the form tutors to enhance the same aspect for students, thereby increasing the chances of influencing high attendance even further.

Such complex and deeply rooted needs and requirements are all brought together through Ricoeur's combination of ipse and idem. It is through this relationship that meaning (of individuals as well as the concepts and roles in which they are at play) is given a methodological route to express the complex and diverse dialectical concepts required.

Prescription **of the Ethical Self through Narrative Identity**

The interaction and relational elements of identity, give rise to a twofold ethical consideration. The first of these (individual ethics) will be discussed within this section, the second of which (social morality) will be discussed in the following section. The distinction between ethics and morality, based upon Ricoeur's definitions, will be outlined initially here in order that both sections may proceed from a grounded and joint basis.

Given the constitution of the self with others, the self becomes ethically charged with responsibility for the growth and impact they may have on other selves through ipse and idem. Individuals therefore have a personal, *ethical*, duty towards the self-esteem and growth of each other. Ricoeur (1990: p.170) describes the term of ethics as following an Aristotelian and teleological path.

Secondly, individuals have a *moral* duty towards the social group in which they act and react. Ricoeur describes morality as "the articulation of this (ethical) aim in *norms* characterised at once by the claim to universality and by effect and constraint" (p.170). Ricoeur aligns morality with the Kantian propositions of deontological arguments and universality of norms.

Pure Kantian moral theory (Kant 1785, 1781) can diminish the role of the individual due to a priority being given to the ability to generalise and universalise norms. This form of morality could appear at first to be the most applicable to attendance issues: attendance is constituted by a moral assumption that education is not just good for all individuals but an obligated 'must'.

However, it is as a result of giving such social morality overall power over personal ethics that attendance has begun to move away from the real meaning and content

paradoxically creating the concept of attendance in the first place: the roles and identities of individuals. The personal, teleological aims of individuals are significantly diminished in power at present. I have discussed the relationship of Kant's moral theories and the need for such theories to incorporate the epistemology and essence of McDowell's theories upon the re-enchantment of nature, in a previous assignment (Marshall 2001b).

Ricoeur (1990) does not argue for a total disregard of deontological morality. Instead, he argues for a primacy to be given to ethical teleology, with a return loop existing between morality and its cyclical relationship back to ethics. Morality and self-respect provide the practical ground within which self-esteem and ethics can act (Ricoeur 1990: p.171). Self-esteem can be the source and "recourse" for self-respect through duty. Social norms that may traditionally assume moral priority and superiority over that of the individual ethics cannot now always maintain this level of status. As the actions and lives of individuals are so entwined with who they are as well as what they are, it is not possible to generalise all ethical and moral norms to cover all individual characters and dispositions. A role may be describable to some extent in terms of social, political or official norms and responsibilities but through the actualisation of this role by an individual, an element of personal ethical duty is brought into play.

Individual Ethical Influence

From this marriage of ethics and morality, Ricoeur provides a useful context in which to describe (or prescribe) the reason why individuals should be given such a significant and important role within ethical and moral processes. It is this understanding that holds the key to understanding how and why the role of the form tutor, through the individual, can be so important to attendance. The individual form tutor can both affect the behaviour and self-esteem of the students they work with and also require in return some moral recognition of their status from the attendance system in place. The more the latter is given emphasis, the more the potential is given for this to be reflected in the individual self-esteem and self-respect of the form tutors as individuals and through their role. This in turn sets up a positive cycle of progress from which the students can also relate to and 'see similarities' within.

Nevertheless, in order to achieve this cycle of positive progress, the difficulties that face form tutors through their role and as individuals needs to be genuinely acknowledged in order that legitimate recognition can be provided. For instance, the form tutor has a professional and socially derived duty to guide the individual students in their group towards the given social and morally set deontological aim of full attendance in school. They also have a socially grounded legal responsibility to complete their attendance registers accurately. However, as individuals, this moral duty becomes constituted by personal ethical judgements, as Metcalfe and Game (2008: pp.349-350) highlight:

> The teacher keeps meticulous files on the progress of each student. These are all necessary I-It forms of knowledge. But…teachers and students see beyond these things…the I-Thou reveals that the whole person is more than this collection of attributes…Vicky must occasionally identify and rank children, in I-It mode, but it is the I-Thou that guides her, regularly reminding her of what teaching is really about.

As an effect upon attendance, this ability of individuals to naturally connect with each other, even through dynamic and constantly changing subjective groundings, is second nature (McDowell 1996) and is encapsulated by how individuals achieve this through narrative temporal aspects.

In reality form tutors have their own ethical aims and personal consciences. It is the ethical ability of individuals to keep their word in defiance of linear time, social pressure and changes in situation and context that enables form tutors to maintain their individuality externally, and yet intricately related, to their professional role. As Ricoeur (1990: p.174) states, the individual has to make choices regarding which path to take when faced with such combinations of ethical and moral contexts:

> …could Aristotle have failed to consider that a person may be placed in the situation of choosing whether to become a doctor rather than an orator or a politician? Is not the choice among several courses of action a choice about ends, that is about whether they conform more or less closely to an ideal in life…

In life individuals judge which path to take, and themselves, with respect to each other and the contextual practice or ‘game’ in which the individuals exist. In parallel to MacIntyre’s (2007: p.190) “standards of excellence” and Luntley’s (2004 and Ainley and Luntley 2007) discussion on professional expertise, individuals carry this

judgement out by attending to the world. However, they ultimately affect other individuals who attend to the world alongside and in support of each other, as Luntley (2004: pp.6-7) argues:

> …the expertise of the experienced class teacher consists, for a large part, not in a body of theoretical knowledge and not in a body of socially-determined dispositions to respond to certain sorts of situations…[but] in possessing a repertoire of attentional skills that enable the experienced teacher to find things and situations salient that the novice misses.

Therefore, part of the self-esteem of individuals is formed from the self-respect gathered from others in the same game or practice. For students, this may equate often to that of their peer groups within their tutor time. For form tutors, their professional role as a form tutor within the education system defines and collects this particular group of people together. Thus, the self-respect gained by individual form tutors from other form tutors and from the education and school system in which they act, can and does affect their self-respect and their self-esteem.

Hence, the ethical judgements made by individuals within their roles as form tutors are made from a combination of personal and social evaluations, each reciprocally related back to the self-esteem and self-respect of that individual. The role of the form tutor is thus both ethically and morally constituted: the individual and the role itself are entwined intricately and affect each other essentially and fundamentally. However, it is the individual that holds the ability to influence the actions, self-esteem and self-respect of others, though this may be achieved through a socially provided role. The role, parallel to morality, may provide the basis and grounds for this to happen but it is the constancy of the individual that ethics finds its primacy over morality.

This gives rise to potential practical methods for training form tutors and also allowing them time to come together and share practices, friendships, ideas and feelings upon their role and themselves more openly. In this way, both the ethical element of their individualities, personalities and life stories can be heard and recognised and also their professional role enhanced by the opportunity to combine such ethics with their moral duties as form tutors. As Ricoeur and Aristotle (see Price 1997) both argue, friendship is something that does not have to be accidental within us but something individuals can strive and work towards: it is also something that requires reciprocity (Ricoeur

1990: p.183) and therefore linear, real time for individuals to actually carry out such activity and phenomenological time for them to bring to the activity their own influences, feelings, comments and life experiences.

Such a method for aiding in the role of the form tutor could also be practised directly by the form tutors for their tutees, thus enabling the 'seeing similarities' ability of individuals to reflect and learn from others within their social games. When students come together with their form tutor in tutor time, they become part of a social game and could potentially gain from such a method of sharing, raising and understanding the relationship between self-respect and self-esteem, both of which are already linked directly to attendance matters.

Individual Reflection and Self-Consciousness

As has been seen, the individual has a significant impact, often through a role within a social group, to affect the self-esteem and self-respect of others. McLean (2008: pp. 1686-1687) highlights the view that during the teenage years (particularly important for secondary school age) self-identity naturally starts to become narrative both temporally and spatially:

> …in adolescence individuals begin to be able to explain the self in terms of stories, and to see connections between the self in different settings and across time via personal story constructions. The goal of this beginning story construction is to create a life story, which is a selective narrative of one's past experiences and thoughts about those experiences that service to *integrate* the self…adolescence marks the beginning of life story development primarily due to the onset of formal operations and, in many societies, demands for establishing oneself in the world through work, school, and relationships.

It is at this time that individuals can begin to entertain multiple possibilities of life choices and decisions with likely outcomes playing out within the imagination. Thus, this reflection and awareness of self-consciousness is reliant upon a freely accessed imagination and an active and open attitude secured within the self-identity of the individual (Ricoeur 1969: p.110).

It is also due to this emerging ability within adolescence that self-identity can become fragile. McLean (2008: p.1692) interestingly uses the same term as Luntley when she expresses the need for individuals to have support and "scaffolding" during this

critical time. The role of the form tutor within schools is a prime example however of an opportunity to provide support and scaffolding for all students in schools as this self-defining and narrative learning journey begins. Hence, the decision a student makes (or the decision made for them by others) to not attend school can be founded upon a combination of individuals judging themselves, each other and the world as well as possible and actual life stories emerging from the act of judgement itself.

Regarding this, it is interesting to note Ricoeur's (1990: p.159) comments upon his difference to MacIntyre. Ricoeur argues that, unlike MacIntyre, he utilises narrative *fiction* as well as narrative in everyday life. Individuals may have constancy and perseverance through time but the roles that these individuals can take on can be extremely varied in number and constitution. It is through fictional time that individuals 'play' with ethical contingencies and ultimately form judgement on the actual world and their roles within it: a practical method is naturally born from the theoretical methodology. Once again, it becomes useful and meaningful to understand not only the role an individual is playing but also the constant individual behind the role.

It is this ability of individuals to imagine in fictional time that allows individuals to be so complex and so rich in meaning and potential power. Individual temporal freedom and mastery is arguably reliant most significantly upon the human level of self-consciousness. Specifically, in terms of attendance, human self-conscious elements are needed in terms of their *application* to the individual, identity and role of those involved in attendance situations. The term 'human' is here applied specifically for it denotes the uniqueness of humans to have a form of self-consciousness that allows for the ethical and moral combination and power that Ricoeur describes and from which attendance is now being understood.

