

***An Empirical Phenomenological Investigation
of
Procrastinating Behaviour***

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PhD (Humanities)***

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Abstract

A qualitative empirical phenomenological study was undertaken to determine the self-experience of procrastinating behaviour. Five students each gave an account of an occasion when they procrastinated. The resultant protocols were analysed and the Situated Structure of each individual's experience was reported. From these, the General Structure of procrastinating behaviour was determined. A further, novel step was added to the standard methodology, whereby 'themes' were extracted from participant protocols and a 'Composite Reality' of everyday-life procrastination was rendered. Participants' accounts suggest they are concerned the results of intellectual tasks they undertake will be seen as equivalent to their quality of being-as-an-individual: poor work results will be interpreted by important-others as evidence of participants' poor quality of self – which is to be avoided. This study suggests that procrastination is a ploy used by individuals to avoid criticism, by deflecting assessment of their capacity to complete a task well, to instead, what they are capable of when only a limited time is available. Conclusions drawn by the important-others of participants' true ability are thereby confounded. The results achieved in the phenomenological study were compared with others originating from various quantitative studies, and considerable overlap was found. The experiential richness of the phenomenological results point to a worthwhile methodological strategy for future procrastination research.

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Thanks

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I'm almost sorry it's all over ...

***Thanks also to the participants in the study, who took time out to tell me
in detail of their procrastination difficulties, when they really should
have been doing something else, more important ...***

Dedications

***This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Ken and Mary Barratt, with my
love and thanks for their perpetual support and encouragement – and a
quiet place to work, away from everyday reality***

***And of course to Colleen – for her love, belief and ... just being there.
I hope that carries on forever***

Foreword

Although it is possible to trace the origins of the word *procrastination* through its Latin roots (*pro* – towards, *crastinere* – tomorrow) to an era much earlier than the present, this is merely a linguistic relic in relation to the scope of interest generated by the topic in modern times. *Procrastination* is currently a word used in general conversation, as well as being found in a range of publication types – from popular magazines to academic journals. Most people in the developed world are consequently aware of it as a recognisable type of behaviour.

Procrastination as an area of research in psychology has, however, only attracted substantial awareness during the latter part of the twentieth century; and since the early work of pioneers in the field such as Solomon and Rothblum, Ellis and Knaus, and Burka and Yuen in the 1970s and 1980s, there has been much attention devoted to a facet of human behaviour that is as intriguing to those who study it as it is frustrating for those who experience it. Moreover there can be little doubt this subject will continue to be an area of study that will be of importance as more distractions are made available via home computing, an increasingly large part of the workforce who are no longer to be found in the traditional office and consequently need to rely on their own motivation to work from home – as well as students who use the internet to study.

Preliminary studies in procrastination which sought to determine a single root cause of this behaviour have done so with little success. Consequently, a more contemporary view of procrastination is that it is a multi-dimensional condition. Yet whilst there has been considerable experimentation undertaken to, for example, correlate procrastination with other behaviours or explain it in

terms of a personality type, as yet this approach has met with similarly incomplete success.

Within the existing experimental milieu then, the purpose of the current research has been twofold: Firstly, to use a phenomenologically-based methodology to investigate the procrastinator's experience of their inability to make progress with important tasks, and thereby attempt to achieve an understanding of the nature and essence of this difficulty; and secondly, to compare the results of the phenomenological study with those achieved using other means in order to both assess the phenomenological method's suitability for further research in this area, as well as to discover if further insights might be gained from the results already gained from those other methodologies.

It is hoped that using this approach, much may be learned both of the very personal dimension of the experience of procrastination, and light be cast on the meaning of the experience and aetiology of procrastinating behaviour through the use of this method.

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An Overview of Contemporary Research into Procrastination

Definitions of procrastination are numerous, but Solomon and Rothblum's (1984) frequently-cited description that it is 'the act of needlessly delaying tasks to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort' (p. 503) or Ellis and Knaus' (1977) view that it represents 'a failure to initiate or complete a task or activity in a preset time' (p. 7) illustrate a widely-held understanding of the behaviour simply, yet succinctly. Later definitions developed these notions to describe procrastination as a postponement (Lay, 1986) and dilatory, unnecessary and counterproductive (Schouwenberg, 1992). Milgram, Sroloff, and Rosenbaum (1988) noted the procrastinator's tendency to delay everyday tasks which were regarded as onerous, and instead make progress with those that were perceived as enjoyable. This was echoed by van Eerde (2000) who wrote of task delay as being characterised by 'distraction with more pleasant activities or thoughts' (p. 373). More recently, Schraw, Olafson, and Wadkins (2007) noted a sense of purpose in their definition of procrastination, when they wrote of 'Intentionally deferring or delaying work which must be completed.' (p.13)

Generally then, throughout the literature, any definition of procrastination will include some or all of the following:

- There is an intention to commence a task but a delay in doing so
- The delay in starting is not necessitated by the task itself
- Emotional discomfort is occasioned by the delay
- The task that is delayed is viewed as onerous
- The delaying behaviour is repeated in other situations

Such behaviour may occur in any area of the procrastinator's everyday living, including their personal and social life, in education, or the workplace. The immediate and long-term consequences of the behaviour can be serious and cause considerable life-disruption. Common-sense tells us that those who do not keep to agreements, appointments or deadlines may experience a range of consequences – from missing personal engagements, to having important relationships jeopardised or lost; from failing academic projects, to being forced to drop out of higher education; or from not meeting work deadlines, to being dismissed for failing to perform adequately (Balkis & Duru, 2007). Research has moreover suggested a link between procrastination and a decreased likelihood that persons will engage in important personal matters such as so-called 'health behaviours', which include having medical checkups or failing to investigate health difficulties to the detriment of their well-being, and which can contribute to increased stress levels and poor health quality (Sirois, 2004; Sirois, 2007; Stead, Shanahan, & Neufeld, 2010; Tice & Baumeister, 1997).

It is important to note, however, that not all instances of purposeful delay will lead to negative consequences, and should not therefore necessarily be considered as procrastination. There are occasions when it is preferable to commence a task at a future time when it is expected that fuller information will be available. Choi and Moran (2009) and Chu and Choi (2005) suggest there is a type of procrastination they refer to as *active* procrastination, which will lead to desirable outcomes. Ferrari (1994) makes a similar distinction between *functional* procrastination which can have benefits, such as for example not paying one's taxes until the last moment, and that which is *dysfunctional* – in that those tax payments become overdue so a fine for late submission is incurred. But Pychyl (2009) noted in an article in *Psychology Today* that any talk of *active* procrastination (and therefore, we must assume,

functional procrastination) is borne out of a misunderstanding of the terminology: active procrastination was in fact simple, beneficial delay – and that procrastination *per se* is, by definition, an entirely different entity.

Unnecessary, undesired delay is then an impediment in our personal lives. It is also important, however, to understand that such behaviour will not take place in a social vacuum. In this regard, Knaus (2000) described *personal procrastination* and *social procrastination*. The former refers to behaviour such as being late for personal appointments, submitting application etc. forms after due date. – and generally relates to those activities which affect only the individual. In contrast, *social procrastination* relates to a type of activity in which delay will cause inconvenience to others – such as an individual not completing their part of a group project in good time. Importantly though, these two categories of procrastination should not necessarily be viewed as mutually exclusive, and there is possibility for overlap – as in the case of personal appointment-keeping, for example, where if one is late for an appointment, another will be kept waiting.

There is also little doubt that increased use of the internet is at the modern forefront of ways in which to procrastinate, as shown in a South African study (Thatcher, Wretschko & Fridjhon, 2008) which investigated online procrastination and the difficulty that internet users had in maintaining a state of ‘flow’, which is described as productive involvement in a task, rather than slipping into the procrastinating behaviour referred to as ‘PIU’ – Problematic Internet Usage. PIU is moreover emerging as an area of study that stands alone (Aboujaoude, 2010) with its own assessment scales (Chen, Weng & Su, 2003; Young, 1998) and attempts to diagnose it in terms of a distinct DSM- IV category (Ko, Yen, Chen, C. C., 2005; Ko, Yen, Chen, P. H., 2009).

Estimates of the incidence of procrastination in the general populace vary, although Ellis and Knaus (1977) suggest that procrastination is 'statistically, quite normal' (p. 8). Other researchers claim that 20-25% of European, North and South American men and women report that they procrastinate (Ferrari, Diaz-Morales, O'Callaghan, Diaz, & Argumedo, 2007; Harriott & Ferrari, 1996). This is entirely credible if we consider that it is a notable individual who does everything at exactly the moment they had planned to.