In previous research projects (Marshall 2000, 2001a) I examined the difference between the possible self-conscious levels of human and non-human individual beings, through analysing the philosophy of episodic memory and intentionality. Higher-order self-conscious animal species were shown to have a potential level of self-consciousness. However, although I wished to relate this directly to the self-conscious ability of humans, this was not possible. I described certain animals as having 'scenic memory' as opposed to the human ability to have 'episodic memory':

the distinction being that these specific animal groups can understand themselves, self-consciously, as potentially existing in different times and spaces, which I described as being akin to the 'scenes' of a play. However, human individuals have the unique ability to understand the self in terms of not just scenes but also differing potential structures of these scenes in order to achieve different plots and stories entirely.

In this respect, my previous research now aligns with Ricoeur's theory that humans utilise not just real life scenarios and experiences to judge themselves and others but also the 'possible' life stories that could or should exist. Through imagining, examining and reading fictional plots and narratives, human selves naturally and self-consciously judge real life ethical and moral dilemmas. Within this, the individual self can judge the implications of differing actions as well as taking on differing roles within their social groups.

Human identity, judgement and role definitions are therefore not just 'practical' or even merely linear in direction and structure but are also based upon fictional, potential, possible and reflective individual self-conscious elements. This allows human individual identity and roles to become constituted by non-linear lines of progression as the human individual undertakes a constant non-linear journey of reflection.

Complexly, aspects of this self-conscious ability do not necessarily have to be carried out consciously by the individual. Individuals are not always aware of the whole process of reflection or judgement that they are performing: "A sizeable proportion of truants (26.6%) do not see themselves as self-conscious…" (Cooper and Mellors 1990: p.323). There is a significant loss of belief in personal self-consciousness and stability of self in 'truants'. Thus, some individuals are not aware at all of their self-conscious abilities and it is interesting to note that in this case, it is those with the most negative social role attached to them (i.e. 'truant'). King (2008: p.339) suggests that:

> …we are all engaged in the process of narrating our lives on a daily, informal basis, and the popularity of the genre [autobiography] may be partly based on this constant, often unconscious activity.

This again draws to the forefront the natural, unconscious ability of the self to understand individuality, identity and character of the self and of others. Foster and Roberts (1998: p.218) also find that this is not always positive:

> …the disquieting report from a team manager of his having told his staff that they had been projecting their anxieties into him and needed to 'take these projections back'. When we forget that we are all subject to unconscious processes and that they *are* unconscious, we are tempted to use concepts like projective identification to 'explain away' our own discomfort and our mistakes.

Thus, individuals can fall into a trap of assuming other individuals are consciously aware of all their actions and self-conscious judgements or of negating the basic ability of other individuals to be aware they are self-conscious at all. However, through openly and overtly using narrative methodology to understand the ethics and morality of individuals and roles, individuals gain the chance to become more aware of their influence on others and therefore in a more productive position to positively use such knowledge to help others. Form tutors can reflect upon their own life stories and experiences and see how these have already or could potentially affect their judgements and influences upon students. Likewise, students could be supported by form tutors to understand how their experiences and stories are shaped through multiple, ongoing and non-linear acts of reflections, judgments and self-conscious acts through and upon themselves and others.

Ultimately, given the relationship seen above between plot and character, by not acknowledging the significance and influence of individual conscience, ethics and character, it can now be seen how and why the plot suffers itself. Attendance as a concept is currently losing an element of meaning, direction, drive and understanding. In parallel, Ricoeur (1990: p.149) states:

> …as the narrative approaches the point of annihilation of the character, the novel also loses its own properly narrative qualities…To the loss of identity of the character thus corresponds the loss of configuration of the narrative…

The individual, being active in meaning, brings active significance upon attendance issues. Thus, by implementing the above support and recognition for individual ethics and identity, attendance itself can be supported to gain in accurate identity and numerical content.

Prescribing **Social Morality through Narrative Identity**

> ...the formal identity of pupil, which implies child, not adult; not parent; not teacher; not worker. It implies a particular relationship of subordination to these other identities; it implies one whose movements ought to be authorized. It implies someone who is physically present at authorized times in an authorized place, i.e. school. (Paterson 1989: p.25)

It is through Ricoeur's marriage of ethics and morality that a useful and epistemologically sound basis can be found from which to understand attendance. The primacy given to ethics, as seen above, must be understood within the context of a moral grounding: the impact of social norms upon ethics must not be overlooked. This is so in terms of both recognising the effect of moral norms upon individuals and also in terms of recognising the power morality can have over individuals should the balance not be maintained.

Positive and Negative Social Prescription

Attendance is fundamentally affected by social constraints, as previous chapters have shown. Attendance is constituted by an 'ought' disposition: children *ought* to attend school, parents *ought* to ensure their children attend, it is a child's *right* to have a full time education. Such social moral groundings can be contextualised within a positive framework, as Seaton (2008: p.293) highlights:

> …communal narratives may also service as therapeutic, lightening the burden of unspeakable knowledge through the shared experience of knowing, remembering, and retelling what might otherwise remain silent.

Social power can potentially be used positively and sensitively to aid in supporting and nurturing the growth of the individual. It is exactly this form of change in recognition and use of social power that could potentially genuinely benefit attendance. Individual narratives can become positively "woven" within "a communal narrative, revealing the layers of their agency, listening, telling and retelling…within the story itself" (Seaton 2008: p.300).

Seaton continues by using descriptions such as "spinning out" from individuals to community narratives and how the retelling other people's stories produces "new

meanings". Thus, the stories and narratives of the form tutors may spin out to the group they lead, mirroring the similar activity taking place from each student. The tutor group becomes a 'woven' collection of individual narratives, which when brought together through the temporal structures of plot and mimesis can clearly now be seen to produce new meaning and content.

However, just as with meaning in general, social moral power must be carefully contextualised. Seaton (2008: p.293) warns:

> …communal stories strip individuals of the ability to craft individual narratives, as personal stories serve to create a larger communal understanding of events and history.

The power available to community narratives and 'games' can overwhelm the importance and influence of the individual. In terms of attendance, it can be seen that the normative and moral power of attendance as a social law, dictates the judgements that society makes upon those individuals who do not 'fit' within the social game they are meant to be a part of. Paterson (1989: pp.6-7) argues:

> …to describe someone as truanting is to state that they are in the wrong physical location in respect of social customs. This judgement involves a claim about that person's temporal location: biographically, they ought to be elsewhere at that given time of the day/week/year. Truanting is being out of place and discussions of this entail questions of an individual's relation to the normality of schooling within a particular social order.

Individuals can become submerged within communal "master narratives" (McLean 2008: p.1695) and therefore unheard, unseen and unrecognised. Within her own research, Seaton (2008: p.303) also found:

> …it is easy to see how Diana's words could be lost if a researcher is not careful to document the fact that threads of the communal narrative overlapping Diana's story surround her own narrative, shape her self-understanding, and limit the degree of control she has over this narrative.

This is parallel to the work and role of form tutors at present. Their work is subsumed within the general work of the school with no particular recognition of their dedication and personal influence upon attendance related areas.

From within the mimetic process that brings together the plot and meaning of a whole story and the roles of characters, the individual must remain decipherable. As the previous chapters have seen already, it is entirely possible for the narrative of the social group to completely subsume the identity of the individual if this is not upheld. This is not to ignore the community story: such stories are still a part of the self-definition that individuals are living within. Individuals are a part of their own community stories whether this is positive or negative. Erben (1996: p.160) highlights:

> …selves are not free agents within this temporal schema. They arrive in the world already made, in a language already in existence…Subjectivity is therefore a product of a variety of social discourses and a unique, personal, life history.

In line with Wittgenstein's epistemology and Ricoeur and Erben's arguments upon the nature of narrative and temporal relationships, the subjective individual cannot be entirely isolated from his or her social context. A small connection a tutor may make regarding his or her own personal history and the understanding of a student's situation may affect not just his or her judgments but also how the group feel towards that individual. In turn, this social understanding can affect the individual's own sense of self all over again.

Although this may lead, on occasion, to negative consequences, it can also be used overtly as a positive way of connecting with individuals and steering group and social approaches in a positive and constructive way. Awareness of this pattern of effects and cyclical reflections between individual and group is something that Luntley (2004) and Ainley and Luntley (2007) have researched into, attempting to capture the often non-verbal and natural expertise of experienced teachers. In turn, this is something that now could become paramount in understanding how the role and individual, as a form tutor, can ultimately be critical in raising attendance levels.

The Challenge of Balancing Social Prescription

There is a genuine need in attendance now to find a balance between social and individual identity, power and understanding. Interestingly, Ricoeur distinguishes between institutions being governed by 'power in common' and those governed

through ‘domination’ (1990: p.194). Through not recognising the individual or ethical content of attendance at present, it is my contention that attendance in general is being governed by social dominance. It is through constraining rules, power and legislation that attendance is currently measured, understood and dealt with. Through this, the ability of individuals to influence, affect and take power within the concept is diminished almost entirely.

A rebalance of power is needed in order to achieve a ‘power in common’ between individuals and social dominance. Institutions and individuals are, in fact, linked together through the actions, participation and belonging of the individuals within them (Ricoeur 1990: p.200). Education institutions rely upon students to attend in order for the institution to exist. Attendance, as a concept, relies upon form tutors to complete the attendance registers daily using their personal experience to judge and code each situation. Parents promise, as part of the social and political ‘game’ they live within, to allow their children to be educated full time. In return, the education system, through the individuals within it, is obligated to provide such an education and an accurately, ethically and morally completed register of each child’s attendance.

Such obligation is not based upon “success” (Ricoeur 1990: p.266) necessarily but on the “conditions of satisfying the promise”. A reciprocal relationship of duty, responsibility, promise and action exists not just between parents and schools but also between the education system and the staff within the schools. Each requires a level of individual and institutional respect and understanding. This is parallel to Ricoeur’s theories upon sympathy (1990), where one individual decreases his or her sense of security in order that another individual may grow.