Research also shows that procrastination knows no barriers to continent. Ferrari, O'Callaghan, and Newbegin (2005) tested the incidence of procrastination in the US, UK and Australia and found no significant differences across these countries, leading them to conclude that 'results indicated that chronic procrastination prevalence is common among westernized, individualistic, English-speaking countries'. This conclusion was extended by Klassen, Ang, Chong, Krawchuk, Huan, Wong, & Yeo (2010) who found similar results when comparing students from Canada and Singapore. Interestingly, however, in a separate study, Klassen et al. (2009) found a higher incidence of procrastination amongst Singaporean than Canadian *adolescents*. Ferrari, Johnson, and McCown, (1995) showed that procrastination did not occur differentially across race or gender, and the former of these was conclusions was supported in Prohaska, Morrill, Atilas, and Perez (2005), who examined a population of non-traditional college students and found no reported differences in academic procrastination in students based on ethnicity. Ferrari et al. (1995) also echoed earlier research relating to academic procrastination which indicated no significant difference in the incidence of procrastination between males and females (Beswick, Rothblum, & Mann, 1988; Ferrari, 1992; McKean, 1994; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). However a more recent study (Özer, Demir & Ferrari, 2009) amongst Turkish students, found that of the 52% of students who self-

reported frequent academic procrastination, more male students reported this tendency than did females. Özer et al. (2009) further found that significantly more female students reported task procrastination as a result of fear of failure or laziness, and more males reported procrastinating behaviour as a result of 'risk taking and rebellion against control' than did females.

A Spanish study (Rosário, Costa, Núñez, González-Pienda Solano, & Valle, 2009) of school children in their last three years of compulsory education noted that scholars were less likely to procrastinate if their parents' education level was higher, and that this was a tendency which increased with the number of siblings they had.

From an academic-task standpoint, procrastination has been suggested to be a greater problem for students in the early rather than later stages of their academic careers. Miller (2008) noted that first-year students were assessed to display more procrastinating behaviours than those in their fourth year of study. However in a study that displayed quite contrary results, the tendency to delay on academic matters was shown to increase as students become more senior (Onwuegbuzie, 2000a; Semb, Glick, & Spencer, 1979). No research has been found to have investigated these diametrically-opposed views, and one is left to ponder if the nature of the behaviour seems to be conflicting because different experiences were being examined. Could this result be due to the fact that in the Miller (2008) research into early years of study when failure rates are higher, students were less sure of their final career path or simply unprepared for higher study, and were thus merely less competent to make progress?

An exception to the generally ubiquitous nature of procrastination was discovered by Hammer and Ferrari (2002), who recorded that 'blue collar'

workers reported significantly lower levels of chronic procrastination than did 'white collar' workers, but noted that speculation as to the reason for this difference centred on the greater academic-orientated nature of white collar work.

A questionnaire-based study (Dietz, Hofer, & Fries; 2007) of 704 students in the German educational system investigated the notion that procrastination should be expected as a result of values existent in contemporary society. This reflected the researchers' surmise that contemporary society was more geared to a striving for leisure activities, and reduced structured routines for academic tasks. Procrastinating behaviour was, they suggested, rather to be considered a societal-cultural consequence, rather than an individual failing.

It is noteworthy that in normal adults, procrastination is not associated with attention deficit disorder (Ferrari, 2000), although procrastination has been shown to be significantly associated with AD/HD populations (Ferrari & Sanders, 2006; Miller 2008). Furthermore a study by Klaasen, Krawchuk, Lynch and Rajani (2008) noted that procrastinating behaviour amongst undergraduates displayed a significantly higher incidence of self-reported procrastination amongst students with learning difficulties, than those without.

It is certainly true that the majority of procrastination research undertaken relates to academic procrastination, described by Rothblum, Solomon, and Murakami (1986) as the 'tendency to (a) always or nearly always put off academic tasks, and (b) always or nearly always experience problematic anxiety associated with procrastination.' (p. 387). Solomon and Rothblum (1984) claimed that 46% of students reported that 'they nearly always or always procrastinate on writing a term paper' (p. 505) though this figure has been put at as high as 70% by others (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Harriott & Ferrari,

1996; Hill, Hill, Chabot & Barrall, 1978; Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In addition, students at a selective college displayed higher levels of procrastination than those at a non-selective college (Ferrari, Keane, Wolfe & Beck, 1998).

There are various devices used to detect the incidence and intensity of procrastination. Those most frequently used are self-report measures such as the PAS (Procrastination Assessment Scale) and PASS (Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students) (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Other well-known tests such as the General Procrastination Scale (GPS) (Lay, 1986), and The Procrastination Scale (PS) (Tuckman, 1991) have been standardised over many years of usage. More recent and bespoke devices include a revision of the Procrastination Inventory (PI) by Johnson, Green, and Kleuver (2000) which has been found to be useful in research into senior academic procrastination.

A criticism levelled at the ability of these tests to reveal the truth about procrastinating behaviour however lies in the fact that they are self-report devices. It is certainly the case that deceit – whether of self in the belief that plans that are made will be adhered to on a present-time occasion (Steel, Brothen, & Wanbach, 2001) or on any future occasion (Lay, Edwards, Parker, & Endler, 1989) or, for example, the deceit of others in making untruthful or other excuses for late submission of work (Ferrari & Beck, 1998; Perina, 2002; Roig & De Tommaso, 1995) are integral parts of the practice of procrastination. Therefore the question must be asked: if procrastinators deceive themselves about their plans to complete a task, and others about the reasons they have not – why should their self-report replies made to researchers be any less deceitful!?

Early debate into the nature of procrastination centred around consideration of whether it is best understood as a situational response to particular circumstances, or if it was, in fact, a trait that was able to be identified across a range of circumstances. As such, the question is then one of whether the delay is dependent upon the task which is to be undertaken, or if it is instead the result of the habitual world-view of the procrastinator. Both of these views would seem to be supported: it is certainly the case that people who display a tendency to procrastinate in some situations, will not procrastinate in others (Sénécal, Lavoie, & Koestner, 1997). However, Steel (2007) notes in his meta-analytic and theoretical review, his belief that there is enough research relating to this issue to suggest that procrastination has adequate situational stability across time to be able to be seen as a personality trait.

Another view of the trait vs. situation distinction is to conceive of procrastination as *behavioural* or *decisional*. *Behavioural* procrastination is described as a repeating cycle of seemingly inescapable delaying behaviour, whereas *decisional* procrastination is viewed as an inability to make choices between options that are available. Lay (1986) wrote that *decisional* procrastination is an example of cognitive procrastination 'which has a distinct typology in comparison to the *behavioral* forms, such as the more commonly studied everyday procrastination.' (p. 480).

The reasons that people give for their procrastination are then seen broadly as originating 'externally' or 'internally' to themselves – meaning due either to factors outside of their person and therefore outside their control, or alternatively, due to their attitude towards the task which must be completed. Examples of 'external' reasons to procrastinate can be as prosaic as simple task-aversiveness – such as an unpleasant or onerous task which must be completed, or alternatively, unpleasant circumstances under which the task

must be undertaken. 'Internal' reasons, however, are deemed to reflect the world-view of the procrastinator and are, therefore, the subject matter with which procrastination research concerns itself.

'Internal' reasons to procrastinate are generally described as relating to one of three types, namely: *avoidant*, *decisional*, or *arousal* procrastination.

Avoidant procrastination is the avoidance of doing something which is not relished – but it is important to distinguish this from the previously-described action of onerous or aversive task-avoidance. Avoidant procrastination is deemed to have at its heart a fear of failure: that the avoidant procrastinator will i) avoid tackling tasks they believe will be revealing of their low ability (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Rothblum, 1990); or more subtly ii) as a strategy to avoid self-awareness (Ferrari, Wolfe, Wesley, Schoff, & Beck, 1995). *Decisional* procrastination is defined as being due to 'cognitive failures' such as simple forgetting, but also refers to the procrastinator's concerns about their potential lack of understanding or ability concerning the task, which in turn is related to low self-esteem (Effert & Ferrari, 1989). *Arousal* procrastination is also known as 'thrill-seeking' behaviour, and describes delaying starting working on a task until the last moment in order to experience the heightened rush of adrenalin it is claimed will accompany the last-minute attempt to complete a task on time (Brindhaupt & Shin, 2001; Ferrari, Wolfe et al., 1995). This arousal response has, moreover, been viewed as an adaptive response and a way of achieving increased efficiency (Schraw et al., 2007). Interestingly, however, this view is contrary to Krohne's (1989) statement that avoidance is evidence of intolerance to arousal. Yet academic procrastinators, in particular, claim a greater sense of challenge and peak experience prior to exams (Lay et al., 1989) and state that they perform better under pressure, or that their thoughts are more focussed and

that the work they produce will be of a better quality if they delay beginning a task until the last moment (Chu & Choi, 2005; Simpson & Pychyl, 2009). Ferrari (2001) however suggests that the benefits of the 'adrenalin rush' described by last-minute performers are seemingly not available to all last-minute procrastinators, as chronic procrastinators were shown not to perform as well under high cognitive-load conditions, as non-procrastinators.

In a study of Turkish adults, (Ferrari, Özer, & Demir, 2009) 17.5% were assessed as *decisional* procrastinators, 14.7% as *arousal* procrastinators, and 13.8% as *avoidant* procrastinators. This total of 46% of the sample population who were assessed as displaying procrastinating behaviour (of any kind) is within limits suggested by previously-reported studies. (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Harriott & Ferrari, 1996; Hill et al., 1978; Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Ferrari et al. (2009) reported no significant differences for gender or age in decisional, avoidant or arousal styles of procrastination. However a study (Díaz-Morales, Cohen, & Ferrari, 2008) of 1027 Spanish adults indicated that avoidant procrastination was predicted by a passive, accommodating type, as well as those who were gregarious and outgoing; and negatively predicted in the case of those who displayed a conforming behavioural style.