The related concept of empathy is seen increasingly within medical research (Reynolds and Scott 1999). French (1999: p.1218) finds a similar sense within the ‘negative capability’ of an individual to: “contain emotion, the ability to hold enough to be able to hold something for another as well as for oneself”. By acknowledging, supporting and promoting this balance, attendance could potentially actualise meaning currently being hidden from view.

In practice, readdressing this balance within ‘games’ such as attendance entails accepting that not all cases will be describable by universal, social or political maxims

or norms. Instead, some may require to be treated as the exception to certain moral norms as individual power over, and in conjunction with, social governance is acknowledged. Each context and situation requires individual attention. In line with Wittgenstein's epistemology, such individual understanding naturally entails some level of social grounding still. Ricoeur (1990: p.269) highlights that "Practical wisdom consists here in inventing just behaviour suited to the singular nature of the case…But it is not arbitrary". The same "principle of respect" in each case may be needed but the actual method of application may differ. Thus, narrative identity and temporality shows how a balanced *methodological ethos* from which to approach attendance is needed, rather than norms, maxims and practices.

This balance directly affects the relationship between individual identity, social role and social institutions. Institutional power can be meaningfully communicated, both negatively and positively, via social roles through individuals. Thus, an official attendance officer represents the attendance establishment within which the form tutor's legal registers become assessed in relation to the school as a whole. Likewise, the form tutor represents the school in which the student becomes judged and, critically, the researcher can represent an academic, institutional power over those being 'researched' into.

As MacIntyre (1999: p.315) discusses, in order to be held responsible for one's actions, an individual must be capable of being upheld as a moral agent and have an understanding of the self as having an identity "other than the identities of role and office that I assume in each of the roles that I occupy". MacIntyre (ibid) continues:

> My awareness of and understanding of myself as an individual is exhibited in and partly constituted by the various acknowledgments of that individuality by others and my ability to respond to those others as individuals and not just as role-players…And central among such acknowledgments are those judgments in which we evaluate individuals as individuals, in respect of their virtues and the goodness of their lives. But initially such judgments, we should note, just as much as our judgments about individuals as role-players, are generally governed by socially established standards.

Hence, the individual brings to his or her role a constancy of self. The individual may use self-conscious acts through fiction and reflection to understand the self, others and ethical judgements but the individual remains constant throughout. Unlike some

fictional roles, the roles that individuals take on in real life are multifarious and all affect and are affected by the individual constancy and social dynamics. Additionally, this self-conscious act may be performed unconsciously and also be impacted upon, or based from, socially constituted roles, dynamics and interactions.

Thus, MacIntyre (p.316) shows how responsibility lies with the individual and also with the social group. Morality and ethics require each other in order to find meaning in themselves:

> We need therefore to have tested our capacity for moral deliberation and judgment in this and that type of situation by subjecting our arguments and judgments systematically to the critical scrutiny of reliable others, of co-workers, family, friends…

With all of these situations, whether regarding a form tutor, researcher, student or education establishment, the moral duties come with accountability and responsibility. The consequences of such responsibility can become not just about sanctions, punishments and negative experiences. Rather, as a relationship is built between the active members of a group, consequences of personal or individual unacceptable action come in the form of disappointment from others in the group.

In summary therefore, it is through an individual's role that the appropriate group of 'other' individuals is found from within which such moral judgement upon ethical decisions can be made. Individual ethics is, as MacIntyre (1999: pp.316-317) finds, related to social morality through roles and role definitions:

> For each role there is a range of particular others, to whom, if they fail in their responsibilities, they owe an account that either excuses or admits to the offence and accepts the consequences.

Some Concluding Remarks

It is within narrative as a methodology, that a "middle ground" (Ricoeur 1990: p.114) is found between the descriptive approach to action and the prescriptive approach now possible to understand relative to the individuals, roles and institutions involved in attendance. This relationship is held and projected by the understanding of the self

through narrative auto/biographical identity, through which description and prescription become aligned and conjoined and yet still distinct from one another.

Meaning within narrative temporal structures and auto/biographical identity, become actualised through the telling, retelling and reconfiguring of stories. As individuals act, speak, react and judge each other in the world, they understand more subtle elements of old stories and become potentially aware of any new 'double meanings' previously hidden. As Ricoeur (1984: p.74) states:

> …a life story proceeds from untold and repressed stories in the direction of actual stories the subject can take up and hold as constitutive of his personal identity.

Individuals, including myself as the researcher, through *using* the methodology of narrative, actualise stories that were "(as yet) untold" (ibid). We are continually putting together different stories, elements, actions and characters to readjust our judgements upon our own, and others', life stories. Our own reflections upon ourselves therefore rely upon this active use of narrative.

Such reflections and relationships incur ethical and moral implications, strengthening the bond possible between individuals. Individuals and the roles they undertake within social groups can be understood as adjoined and fundamentally conjoined. However, the individual behind each role has an identity, ethical duty and moral need in relation to other individuals and the relevant social group. It is through the act of narration that such identity, ethical and moral elements and a sense of belonging both to others and to the self is formed and expressed. Narrative can hold the ""prehistory" of the told story…a "background"" (Ricoeur 1984: p.75). At the same time, narrative can allow for characters, identities, actions, plots, individuals and lives to emerge and bring forth new stories and meanings.

School attendance may be the 'background' story of this thesis, but it is the individuals that emerge from that background through the telling of the stories within school attendance that unlock the real meanings. Through using narrative, personal identities can be found for the students, the form tutors, the individuals within the role of form tutor and school attendance itself.

Consequently, from this greater understanding comes the potential for positive and progressive actual and practical *methods* to further highlight identities, meanings and narrative content, and therefore a potential increase in school attendance. It is not through just theoretical discussion of narrative methodological elements that auto/biographical and potentially significant new understandings of attendance can therefore be actualised: "To follow a story is to actualize it by reading it". It is the *act* of telling this story through this thesis, through reading it as you are now, and through practical applications of the ideas expressed within this thesis that the true significance for attendance may be found.

Crucially, also, it becomes clear that overtly using narrative methods as well as using narrative methodologies in practice, could produce positive results for attendance and the individuals involved. The same is true of the political literature upon school attendance. Such literature is often suppressed in actualisation of meaning due to not being aimed at the relevant individuals within attendance matters.

With this in mind, the proceeding and final chapter will now turn from these philosophical, theoretical and methodological inquiries to a discussion upon the actual applications and research, attendance, ethical and moral implications of the ideas expressed throughout the thesis.

PART III

Practical Implications and Thesis Conclusion

'The Complexities of Attendance'

Truancy is a crime
And truants must pay the price.
It is an offence to miss school regularly.
Unauthorise each day lost.

But non-attendance isn't simple,
Each missing mark holds a story.
A story that could be heard,
If only someone had time to listen.

A form tutor's role is to record the data,
Not to get involved.
What time is there to stop and listen?
To every reason made?

Tutor time is there,
With an individual taking the role.
To stop and even to listen,
To bring life and identity to all.

Elhaggagi (2009)

CHAPTER 6

Attendance, The Form Tutor and Narrative Methods: A Thesis Conclusion

'No End'

There is no end,
Just multiple beginnings.

I see the lives of others,
Keep on turning, spiralling, circling,
Around me, surrounding me.
All these lives making a difference, all the time, every time,
Sometime, no time.

Now these lives can be recognised,
Through more than mere words and numbers.
For narrative methodology does not mind:
Whether it be a smile, a comment, a gesture or unspoken promise,
Narrative auto/biography will hold them all.

Learning can happen
Through a shared understanding,
Where individuals have meaning together.
Creativity and learning may be required, but through structure
Freedom is found.

Codes, numbers,
Stats and graphs,
Are all still needed of course.
But now there is more to meaning than this,
Narrative contains them all.

Character, identity,
Personality and Selfhood,
Are given time in the story.
Form tutors and students can impact the plot for each other,
Through auto/biographical, narrative lives.

Attendance therefore,
Is about all of these lives
All ethically and morally charged.
And with official recognition, learning has a chance through school attendance,
And belonging to each other once more.

Elhaggagi (2009)

This chapter represents the final part and the conclusion of this thesis by returning to the beginning, thus completing and yet not halting the circular path that was started through Part I. Part I started at the end by including some of the findings taken from the comments, ideas and contributions created by the form tutors who took part in the research for this thesis. Conversely, this concluding chapter will examine the original methods used in order to obtain such results and contributions.

Each subsection of this chapter will, when applicable, initially summarise and conclude upon a relevant aspect of the narrative auto/biographical content created by the thesis. From each of these aspects, a discussion will follow upon how practical methods were created and derived to use directly for the practical research carried out. Ultimately, each subsection will then venture to the propose methods, ideas and initiatives that could now be extended towards approaches taken to attendance, and form tutors, in general.

It is only now that such a discussion has the epistemological and methodological basis from which to be situated. Hence, narrative mimetic structure has become necessary even within the forming of this thesis: it is necessary to express the circular and ever-involving path of auto/biographical elements within the uncovered and ongoing narrative of attendance.

Therefore, in particular, this chapter will put forward suggestions for explicit changes to the *approaches* used for methods in understanding the individuals and their roles within attendance. This will be put forward both in terms of how official attendance bodies and departments approach form tutors and their role as well as how form tutors then relate to each other and students regarding attendance.

Attendance and a Pre-Understanding

This section of chapter 6 will, through a reflection of Part I of the thesis, discuss the importance of the constitution and approach of a pre-understanding (Ricoeur 1984: p.46), with specific reference to practical methods of application for attendance. This will be based upon a summary and examination of the actual methods used within the practical research for this thesis. Through this, it will be argued that the new

methodology and epistemology argued for in Part II can now be used to form an alternative pre-understanding of attendance, allowing the dialectic relationships within attendance to become both essential and potentially extremely productive.

The Current 'Pre-Understanding' of Attendance

Part I of this thesis discussed the current official approach to both form tutors and attendance. Chapters 1 and 2 concluded that a statistical, numerical and 'external' foundation is presently taken as the complete meaning of attendance, through which attendance codes are taken as the full representation of that which is occurring. This meaning is assumed to be complete without acknowledging subjective or life-experience elements. This is then applied *to* and *about* individuals through 'external' and 'objective' judgements and used to create initiatives and legal procedures to force a change in *what* and *how* individuals act.