Interestingly though, despite the preceding, more recent research (Steel 2010) has claimed that when the notion of the avoidant, arousal and decisional model is investigated 'meta-analytically and then factor analytically, using a large sample exceeding 4,000 respondents. The evidence does not support the tripartite model, particularly the avoidant and arousal distinction, instead indicating that procrastination is indeed an irrational delay.' (p. 926)

As stated earlier, the majority of procrastination research has been conducted not only *by* the academic community, but *upon* it, and students have been shown to procrastinate repeatedly, despite their knowledge of the consequences (Conti, 2000; Saddler & Buley, 1999). Academic procrastination is considered typically to be situation-specific (Burns, Dittman, Nguyen, & Mitchelson, 2000) but students will procrastinate in all areas of their academic courses.

A higher incidence of procrastination in the academic context was however noted in tasks which relate to writing essays (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2001; Klassen, et al., 2010). Solomon & Rothblum (1984) had found that term papers were procrastinated over more than was exam study, and in a later experiment showed that in the hierarchy of procrastinating behaviour, term papers were delayed over most, followed by readings, study for exams and administrative matters (Rothblum et al., 1986). Schraw et al. (2007) found that when writing essays, procrastinating students would spend less time researching the paper than non-procrastinators and would be left with less time for revisions. This lesser amount of time spent researching their paper may however also be understood in terms of Onwuegbuzie's (2000b) experiment which found there was a positive correlation between procrastination and anxiety at going to the library!

Some research has sought to explain late starting of essays by procrastinators in terms of lower standards of achievement acceptable to them (Saddler & Buley, 1999). Similarly, some procrastinating students who received adequate or good grades for their papers felt that extra time or work put into the paper would not have improved its grade, even if they felt that the end result would be a paper that was of a better quality. Others were in fact

able to construe that their delaying behaviour had been rewarded by good grades (Saddler & Buley, 1999).

Student procrastination has been shown to be likely when there is heightened expectation of evaluation (Senécal et al., 1997) and more specifically, if there was a perceived threat of negative evaluation (Saddler & Buley, 1999). This tendency was also shown in an experiment in which procrastinators in a high evaluation threat group delayed returning essays significantly more than those in a low evaluation threat group (Bui, 2007).

Attempts to understand the reasons people delay unnecessarily are legion. Amongst the simplest of explanations of procrastinators' inability to commence tasks is that they have poor scheduling abilities. This early view was the basis of Knaus' (1979) suggested cure for procrastinating behaviour, that sufferers would be helped by making lists and schedules. There is no doubt that this seems a sensible understanding of the problem – as Burka & Yuen (1983) wrote: 'On the surface, procrastination appears to be a rather straightforward problem of poor time management. If you organised your time better and used it more efficiently, you wouldn't be procrastinating.' (p 147). But as they note later in their book, appealingly simple as this interpretation might be, there seems to be more to procrastination than simply poor time management.

Because the study of procrastination is, whilst plentiful, a relatively youthful one, there is – apart possibly from between the covers of self-help books – still ample room for debate as to the origin and consequent treatment of the condition. In the academic context, the current state of understanding of the aetiology allows, despite procrastinators' apparent difficulties with deadlines (Milgram, Marshevsky, & Sadeh, 1995) and punctuality (Lay, 1986; Rothblum

et al., 1986; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), that the condition is presently viewed as more than mere poor time-management, and is acknowledged as being comprised by behavioural, cognitive, and affective components (Ferrari, Johnson, et al., 1995; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

In fact, contrary to the view of procrastinators as poor time-keepers, although it may be the case that procrastinators start a task later than non-procrastinators, as will be seen in the research that follows, the ability of procrastinating students to comply with deadlines is frequently on a par with those who do not procrastinate. Moreover 'lateness' in starting might merely be a preference for a different hour to commence. Pychyl, Morin, and Salmon (2000) and Ferrari, Harriott, Evans, Lecik-Michna, and Wenger (1997) have suggested that procrastinators merely prefer to begin daily activities later in the day rather than first thing in the morning; a tendency which has been referred to elsewhere as 'eveningness' (Hess, Sherman & Goodman, 2000). The tendency to eveningness has however been described elsewhere (Digdon & Howell, 2008) as having a positive relation to both low self-control as well as procrastination. Díaz-Morales et al. (2008) explored this temporal relationship with the time of day that a person believes they operate best further, and examined how 'morningness' (Smith, Reilly, & Midkiff, 1989) related specifically to decisional and avoidant styles of procrastination. Morningness was found to be negatively related to avoidant procrastination, but this was not so in the case of decisional procrastination.