However, it was also concluded that this present approach is not working: attendance rates are not increasing. Therefore, it became clear that the meaning being obtained was potentially only a part of that which was actually possible. The terminology used in attendance was shown to be often badly defined or incorrectly used, thereby increasing the negative and unsuccessful nature of attendance initiatives and policies.

It was seen through the form tutors' contributions that immense work, relationships and intense interactions are actually taking place within the context of attendance in tutor groups. The form tutors discussed attendance in terms of subjective lives, individual personalities, life experiences and stories. They also detailed how interaction between individuals creates a powerful and natural method of supporting and nurturing students and their attendance levels. However, these various elements are not reflected, or recognised, within any of the official attendance literature, policies or publications.

In addition, form tutors felt their role had a specific lack of definition and boundaries. Form tutors 'learnt on the job' and incorporated much of their own judgement upon what was needed for their role. Form tutors and students alike were found to be confused about their own identities, roles and importance within attendance. Such individuals are thus coming to attendance through confusion of identity and role rather

than clarity and shared understanding. Attendance was shown to need a new 'pre-understanding' in which not only the statistical, numerical and external aspects are held but also where the individuals involved can obtain definition and acknowledged influence regarding themselves and their own life journeys.

To increase the chances of active participation freely taken by individuals is to create a method through which the individuals' *initial* pre-understanding of identity, definition, power and temporal richness is supported, secured and recognised. This is in contrast to the present situation where such individual content, context and influence is often denied or ignored. As a consequence of this current pre-understanding, when form tutors are successful or have genuine positive intentions regarding attendance, there are no background educational groundings capable of capturing their meaning and significance.

Participation at this initial stage of bringing together a social game, concept or project, thus becomes a responsibility of all the individuals and their auto/biographical interactions. In terms of practical methods, this requires both a communication between individuals regarding the context, definitions, roles and individual identity through the concept as well as a structured freedom from within which the participants can potentially flourish beyond the structure provided. Such a pre-understanding creates the potential for entry into the journey accessible, secure and personally contextualised for all participants, allowing the journey to begin with the freely given and active nature of the individuals involved.

Practical Methods: Communicating Information to Form the Shared Pre-Understanding

The form tutors within the school used for this project were informed about the nature and aims of the research through an initial information page, published through the internal Staff Bulletin (Appendices 3 and 4). This allowed form tutors to read about the project through a medium routinely used by staff, thereby lowering the risk of isolating or unnecessarily bringing attention to form tutors. The same information was also provided within a leaflet, offering an alternative format and secondary route of communication. Heads of year were given a copy of the forms also so that form tutors could approach the project through someone other than myself.

The formal communication methods used between participants and myself involved a number of follow-up letters and communication forms (Appendices 5 and 6). Form tutors were given a final copy of their contribution and asked to sign a final form of consent following checks and necessary alterations regarding ethical and moral requirements. This process of double-checking and consent was utilised by some of the participants to actively alter and change their contributions.

The structure of the information was also carefully created in order that the context of the project incorporated security and privacy. Check boxes were used within all the forms to provide ease of use for the individuals. Individuals were asked to *initial* rather than just 'tick' boxes to aid in reducing possible deception or abuse of identity. The contributions given in by participants were kept in a file off the school site and electronic versions were kept under my own email password to ensure security. It was made clear to participants' that their real names would not be used within the thesis and all data would be destroyed on completion of the project.

Crucially, participants were also informed of the aims of the research and where it may be used, published or summarised. This included both the context of the school and the academic world in which the project is situated. Thus, the pre-understanding of the project included not just individual interactions but different forms of interactions between individuals and social institutional contexts. The school had sponsored some of the fees for my studies but had not made any request regarding the thesis or the research I was to carry out. However, I did intend to provide the school with a summary of my findings for possible staff development material. This intention was clearly marked within the literature and a specific section within the ethical consent forms enabled form tutors to opt out of this if they desired.

Similarly, the practical research was undertaken officially through the name of Southampton University and this extra academic context was made clear to participants through written clarification, headed paper and University logos. The consent forms given to participants included an option to agree or not agree to any contribution to the project being used in further educational research or published material. No participant withdrew consent for any of these uses of his or her contribution however.

Included within the formation of this pre-understanding were details of my own contact information. Additionally, an appropriate professional confidential help-line was published for participants to use at any time during the project (with full permission and agreement from the organisation itself). Thus, a direct and overt protection system was put in place to ensure that participants had both internal routes of seeking support as well as external and fully confidential options.

Consequently, participants were given an extensive amount of information regarding the social, institutional and procedural context of the project as well as my own personal details and intended use of any contributions made. Participants had the opportunity to become a part of this context at different levels, choosing whether to agree to their contributions being used for academic purposes or for school development material, or both. From this, individuals became influential upon shaping the path of this thesis and their contributions became a part of the project's 'pre-understanding'. This became possible not just through the words used by the participants but also through the *process* of consent, participation and contribution.

This approach to communication is potentially crucial to future methods of understanding and tackling attendance. Even simple methods in which form tutors discuss with students the meaning and relevance of attendance registers could aid in creating a more successfully shared and fully comprehended start to the process of attendance each morning: why the register is taken, how the form tutor completes it, how the student is judged and what consequences this could hold in the future could be discussed. Thus, students within a tutor group could share an agreed awareness and participation in the registration process rather than the register being an 'external' codification of their actions. Not only is the register a reflection of *what* the individual students are but also a reflection of the auto/biographical relationship between the form tutor and the students based upon ipse and idem of each individual.

In order to achieve this, form tutors themselves would need to understand the registration process as such an auto/biographical and interactive process, thereby highlighting a possible future role-specific training need. On-going professional development in which form tutors could reflect together upon how they individually approach their role could potentially continue this growth further and also support the

individuals involved. Communication outward from such processes could provide official attendance departments with a clearer understanding of identity, significance and auto/biographical elements regarding the role and the individuals who carry it out.

Practical Methods: Freedom Within Participation, Through the Shared Pre-Understanding

From the structured and formal context of the pre-understanding created, a freedom of approach to participation and individual contribution was still required. With this in mind, all twenty-one form tutors within the school were given the opportunity to participate in the research; one third took up this option. From this, the research was not limited to any one narrower or project-defined group of individuals. I specifically asked form tutors for their stories and opinions whether they were negative or positive, to also reduce the bias that would otherwise be possible.

On a negative note, the flexibility offered regarding the participant group, meant that there was less control possible from myself as the researcher over the year groups, experience levels and general background of tutors contributing to the project. As a researcher I could have been inviting "differences of interpretation" and risking a level of losing some degree of control over avoiding "ambiguity" (Seaton 2008: pp.303-304).

Positively however, this freedom led to a less pre-judged and pre-created outcome. Through giving the potential participant group such power, a wide background and range of individuals contributed to the project, thereby freely representing a diverse group of individuals. Contributions were made by form tutors who were newly qualified or new to the school as well as teachers who had been at the school for a number of years, had extensive experience and also numerous heads of academic departments. Two female and four male form tutors represented international and British teaching staff. Such freely chosen commitment reflected the intention to 'keep one's word' by that individual (Ricoeur 1990). Therefore, by both committing to contribute and then by actually achieving such a contribution, individuals had the opportunity to express their full identity through ipse alone as well as ipse and idem combined together.

Reflecting this form of inclusive method onto the construction of a tutor group, it can be seen that the form tutor also often provides a place and a time for each and every student. By recognising the contributions that individuals make just by joining the group each morning in their own way and with their own lives and needs, the form tutor has the capacity to enable each student to be an individual and yet still a part of their group.

Using vertical banding within tutor groups (whereby each group is constituted by a selection of students from each year group) could be proposed as a potentially positive initiative. While this may not be appropriate in all schools, it could further provide a variant on the formation and support structure obtained from tutor groups. Form tutors could utilise the life experiences of the older students to scaffold and support the younger students for instance. This is something that could be included in further research projects upon tutor *groups*, form tutors and attendance.

Therefore, it has been shown that setting up an agreed and shared pre-understanding of the narrative, 'game' or concept at hand is essential for all individuals involved. Whether it be participants in a research project or students and form tutors relating to each other within the process of taking an attendance register, understanding the context in which such information and approaches are taken, understood, carried forward and used by others is fundamental.

The process of school registration is not just about a resultant piece of paper created from objective codes: registering attendance within the tutor group represents an active, dynamic, immanent, auto/biographical relationship between individuals in a social group. The dialectic relationship between quantitative data and qualitative content is now seen as a productive unity and distinction rather than a tension-filled dilemma. Thus, the overall system of official attendance policy and direction also needs to incorporate all of the auto/biographical and narrative elements that individuals bring to the meaning of attendance and the pre-understanding.

Approaches to practical methods need to be based upon such grounding through which clear communication regarding roles, responsibilities and boundaries are clearly and overtly published and supported. However, within this, respect and acknowledgement of the individual influence upon even this initial stage of pre-understanding a concept

needs to be achieved. Thus, the process of Mimesis$_1$, provides grounds for both the theoretical and the practical understanding of attendance (and research upon attendance) and allows each element to move towards and merge with the second mimetic process.

Actualising Meaning, Activity and Practical Implications

The Immanent Situation

A discussion will be presented here regarding the actualisation of the meaning and activity within the concept of attendance, thus reflecting the transition from Mimesis$_1$, to Mimesis$_2$. Moving from the current situation in attendance to the proposed narrative and auto/biographically based approach argued for in Part II, initially required a largely theoretical and philosophical content. Through this process, the dialectic relationship between individual identity and social role definitions became paramount. The epistemology of Wittgenstein within chapter 3 became an essential grounding to the ideas presented. It was only through such an epistemology that the immanency of meaning was not only housed but also incorporated into an understanding of *how* meaning is created.

Action and dynamics between individuals within social groups became not just added to meaning but an intricate and inseparable part of meaning alongside more traditional external or physical elements. Wittgenstein's epistemology presented a way of understanding how this influence could be described and also a method of transition from a passive and external approach to attendance to the beginning of a new active, dynamic and immanent understanding.

In order to house this new approach, and yet still allow attendance to avoid becoming fatally complex or only philosophically driven, chapters 4 and 5 argued for a methodology based upon Ricoeur's theories of narrative temporal structure and auto/biographical identity. This brought to attendance a methodological structure and approach that emphasised and positively used the dialectic relationships between individual identity, role, ipse and idem as well as social structures, elements and definitions. The further dialectic relationship between individual ethics and social

morality was also highlighted, not as a philosophical dilemma but an essentially entwined co-existent relationship from which productive methods of understanding and meaning could be formed.

Practical Methods: Actualising Participation and Contribution

Reflecting the theoretical elements within Part II, the actual methods of contribution given to participants to choose from for this project were chosen in line with the methodological and epistemological grounding now argued for. These methods needed to allow participants freedom to be individuals and yet discuss their role, whilst also remaining within an agreed structure and context. When taking part myself in a research project carried out by Seale (2008), with a similar methodological approach, I was extremely impressed and affected by the choice of methods offered. From this experience as a participant, I was more confident in asking the participants in my own project to be involved in a similar approach. With this in mind, the following suggested methods were provided to the participants:

a) Write a brief diary or notes describing your time as a form tutor.
b) Write an email or letter to a fictional friend who is thinking of becoming a form tutor.
c) Describe a 'critical incident' that has occurred whilst being a form tutor (something that has involved student welfare or attendance issues).
d) Construct a piece of creative writing or poem to express your ideas.
e) Taped interview (due to time limits, only available for up to 4 participants).
f) An alternative method (please contact me to discuss additional possibilities).

Options 'a' to 'd' enabled participants to choose creative and personal ways of contributing. These included semi-fictional methods, through which participants could express real feelings but outside of real situations, actualising the freedom of imagination as discussed through Ricoeur's theories of fictional time and identity.

Two of the six participants chose the diary option, two chose to write personal notes, one chose to write a letter to a fictional friend and one chose a 'critical incident' to describe. Therefore, all of these options were chosen by at least one participant. This confirmed that offering such wide varieties of methods (although all structured around auto/biographical or narrative groundings) provided participants with a freedom of choice that was readily taken up.

Option ‘e’ was available for a limited amount of participants due to the linear time commitments of the project. By restricting this one option, the project was controlled in size so that all twenty-one form tutors potentially had the opportunity to participate. However, no participant chose this particular method even though it has a strong traditional background in qualitative methods. The limit placed upon it may have contributed to this, although only one participant enquired as to its availability and even with the knowledge that it was available, decided to contribute via an alternative method. The availability of personal and professional time may also have been an influence on participants’ choices.

Option ‘f’ offered participants a chance to contribute via methods not provided directly by the project. Freedom to be individual and contribute through individual means could be used by participants to show their own characters and meaning. Participants were asked to contact me in advance of going ahead however, in order for any alternative methods to be discussed in terms of maintaining ethical requirements and relevant content.

This latter option was not officially taken up by any of the participants. However, one participant, who had already contributed, did utilise this option at a later date when a particular personal event happened (the ethical element of which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter). This individual strongly wished to put forward the details of the event through scrapbooks, historical papers and personal documents tracking his or her autobiographical life. This provided firm evidence that by allowing participants to have structured and yet free power over their method of contribution, not only were a wide variety of methods utilised but also a deeper and far more personal input was achieved from the participants.

Practical Methods: Temporal Order, Flexibility and Considerations

Although the form tutors’ stories may not all have been long or covering the individuals’ entire lives, they were still auto/biographical narratives through their temporal structure and content related to the individual’s life experiences. As Sandelowski (1991: p.162) states:

> Generally, narratives are understood as stories that include a temporal ordering of events and an effort to make something out of those events...

Narrative time has been argued throughout this thesis, and specifically within chapter 4, to be critical in the structure, content and understanding of attendance and the individuals within it. It has been shown to include linear, phenomenological, historical, fictional, subjective, external, auto/biographical, paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements. Time is significant within the process of Mimesis$_2$, itself, which Part II of this thesis reflected: Mimesis$_2$, holds the identities of the individuals and characters firm throughout the temporal changes and yet still allows the individuals flexibility to grow and adapt.

Placed within Wittgenstein's epistemology, the practical application of these temporal elements becomes one of describing the context in which the term 'now' is used. Ricoeur (1984: p.63) also states: "…it is important to note those occasions in which we say 'now' in our everyday acting and suffering". By looking at the *use* of a word and its own contextual 'now', the deeper, richer, hidden meanings can be found. Thus, time in practical application to individual lives becomes that of context and *use* of temporal terminology.

The contributions from the form tutors showed that methods are already being utilised that reflect this temporal approach. Form tutors expressed a need to 'suspend' linear time on occasions and instead rely upon subjective and 'within-time' perspectives, such as when judging which late code to use. Thus, judgement regarding the objective time of an event has a significant subjective element of interpretation and control within it. This clearly shows how a code such as 'late after registration', which counts as an unauthorised absence (or 'truanting'), must be allowed to contain, reflect and hold meaning from a subjective and phenomenological perspective of time.

Linear time however is also *positively* used by form tutors to set boundaries and consequences of unacceptable actions. Loss of the student's personal time through break and lunchtime detentions is used as a consequence of missing the 'group' time by being late to school. The succession of 'nows' that is available through linear time is utilised on these occasions to show students how the 'now' of one contextual moment can affect the 'now' of another. This is a significant deterrent to students as it

is a loss of 'their' time that is the consequence. Time is very much phenomenological within these methods and yet combined with linear temporal structures in order to build learning, understanding and self-identity within the group.

One form tutor (Graham) also commented specifically upon how contributing to this project via a diary format allowed him to reflect back on his ideas and thus gain new understandings and insights into his own feelings and thoughts as each day progressed. This, he suggested, had directly contributed to his enjoyment in being a part of the project. Individuals instinctively use time in linear and non-linear ways in order to create judgements upon others and themselves.

Therefore, form tutors are already using methods that highlight their individual ability to "master the rules that govern…[a narrative's] syntagmatic order" (Ricoeur 1984: p.56). Thus, the requirement now is for such methods to be overtly recognised for their true significance. Time and identity become intricately related and by acknowledging the narrative content of this relationship it could be used positively to enhance identity, role understanding and therefore attendance levels. Interestingly, Metcalfe and Game (2008: p.346) highlight how this relationship does not have to be between people:

> …dialogue refers to any encounter that respects the world's difference. Making a sculpture, reading a book, or playing golf can be dialogical experiences…

Establishing this dynamic and active engagement between individuals, their roles and attendance levels could be achieved through creative, imaginative and individual ways. Once again, the individuality and personality of the form tutors, through their contributions, have already shown how they can achieve positive dialogue and communication with students via many different methods. The underlying common ground to each however is the respect for individuality and yet progression within time: individuals are given time and space to 'encounter' and live within the world and with each other.

Practical Methods: Ethical and Moral Responsibility

The freedom given to form tutors within this project inevitably incurred multiple ethical issues. However, utilising the narrative ethical and moral distinctions and co-

existence outlined in chapter 5, such issues became not just manageable but also a part of the project's practical ethos and content itself.

All contributions from form tutors were made anonymous regarding not just the author but also any other individuals or institutions named. Ironically, it is through providing such anonymity that participants were offered the opportunity to express their full identity without the threat of negative professional or personal consequences. Participants were informed that their contributions might be altered in order that this level of anonymity was ensured. However, the final draft of all contributions was given to participants to double check before their final permission was asked for.

Given this freedom there was a possibility that the participants' contributions may have touched upon issues that they found stressful. However, through the pre-understanding created, participants were given methods of obtaining support throughout the project. The process of Mimesis$_2$, provided a context in which to understand that such freedom for participants to develop and contribute individually was a part of the moral respect that the project (and ethically from myself) needed to provide the individuality of the participants involved. The responsibility therefore became a relationship that included the project, the individuals participating and myself: each form tutor freely entered the project and all were adults with professional experience.

The option to double check and alter their final 'ethically checked' versions of their contributions was taken up by a number of the form tutors. Over time, their own view upon their contributions had either altered or developed, once again reflecting the necessity of contextualising the subjective 'now' of the information. One participant realised only after both he and I had already checked his piece that changes were needed to maintain the anonymity of others. This was something I could not have detected myself to this level, having no knowledge of the actual individuals the story had described.

As a positive consequence of the freedom open to them, the contributions from form tutors had less influence directly from myself. I believe this is crucial in allowing their stories to reflect the development of each individual rather than my own research priorities. It is not possible for me to take my own role out of the project entirely and

so my own narrative will inevitably have some effect upon their contribution. This need not be a negative though. My relationship with the form tutors was a part of the pre-understanding created through which trust and confidence was initiated. Therefore participants were contributing not just towards a faceless project but towards a project they knew I was personally involved with and committed to. Thus, their stories became both independent reflections of auto/biographical elements as well as becoming a part of the bigger, dynamic and inter-relational context with me personally and with the project.

Through a similar approach to methods, attendance could now provide students and form tutors more freedom to also choose narrative life-paths that they believe they need, rather than the narrative story placed upon them. This is directly comparable to McLean's (2008) description of a "master narrative" (p.1695), which describes socially defined narrative labels relative to which individuals must place their own narrative paths. Part of the responsibility therefore surrounding narrative methods within the context of Mimesis$_2$, (and whether carried out by individual or role, by the researcher, education system, schools, form tutor or student) is to allow this freedom and availability of *choice* of narrative. Through such choice, responsibility and accountability become more clearly defined and structured.

Form tutors, by supporting and scaffolding students through auto/biographical interactions, rather than just through statistics, labels, registers and numbers, are providing students with this freedom and yet structure. The methods already being used by some form tutors reflect the needs of the individual students to grow in self-consciousness, self-identity, social understanding and ability to choose their own life-course. School attendance and the decision to attend school is a part of this ability for an individual to choose identity, label and character within the story surrounding his or her life. This is not to advocate school attendance becoming voluntary but rather that the compulsive element be regarded more as the overall structure, within which greater individual freedom, influence and personal contribution could be achieved concerning the method through which to approach and record such a structure.