As has been suggested, a principle and obvious reason for delaying the commencement of a task is its perceived aversiveness (Blunt & Pychyl, 2000; Lay, 1990, 1992; Milgram, Batori, & Mowrer, 1993; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). At first glance, it would seem reasonable to not include such a condition as really having much to do with procrastinating behaviour: delaying

commencement of an aversive task might seem, if not sensible, at least prudent – in that if the person was fortunate, the necessity to perform the task might disappear. Additionally, a more subtle and thoroughgoing apprehension of the notion of aversiveness can be achieved if it is not necessarily equated with ‘dirty’ or ‘physically onerous’ – and it is instead considered that boring or difficult tasks are seen as just as aversive as arduous or dirty ones (Senécal et al., 1997). This view was supported by Vodanovich and Rupp (1999) who found that those who scored high on the Boredom Proneness Scale (BPS) developed by Farmer and Sundberg (1986), also scored high on Tuckman’s (1991) Procrastination Scale test (PS).

Other reasons for delayed commencement that have received research attention are *fear of failure* and *perfectionism*. Fear of failure is an anxiety that causes a person not to commence a task because they fear that they will not be able to complete it adequately (Schouwenberg, 1992; Senécal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995; Rothblum et al., 1986). Fear of failure has also been linked to evaluation threat and low self-esteem (Schubert-Walker & Stewart, 2000) and self-oriented perfectionism is described as an unwillingness to commence or complete a task which it is not felt will meet with the performer’s own rigidly high standards. (Flett, Blankstein, Hewitt, & Koledin, 1992; Onwuegbuzie, 2000a; Saddler & Buley, 1999;).

Not all instances of perfectionism should however be seen as indicative of procrastination. Terry-Short, Owens, Slade, and Dewey (1995) developed the Positive and Negative Perfectionism scale, or PNP. Their assumption was that whilst perfectionism could be viewed negatively as a neurotic striving towards a state that was in reality unobtainable, it was also possible to conceive of perfectionism in a positive light when it was considered to be associated with a wish to perform as best as was possible. For example, one

can imagine the case of an athlete trying to run as fast or jump as high as their physical limitations will allow as a positive interpretation of such action – rather than it being driven by the negative fear of failure. Seo (2008) demonstrated this in a survey of 692 college students when it was shown that the students who had displayed a high level of self-oriented perfectionism procrastinated less than those who did not.

Procrastinators show higher levels of negative affect (Beswick et al., 1988; Flett, Blankstein, & Martin, 1995; Lay, 1995; Pychyl, Lee, Thibodeau, & Blunt, 2000) and the negative affect most frequently associated with procrastination is anxiety. Procrastinators have been shown to display higher average ratings of anxiety than the general population (Miller, 2008); a general and pervasive feeling of worry (Ferrari, 1991; Rothblum et al., 1986); as well as more specifically the social anxiety that they will lose face in the presence of peers as a result of poor performance (Steel, Brothen, & Wambach, 2001). In the case of students, anxiety is mostly related to writing a paper (Fritzsche, Rapp-Young, & Hickson, 2003) or test situations (Beswick et al., 1988; Lay et al., 1989; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

Procrastinators associate increased levels of anxiety in particular to the previously-cited fear of failure (Ferrari & Tice, 2000), but anxiety levels are also reported to be raised when students merely admit to themselves that they are procrastinating (McCown & Johnson, 1991).

Despite this seeming preponderance of evidence to the contrary, some research has claimed that anxiety is not a major factor in procrastination (Lay & Silverman, 1996). This is understandable if procrastination is conceived of as being, rather than an anxiety-producing activity, instead as a means to escape anxiety. Knaus (1979) suggested that whilst in the act of

procrastinating, a person has contrived a means to not worry about the task they are avoiding. It is in fact only later, when the results of the delay must be contended with, that anxiety will arise (Pychyl, Lee, et al., 2000). This is borne out further by findings that anxiety is in fact claimed to be initiated only when deadlines loom (Tice & Baumeister, 1997) and there is no remaining alternative but to engage with the required task.