Just as form tutors represent institutional support to students, form tutors themselves need official and institutional support also. It is only through acknowledgement and overt recognition of self-identity from within the social dynamics and authority of

each individual that confidence and belief in identity can grow. The narrative dialectic of freedom and yet structure is once again required. It is this recognition of roles, individual actions and choices of life-paths that now has to become central to understanding the role of the form tutor within attendance. As Luntley (2004) and Ainsley and Luntley (2007) discuss, it is through observing and *use* of life and interactions with others that teachers (and therefore form tutors) can learn expertise through each other. However, this form of practice and recognition requires official backing and support in order to become an embedded practice.

In each case described above, the use of auto/biographical methods did not necessarily require individuals to disclose their entire life experiences or stories or, for the sake of this thesis, disclose statistical information about their identity. Hence, their stories have been integrated into this thesis through auto/biography as a methodology without the need to always explicitly detail their specific life or identity details. Auto/biographical elements are not just formed from overt methods but can be found naturally through our 'second nature' as individuals who self-consciously, unconsciously or consciously use life experiences to understand and support each other. Thus, auto/biographical methods need not always be overt but they still can be used as a methodological and contextual approach.

Narrative and Auto/Biographical Analysis

This section will discuss the narrative significance of analysing auto/biographical material. In a reflection of the final mimetic process (Mimesis$_3$), this section does not provide a specific summary of previous chapters. Instead, it moves forwards to a new transition back to Mimesis$_1$, and possibilities for new pre-understandings.

Practical Methods: Researching and Analysing Individuals in a Specific Social Game

> …symbolic mediation has a texture. To understand a ritual act is to situate it within a ritual.... (Ricoeur 1984: p.58)

To understand an individual is to understand the story of culture, language, beliefs and 'customs' of which that individual is a part (Wittgenstein 1953: PI 198). The methods behind the understanding of attendance therefore must now also be gained from within the culture and the setting of the actual people and institutions involved. To

understand the act of taking a legal register each morning is to understand the people taking those registers, including the individuals, the school, the situation and the system they are surrounded by.

In line with the methodological findings of Luntley (2004) and Ainsley and Luntley (2007), it is now essential to recognise that capturing the expertise of an individual carrying out a role in supporting and scaffolding another individual is to see more than numbers, codes, lesson plans and dictated curriculum or pastoral requirements. It can now be seen to include the context, situation and dynamic interaction taking place between the individuals within the tutor or class room. As Ainsley and Luntley (2007: p.4) declare:

> Attention-dependent knowledge, in contrast to information recorded in lesson places, *cannot* be written down. It is knowledge that becomes available during the complexity of the progress of a lesson…

Parallel to Luntley (2003c: p.326), this can be directly compared to the situation in which the *judgement* from experience by the form tutor over the actions of students regarding absences, is based upon perceptual and attention-specific skills only available to individuals, not through dictated codes alone. The codes within registers are meaningless marks without the story of the individual and the context behind each one: "Before being submitted to interpretation, symbols are interpretants internally related to some action" (Ricoeur 1984: p.58).

Thus, to couple with the world or another individual, in order to scaffold, support, research or understand that individual more comprehensively, is to understand the "environmentally-dependent account of content" (Luntley 2003a: p.3) within which that individual exists. De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008: p.380) discuss how, in terms of narrative processes, submersion into the story being told is required: removing a text from the story and into isolation to analyse it for narrative meaning can miss "the fact that both the telling of a story, and the ways in which it is told, are shaped by previous talk and action" (p.381). Narratives are *"emergent"* (ibid) and a process that involves not just the author but also the listener.

This has an impact on the work the form tutors carry out with students, the approach to the role of the form tutor by schools and official attendance sectors as well as for

my own research. As De Fina and Georgakopoulou (ibid) continue:

> The story recipients, far from being a passive audience, may reject, modify, or under-cut tellings and narrative points…they may be instrumental in how the teller designs their story in the first place…

With respect to my own research, it became paramount that I researched upon individuals from a school and an educational setting that I was also a part of. From this, I was in a position to know the context of the school in terms of form tutors and also the history and background of the students and their families. Seaton (2008: pp. 293/294) also highlights the importance of being a part of the community in order to achieve a "strong sense of rapport" with the people involved.

Although specific content derived from understanding the wider context of the school was not disclosed directly within the research, it did allow me to put into context the needs of the students, and the emerging needs of the form tutors, relative to attendance issues. As Stanley (2008: p.444) argues, such contexts must remain just that though: a context. To allow contributions to become over-analysed or over-contextualised could allow the meta-analysis to become the content of the research:

> Very quickly, it was the materials produced from the detailed analyses that were worked with, rather than the data, which was returned to only at particular points to check an analysis…

Stanley continues by using an awareness of such a difficulty to provide potential practical methods of resolution. However, the general threat of over relying upon meta-analysis or meta-philosophical approaches remains. In light of this, analysis of the form tutors' contributions for this project needed to emerge not just from their final written contributions but also through the subtle and relationship qualities with myself that became apparent throughout the process itself. Speaking to form tutors from other schools could have entailed a partial loss of meaning due to my own potential misunderstanding of their educational institution and the external role (as researcher only) through which I would be approaching them.

As I have also never actually been a form tutor, a distance was enabled within the proximity of our closeness through which I could form judgements. Comparably, Ricoeur (1984: p.58) finds that:

> As a function of the norms immanent in a culture, actions can be estimated or evaluated, that is judged, according to a scale of moral preferences. They thereby receive a relative value, which ways that this action is more valuable than that one. These degrees of value, first attributed to actions, can be extended to the agents themselves, who are held to be good or bad, better or worse.

As chapter 5 has already shown, individuals may remain constant whilst their social roles differ. Hence, in this situation I was enabled to utilise my established professional role and individual character and selfhood in the school to not only gain access to the form tutors but also to ground my research within a context of constancy, trust and professional awareness. I was able to gain proximity through my individuality and constancy of self and yet, for this project specifically, create a distance through approaching the form tutors officially as a *researcher* from Southampton University.

Consequently, coding a judgement upon another's behaviour or intentions is most accurately achieved via another individual within the same social and physical context. The *individual,* as a form tutor, has this proximity to the students' educational context through belonging to the same tutor group and school. In addition, the form tutor has the ability to stand back as an individual and place this understanding into a larger context. Thus, individuality and role become entwined and yet positively distinguished in practice as well as theory.

Judgements and interpretations of school attendance rates by official attendance bodies now additionally need to incorporate a method of becoming closer to the school context. Rather than creating greater distance between attendance bodies and schools within data collection procedures (as is happening at present, where data is collected entirely impersonally through computer systems), it would aid in obtaining a greater and more accurate understanding of attendance if more personal contributions were provided. Such methods could include using the school's SEF (Self Evaluation Form) alongside termly data reports sent to the DCSF and Local Authorities. A reflection of the institution's identity could then be more accurately used to reflect the individual and role accomplishments being carried out within schools.

The actual attendance codes prescribed by the DCSF also need to be altered to reflect a greater individual understanding of the context occurring within tutor groups. The

individuals within the role of form tutor need a greater ability and freedom to create codes that represent the situations they have to judge, instead of having to re-shape their judgements to fit the given codes. Such freedom, inline with narrative structure, would not necessarily have to negate statistical accuracy or generalisation. Attendance codes have two meanings. The first is that of a representation of the situation, such as a student was absent as his or her parents refused to bring him or her to school. The second meaning denotes whether the first meaning falls into the bracket of present at school, authorised absence or unauthorised absence.

Therefore, form tutors could have the freedom to change the first meaning whilst still having to place all their codes into the latter, more formally structured meaning. A final category could also be added into this second meaning, allowing a differentiation to be achieved regarding unauthorised absences due to parental actions and those due to student actions. Again, this would enable form tutors to code situations in a way that more accurately represented their judgements upon what is actually happening. This would also achieve a greater understanding of unauthorised absences and the contexts in which they are occurring, thereby increasing the accuracy from which 'truancy' and 'persistent absentee' labels are created.

It may help attendance levels and understanding of roles and individuals to include similar workshops to those detailed by Seaton (2008: p.294) whereby individuals were "invited…to examine identity formation in novels and biographies and to respond through their own writing". This could be used in conjunction with Brockmeier's (2002b: pp.25-26) crucial idea that individuals may need to employ overt "closer scrutiny" in order to see their lives as not just individual but based upon:

> …lifeworlds of memory, made out of texts: there are identification and membership cards, birth certificates and documents from schools….diary entries….tapes, videos….

This practical application of auto/biographical understanding could be taken into tutor times as an explicit way of bringing narrative identity and formation into the lives of the students and the form tutor. This could be particularly useful for form tutors who may initially be less confident in their own identity or role.

These suggested methods are all based upon the need to increase the acknowledgement and recognition of the individual, auto/biographical and inter-relational context and 'texture' of attendance specifically through form tutors. The personality and subjective qualities individuals bring to their role could now be used and recognised positively as not just influential upon judgments that create the codes and statistics of attendance but also through individual auto/biographical relationships that affect the students' self-esteem and corresponding attendance rates in the first place. Thus, being a part of the context of a situation has been shown to be crucial to the creation and the formation of meaning, enabling practical analysis upon others to become possible, positive and more accurate.

Practical Methods: Differing Roles but Constant Individuality

As the above subsection has already inferred, I came to this project through not just the role of researcher but also through my role as a professional within the school being researched and through my own individual context. As chapter 5 argued, roles within social institutions can bring with them levels of authority and, as such, can be used both positively and negatively towards the identities of the individuals affected and their roles.

In planning the practical methods to be used for this project, such ethical and moral issues became critically important. Instead of asking for personal statistics and data from the participants, the methods decided upon specifically asked for personal insight upon *who* the participants felt they were, both as individuals and through their role. Hence, no specific statistics were collected upon age, experience or qualification level: instead, information was collected through and within material created by the individuals. Narratives do not necessarily represent other's lives through data and official biographical material but through opening up a "field of forces for the question of *who one is* to be explored" (Tamboukou 2008: p.289).

The official information and process of participating in the project was carried out through my role as researcher from Southampton University. However, in addition I needed the participants to feel they were able to approach me as an individual or through my professional role. Once again, *who* I was became just as important to the process as *what* I was.

In return, the participants and their contributions changed my views, opinions and ultimately the shape of my thesis. What they said and wrote, now over a year ago, is still affecting my life and ideas now. Narratives cross time, particularly upon ethical and moral grounds, as they combine temporal concepts to a stage where influence upon the past, present and future is as entwined within the practice as are the events themselves. Therefore, comments about people's lives have ethical implications and important influences that must not be overlooked no matter how distant the lives, times or experiences were or, in fact, if the life is now over (as was evidenced in the Introduction to this thesis regarding Wittgenstein's life and identities affected by posthumous publications).

This method of approach to narratives became actualised in practice when one form tutor approached me personally regarding a wish to include extremely personal and intricate childhood details. For the extended protection of this individual, a new pseudonym, Sarah, will be used. Sarah had a story to tell that included extreme pain both physically and emotionally from within her past and she wished to tell this so that I could understand how and why she became a form tutor and to care so much about her tutees. However, she was unable to achieve this through words alone and wished to use scrapbooks, photos and diaries from the present and her past to *show* me her story.

I could have chosen to use Sarah's story as the central narrative for my entire thesis: it held within it the structure, freedom, suppression, passion, emotion and power that would have been supreme to use. Sarah was also more than willing for me to use her story in such a way. However, a number of factors influenced my decision not to take this approach. Sarah brought to me an extremely confidential file that outlined, through an official report, exactly *what* had happened to her in the past. This held significant narrative content, but Sarah had only just that week been granted access to this file herself: the information within it was still actively adding to her own current narrative sense of identity and personal history.

As the researcher, and using the differentiation open to me through narrative and auto/biographical methodology, I had to bear in mind the effects that individuality, plot and role could all have upon each other. This was a situation in which the plot of

an individual's life had very suddenly and powerfully affected her both as an individual and a form tutor. What form of meaning and impact may result from combining her current life story with this new version, became impossible to foretell by Sarah or me.

Given this ambiguity in identity and plot dynamics, I had to respect the highly unusual position Sarah was in. Although she was more than happy for me to discuss her story in detail, to do so would have become ethically unstable. Her own identity would have become impossible to keep anonymous due to the uniqueness of her story. I also felt that I was not in a position to judge or interpret her story given that she had not yet had time to do so fully herself.

However, the level of trust, openness, emotion and commitment to her role, through her individual life story, became powerfully highlighted and demonstrated through Sarah's willingness to participate so deeply in my project. Just the *intention* to hand over such personal information therefore became something I felt epitomised the content I wished to portray and I could achieve this without asking her to actualise her initial intention.

Through sharing her story with me, both as her colleague and through my role as researcher, Sarah had opened up a deep auto/biographical relationship, through which content and understanding were communicated over and above the plot or the words used. Thus, Sarah's story may not be detailed explicitly within the thesis but her constancy of self-identity through dynamic plot changes, strength in character and power of the individual have, I hope, been reflected in its underlying drive. Her journey, as opposed to the details of her story (as well as the ethical and moral charge this places upon research), could potentially be taken up in future research in terms of narrative identity and time.

Practical Methods: A Return to Mimesis,[1]

The process of writing and creating this thesis has also had a profound effect upon my own understandings about attendance and the role of the form tutor. I have become increasingly aware of the ethical pressure placed upon individuals within this role

through achieving intense and effective auto/biographical relationships with students based upon attendance and yet without official social recognition or moral support.

The contributions from the form tutors highlighted just how profound an effect a lack of acknowledgement can have not just upon the effectiveness of the role but also the self-esteem and self-respect of the individuals. Although I believed strongly that the auto/biographical and narrative approach to attendance would enlighten the theoretical side to understanding attendance, I had, perhaps naively, not expected such rich, deep and personal contributions from the form tutors. For this, I am both deeply grateful to each individual involved and also heart-warmingly comforted that such individuals exist within attendance at present.

Therefore, this project has in turn affected my own autobiographical story and life experiences and thus, returns this thesis back to its beginning and introduction. As such a circular path and journey is entered into once again, the possibilities for future research to emerge become even greater. This thesis becomes the 'pre-understanding' upon which further ideas, individuals, auto/biographical and narrative elements can become entwined and involved. Research upon specific methods mentioned above could be potentially helpful in terms of assessing how specific groups of form tutors could be altered. Further research is also now potentially beneficial regarding the alternative approaches discussed in the previous chapter regarding the relationship between individuals and social institutions.

Additionally, research upon how implementation of the ideas within this thesis could affect other roles within attendance could now become productive, including internal school roles such as heads of year or external roles such as EWOs. Each role included within such an approach to attendance would bring new auto/biographical elements to the story and therefore the effect upon the other individuals involved. Although form tutors are central to attendance due to their combination of legal requirements through attendance registers, curriculum background, teaching roles and yet direct pastoral commitment to the tutor group, this is not to suggest that other roles have no place at all.

Final Conclusion

'Secondary School Attendance, The Role of the Form Tutor: An Auto/Biographical Inquiry'

The journey of this thesis began from autobiographical discussions and then travelled through descriptions of current literature surrounding form tutors and attendance, progressing on to a proposed change in epistemology and methodology. Finally, through this last chapter, the thesis has culminated in a discussion of actual and suggested applications for real and practical methods.

This thesis has used and applied philosophy, methodology and theory to propose a new way of approaching and understanding the concept of secondary school attendance. A foundation has been formed on which suggested practical methods for improvement have been put forward. The journey has been captured, shaped, contextualised and driven by the philosophical structure and content made possible by the theories of meaning from Wittgenstein (1953) and the narrative auto/biographical theories from Ricoeur (1955, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990). Thus, the argument presented has been delivered overtly as an auto/biographical inquiry, as opposed to a specific study or purely empirical project.

From such grounding and approach, this thesis has examined the very heart of how and why the role of the form tutor is so intricately entwined with the concept of school attendance. Auto/biographical, narrative structure has opened up the potential for meaning to be grasped from the very lives and living relationships explicitly and implicitly existing between individuals in their social groups within the world itself. Attendance has been given the opportunity to be understood and positively approached through the very dialectic aspects of its constitution that often result in its definition being unduly simplified or misunderstood.

By embracing attendance in this way, the role of the form tutor has been shown to encompass a profound and critical balance of dialectic elements itself, each bringing to attendance further significant aspects of meaning and content. The role has been argued not just to involve official duties and responsibilities, such as completing the legal registers, but also significant effects created directly by personal identity,

character and selfhood from the individual within the role. Individuals, within their role, have the potential to auto/biographically judge, affect, relate to and interpret the actions of students and to code such actions as appropriately as the official attendance system will allow.

Therefore, the *role* of the form tutor is not only essential in the process of collecting and shaping attendance data but is specifically auto/biographically related to the actualisation and meaning behind attendance. It is through the *individuals* within their role, that this auto/biographical element is drawn and, as such, role and individuality become entwined and yet distinct. The character, personality and subtle reactions of individuals towards students can make a genuine difference to their sense of belonging to the school institution: legal, moral and ethical responsibilities surround the individual within their role as form tutor in relation to attendance.

From this profoundly complex combination and actualisation of role and individual, comes the need for recognition, acknowledgement and appropriate formal training for form tutors. As the application to practical methods has shown, changes to the approach official attendance bodies take to attendance and the role of the form tutor, could have genuinely positive effects upon rates of attendance. All our lives are shaped through auto/biographical narrative time, structure and identity. By understanding our own lives as such, we can begin to understand how to affect the narratives, and therefore auto/biographical lives, of others. A smile from a form tutor to a student, as they enter school, could potentially imply and carry with it the ability to actualise and officially accept that student's identity as both an individual and a part of the school group. Recognition of this could hold the key to understanding how to raise attendance levels.

Thus, the form tutor's role in attendance is formally, legally and socially bound through the act of taking the legal register. Yet, through narrative auto/biographical methodology, the individuality within the role has been given the freedom, time and space to express its already significant but often unrecognised power and influence. Attendance is about people: it is about lives, experiences, interactions and individuals. It is through the narrative methodological grounding of this understanding that attendance, and the auto/biographically related individuals within it, can come alive.

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APPENDIX 1

Author's Remarks Regarding Writing the Thesis

Chapter 1 was most definitely a personal challenge. My professional role for the majority of my time whilst writing this thesis was as Head of Attendance and Welfare for a secondary school in a difficult and deprived area of south east of England. I worked deep within the world of attendance, submerged inside school attendance policy and practice elements. Being up to date on all political and legal requirements on attendance had been essential for my professional role for five years. Constant, persistent and consistent tracking of all changes, progressions and directives published by researchers and political drives had been a necessity.

I had approached my profession from an academic background in both quantitative and qualitative areas from maths, philosophy and special needs to theories of mind, self-consciousness and individual identities. I thrived in the practical combination of these that attendance allowed me to work within: I could move and liaise between mathematical targets one minute, to child protection issues being disclosed to me by an individual student the next. Attendance in secondary school is so much more than registers and statistics.

This existence within the world of attendance was physically, emotionally and professionally active: attendance definitions and requirements change daily. Whether it is the political element, the school element or the student needs, there is always something different every day and no one day is predictable.

Alongside this personal activity came the political passivity and distance. It could often feel desperate, frustrating and constraining to be held back and defined by the political statistical publications, codes and quantitative drives that came and went through the years. No sooner had you re-organised school policies, practices and welfare systems to support students than a new directive will be produced and every quantitative element changed once again. It felt as if the rug was pulled from under you as you battled against the political requirements in order to reach the political goals: all whilst trying to support and protect both the students and the school staff.

Attempting therefore to summarise, argue and discuss all the elements that are applicable to this thesis from the world of attendance was a daunting task. The initial

chapter became a prime example of the difficulty facing me as I attempted to write the thesis itself. Chapter 1 particularly demanded my attention in a passive, impersonal format and required such attention upon passive, impersonal content. To therefore keep alight the personal feeling of activity, excitement, enjoyment and enthusiasm towards attendance was a technical and theoretical challenge.