Other reported affective consequences of procrastinating behaviour are depression (Beswick, et al., 1988; McCown, Petzel & Rupert, 1987; Saddler & Sacks, 1993), dejection (Lay, 1995; Lay & Schouwenberg, 1993) and pessimism (Lay, 1995). Research has shown however, that rather than being a source of depression or anxiety, procrastination merely increases and liberates an already-existing tendency (Flett, et al., 1995; Milgram, Gehrman, & Keinan, 1992).

Overall, procrastination is seen as having an adverse effect on health and feelings of well-being (Milgram, Dangour, & Raviv, 1992; Tice & Baumeister, 1997). The consequences of this is that lower work quality is produced (Tuckman, 1991) or that lower grades are achieved and sufferers express less satisfaction with the work produced (Fritzsche, Rapp-Young, et al., 2003.)

Additionally, displeasure with the work-object they produce is not the only discontent for procrastinators: their dissatisfaction extends to their self-view. Both academically and in everyday life, procrastinators are found to make more favourable attributions to peer non-procrastinators than to peer procrastinators, ascribing fewer resources and lower character ratings to the procrastinators (Ferrari & Patel, 2004). Moreover, because procrastinators showed dissatisfaction with others who delayed, it was considered this might

reflect their more private view of themselves. This conclusion was supported in an experiment by Ferrari, Driscoll, and Diaz-Morales (2007), where procrastinators were examined according to Self-Discrepancy Theory and showed greater actual-ought discrepancies than non-procrastinators. This meant that procrastinators demonstrated differences between how they surmised they *did* behave, as opposed to how they felt they *ought* to behave. This, the researchers claimed, showed that procrastinators held negative attributes regarding their self-concept and self-presentational characteristics. This is in line with procrastinators' experiencing a general sense of failure and of self-criticism, as reported by Semb et al. (1979).

In comparison with non-procrastinators, procrastinators are characterised by lower self-confidence (Beswick et al., 1988); lower self-esteem (Beswick et al., 1988; Burka & Yuen, 1983), higher social anxiety (Ottens, 1982) and greater levels of neurosis (Schouwenberg & Lay, 1995). Ferrari, Wolfe, et al. (1995) found procrastination to be negatively associated with self-esteem, internal locus-of-control, and personal standards, and positively associated with task avoidant behaviour, perfectionism, and irrational beliefs.

A number of researchers also refer to procrastinators' tendency towards high levels of guilt (Knaus, 1979; Pychyl et al., 2000; Schraw et al., 2007). However research by Fee and Tangney (2000) distinguished between *guilt* which they described as being a negative affect related to a particular task, and *shame*, which was seen as a more general statement about the person's relationship with their lived-world. Fee and Tangney described shame as being more inescapable for one who procrastinates than was guilt, and their correlational analyses demonstrated that shame-proneness was related to procrastination, whereas guilt-proneness was not.

More positively, procrastinators show a capacity for hope (Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) and may view their procrastination as a positive attitude that has enabled them to self-regulate negative emotions such as anxiety or fear (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994). Other research has even shown that procrastinators can be viewed as motivated students who do not intend to study less, but simply study later in the cycle of the academic term or year due to their greater inability to avoid social distractions (Sénécal, Julien, & Guay, 2003).

With regard to procrastination as a recurring behaviour across varying temporal or situational states, much research has been undertaken to understand the behaviour in terms of correlations with personality traits as described by such testing devices as the Costa and McCrae NEO PI-R and NEO-FFI (1992), or the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) (1968).

McCrae and Costa (2003) refer to the 'Big-5' personality factors of: (corollaries in brackets) Neuroticism (Emotional Stability), Extraversion (Introversion), Agreeableness (Disagreeableness), Conscientiousness (Lack of Conscientiousness), and Openness to Experience (Closedness to Experience). Each of these main traits is further described by 6 subordinate and more-detailed facets.

Procrastinators' self-report analyses found that a tendency to procrastinate correlated strongly negatively with Conscientiousness and positively but less strongly with Neuroticism (Di Fabio, 2006; Johnson & Bloom, 1995; Schouwenberg & Lay, 1995; van Eerde, 2004). More specifically, Milgram and Tenne (2000) reported that of the Costa-McCrae personality factors, most of the variance for decisional procrastination was explained by the Neuroticism factor and for task avoidance by the Conscientiousness factor.

Additionally, McCown and Johnson (1991) showed that Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Psychotism were related to procrastinating self-reports using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (1975).

Thus far we have examined procrastinating behaviour from the standpoint of its purported constituent descriptive elements and their relation to each other. However it must be accepted that any evidence that is considered to be of consequence when attempting to understand procrastinating behaviour is the result of the theoretical orientation that has been adopted to produce or interpret it – and it is moreover only by way of an examination of evidence through the glass of the theoretical perspective which produced it, that any value in regard to a notion of ‘cure’ is able to be apparent.