Chapter 1 therefore was re-written in many formats over time. It had previously been written entirely as a narrative, a diary entry from varying personalities and even one section was constructed as a fictional PowerPoint presentation from a Local Authority representative. I wrote some sections in poetry format with others in prose.

In one attempted format, this chapter became a narrative for a play based upon various characters, each of which were given a specific section within which to represent their views on attendance. Each section was constructed upon a relevant temporal basis. For instance, one section was written as a student's poem reflecting his or her feelings as the new academic year started and another section was written as a politician's diary entry regarding the first term's political target period. Teacher entries were given both short time periods such as a letter from one tutor to another and also longer temporal stretches such as a flow of emails between certain characters.

Each temporal length and position in the academic year was used to reflect the individual orientation and understanding of that individual's place within the world of attendance: One morning's walk to school may feel like a lifetime of worry and emotion to a student whereas a term or a school year may be the concern of the politician.

These alternative writing structures were attempted to see if it was possible to project and reflect the activity within attendance and also the individually oriented temporal viewpoints that become apparent. These structures may be viable, useable and appropriate in many settings. However, the constraints around writing an official doctorate thesis cannot be ignored. Limits such as the numbers of words became impossible to manage. Narrative and alternative writing methods required significantly more background, individual build up and context building sections. Compromises therefore had to be made and style became a luxury over the requirement of academic content and argument.

However, I have retained some of the poetry stanzas as the opening content of various parts of the thesis. This has allowed some subjectivity, activity and personal feeling to be projected before the more usual and academically acceptable structures gain control. Even being able to write using differently structured stanzas within the poems was a freedom and a relief in being able to reflect the characters within attendance issues. I hope that this, in addition to my genuine enthusiasm for my subject, will enable the passion, individuality and active approach to attendance to come through even when the content itself is passive and impersonal.

APPENDIX 2

Letter to School for Consent

University of Southampton

[Personal and school contact information taken out for confidentiality]

Dear [Headteacher]

Re: Doctorate Research into Student School Attendance: The Form Tutor's Story

As you are aware, I am now approaching the component of my doctorate studies that requires practical research and data collection. Part of my research is to be looking at the role of form tutors and specifically how their role and personas may aid in school attendance issues.

With this in mind, I would be most grateful if you would allow me to now officially ask the form tutors within the school to take part in my research. Participation would be entirely each individual's choice. Total anonymity would also be offered to participants and they may withdraw at any point.

With your agreement, I would appreciate being able to publish an initial Information Sheet and a Consent Form through the Staff Bulletin used within the school. I would also hope to provide all form tutors with a further identical copy of the initial Information Sheet through the format of a leaflet placed in the relevant staff pigeonholes. I have attached a copy of these forms for your information and consent.

The long-term intended audience for my research will primarily be academic in nature. The final Research Thesis should be available through Southampton University when completed.

In the shorter-term, I would also like the opportunity to provide you with a brief summary of my findings. Such a summary would principally be based upon any contributions I receive from the form tutors. I would hope that this form of summary might aid the school in terms of staff development and understanding. Participants in the project will have the chance to state if they are willing for their contributions to be used in this way.

Please do contact me if you have any questions or queries about my research and proposed practical data collection. If you are willing for me to proceed with the above, your written consent, via internal post or email, would be appreciated as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Elhaggagi: Dip SAC, BA (Hons), MA, MA (Ed)

APPENDIX 3
Initial Information Sheet for Form Tutors

University of Southampton

INITIAL INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Form Tutor

Would you like to help others understand the complexities of being a form tutor and know what it takes to do your role? If so, you may be able to help me and in turn, have a chance to tell your story.

The aim of my research

I am currently undertaking doctorate level research regarding the role of form tutors within secondary schools. I hope to bring about an understanding of how your role fits within the pastoral side of school, *specifically looking at the issue of student school attendance*. Perhaps some people see the form tutor's role as just taking the register and nothing else. Perhaps some see it as a moral duty or a chance to spend pastoral time with students.

Your contribution

I am interested in hearing your story about being a form tutor: no matter what your opinion. I am interested in the *person* behind the role as well as your concept of the role. This is *your* story, so you can choose how to tell it. I have put a list of ways you could choose to contribute to the project on the attached Consent Form. These range in style, type and scope. I am also happy to organise taped interviews for up to 4 participants if you would find this easier. Your contributions can be as short, quick or long as you wish. You are also free to withdraw from the project at any time.

Some of the following questions may help with your contribution. (These are not compulsory!).

- How, when and *why* did you become a form tutor: was it your own choice?
- Do you feel you have an impact on individual students within your role – what, if anything, does Tutor Time give students that normal lessons cannot?
- Where do you feel the role of form tutor fits within the structure of the school – is there more to it than taking a register?
- Do you get personal/professional respect or satisfaction from being a form tutor?
- Have you ever had training, between teacher training and now, about being a form tutor?
- How do you *feel* about being a form tutor – also, how do you feel about telling your story?
- What do you understand regarding school attendance and the role of form tutors within it?

Confidentiality, Anonymity and Intended Audience

All contributions to the project will be anonymous. In order to achieve this, I may need to make minor alterations to contributions in order to protect identities. However, I will ensure a copy of your contribution, as it may be used in my research, is sent back to you so you have a second chance to ensure you are happy with it.

The intended audience for my research will initially be academic in nature. The final Research Thesis should be available through Southampton University when completed. It is possible that extracts or summaries of the Thesis will be used at a later date within further research or educational publications.

In the short-term, I hope to provide the school with a summary of the specific issues raised in your stories in order to aid with staff development and understanding of attendance issues. You will have an opportunity to tell me though if you do not want your contribution to be used in this way.

For more information

If you have any questions, or for electronic versions of the forms, please contact me. Email: [taken out for confidentiality], Tel: [taken out for confidentiality], or my school pigeonhole.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN TAKING PART, PLEASE FILL IN THE CONSENT FORM ATTACHED.

APPENDIX 4

Consent Form for Form Tutors

CONSENT FORM

Please complete the following and send back to Claire Elhaggagi within 2 weeks via Claire's school pigeon hole or electronically (email: [taken out for confidentiality]).

All information provided on this form will be kept strictly confidential. Your name is required here so that I may confirm with you your chosen details and so I can send you back a copy of your final contribution for you to check. ***Your real name will not be used within any of the actual material produced by the research project.***

YOUR DETAILS

1) Name:……Tutor Group Name (or just Year Group):……..
2) I would prefer to be contacted via (please ***initial*** your chosen option):

☐ a) Email (please state clearly your email address):……...…..
☐ b) School Pigeonhole (please ensure you have provided your name above).
☐ c) Other: (please state details clearly below):
……

3) **CHOSEN CONTRIBUTION METHOD (contributions needed by end of May if possible)**

I would like to contribute through the following method (please ***initial*** your chosen option):

☐ a) **Write a brief diary or notes** describing your time as a form tutor.
☐ **b) Write an email or letter to a fictional friend** who is thinking of becoming a form tutor. (For instance, describe your own experience and whether you would recommend this role).
☐ **c) Describe a 'critical incident'** that has occurred whilst you have been a form tutor. (Something that has involved student welfare or attendance issues).
☐ d) **Construct a piece of creative writing or poem** to express ideas about being a Tutor.
☐ e) T**aped interview** (due to time limits, only available for up to 4 participants. I will contact you further should this method be unavailable.)
☐ f) **Alternative method** (please contact me with your suggestions.)

4) ANONYMITY

Please *initial* each of the following statements that you are happy to agree to. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss anything further.

☐ a) I have read the information sheet regarding this research project and I have had the opportunity to ask further questions.
☐ b) I understand that my contribution may have minor changes made to it to aid with anonymity levels for my own identity or those of others.
☐ **c)** I understand I may choose not to allow such edited versions of my contribution to be used and that I may withdraw from the project at any time.
☐ d) I understand that my name will be kept anonymous.

And, if applicable:

☐ e) I also give permission for my contribution to be used within school staff development materials. I understand that my name will continue to be kept anonymous.

Name: **Signed:** **Date:**

APPENDIX 5

Reply Note 1 to Tutors

Date:

Dear Form Tutor

Many thanks for agreeing to take part in my doctorate research project. I have now received your consent form and made a note of your choice to contribute by:

……..

Time available
Please endeavour to send me your contribution within **four weeks** of receiving this letter.

If you need an extension to this date, please let me know as soon as you can.

Anonymity
Once I have received your contribution, I will ensure it maintains the level of anonymity that you and the project require. I will then send you a copy of the final version for you to check.

Your own welfare
Please feel free to contact me further should you have any questions or issues regarding the project. In addition, should creating your contribution bring about any issues, feelings or emotions that you would like to talk to someone about, please feel free to contact me. There is also the confidential professional advice line run by Employee Advisory Resource (EAR) available. They provide a 24 hour confidential helpline on 0800 243 458.

Thank you once again and I hope you enjoy creating your contribution.

Kind regards,

Claire Elhaggagi

APPENDIX 6

Reply Note 2 to Tutors

Dear Form Tutor

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to my research project. I have received your contribution and ensured it maintains the level of anonymity that you and the project require.

I have attached to this letter a final copy of your contribution with any changes made that were necessary. Please check that you are happy with this final version.

Once you have checked your contribution, please sign the attached form below and send it back to me as soon as you can.

Thank you once again,

Claire Elhaggagi

✂……

STUDENT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: THE FORM TUTOR'S STORY

Name:……

(Please initial the relevant boxes once you are happy with each applicable statement):

- ☐ I have received the final copy of my contribution to the research project being run by Claire Elhaggagi. I am satisfied with any changes made to ensure anonymity criteria are met.
- ☐ I give permission for this version of my contribution to be used within the research project and other relevant educational research/publications.

And, if applicable:

- ☐ I also give permission for this final version of my contribution to be used in any extra summary or report given to the school to aid in staff development and understanding.

Signed:…….
Date:…….

Please send this part of the form back to Claire Elhaggagi via her school pigeonhole or electronically through email ([Taken out for confidentiality]).