The reality is that whilst it is true that there is no substantial theoretical consensus with regard to the cause or causes of procrastination, within a topic that has such a large amount of potential commercial self-help literature appeal, authors are particularly keen to distinguish their thinking from others’ – no matter how arbitrary any such distinction might be.

The three broad areas of explanation – and consequently, where we might search for a remedy for procrastinating behaviour – are firstly behaviourist or cognitive explanations, secondly those that admit conscious choice in the strategy and which are further developed by locus-of-control theories, and thirdly those which have a more markedly motivational and therefore potentially introspective content.

It is feasible that cognitive theorists might find it frustrating to be categorised with those of a behaviourist bent, yet the important similarity in regard of procrastinating behaviour in these two views is that there is less concern about the cause for procrastination than there is about simply removing it

from the human repertoire of behaviours. Behaviourist and cognitive approaches to an understanding of procrastination are concerned with the observable behaviour of delay and a physical, visibly identifiable instance of it, rather than any innate struggle which might lie behind the inactivity. Briefly, behaviourism 'purports to explain human and animal behavior in terms of external physical stimuli, responses, learning histories, and (for certain types of behavior) reinforcements.' <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/behaviorism>

The behaviourist approach to solving the problem of procrastination is then a requirement to identify the problem behaviour, isolate its essential constituent parts – and then remove these from the individual's personal catalogue of automatic responses. Removal of the behaviour as an automatic response to circumstance is achieved by a reinforcement programme designed to help replace the disadvantageous behaviour with a preferred one.

A cognitive perspective on the understanding of procrastination has a similar interest in modifying the behaviour of the procrastinator, though the automatic *thought processes* by which the condition is characterised are considered to be of greater consequence than a mere response-and-reward scenario. A cognitive understanding of procrastination is that the procrastinator's perception of time and reward is different from that of non-procrastinators (Lay, 1988; Lay & Schouwenberg, 1993). Zarick and Stonebraker (2009) refer in their experimental write-up to a conclusion drawn by O'Donoghue and Rabin in 1999 that 'It is as if such students have multiple 'selves' in which the preferences of their current selves are inconsistent with the preferences of their future selves'. (p. 214). From their own research they confirm this view and state that 'Although the students are aware of the assignment on Monday, they intentionally wait. Their current selves value their own well-being over the well-being of their future selves and make choices that do not always maximize their long-run best interests.' (ibid.)

Whereas in the behaviourist context, whilst it is true that one of the techniques to assist behaviour change is to visualise oneself in the future without the difficulties associated with procrastination, that therapy is very much rooted in the present: in that it concentrates on the operant reinforcement of the behaviour of not procrastinating *now*, in the belief that if sufficient 'now' occurrences of non-delay are engineered, then the new, favoured behaviour will take automatic precedence.

The cognitive approach to minimising and then removing the effect of procrastinating behaviour is to emphasise the aforementioned difference between distal and proximal goals, and to work with the principle that people are more likely to grasp immediate, proximal rewards in preference to longer-term distal ones – even if it is the case that they believe that the longer-term rewards will be ultimately preferable. McCown (1986) stated the cognitive view that procrastination is a habit which is learned and which develops from a preference for pleasurable activities and short-term rewards, over longer term ones.

Other research which seeks to explain procrastinators' preference for proximal reward describes them as having a different temporal orientation to others, in that they have a reduced focus on the future. Jackson, Fritch, Nagasaka, and Pope (2003) also conceived that procrastinators had greater focus on the present time and the benefits it could provide. It is noteworthy however that the researchers had also expected that procrastinators would have a more hedonistic approach to the present, whereas instead, they were found to show high levels of fatalism, and in addition, have negative feelings about the past. The former, hedonistic expectation was however borne out in a later and more subtle experiment by Ferrari and Díaz-Morales (2007) when, whilst a negative association of present-fatalistic time orientation with

avoidant procrastination was found, a positive association of arousal procrastination with present-hedonist time orientation was also revealed. Procrastination was further found to have a negative association with a future time orientation.

There is further evidence that procrastinators have a different temporal view in Ferrari, Mason, and Hammer (2006), who found that when describing a task they delayed on in the past, in comparison to a present deadline or one they anticipated in the future, procrastinators were more likely to view tasks on which they had delayed in the past as having required more effort and having had less clearly-defined goals than those in the present or future.

There is, moreover, no doubt that treatment programmes based on a behaviourist or cognitive theoretical substrate can be effective, and that after repeated trials, procrastinators can be encouraged to wait for longer-term rewards (Schweitzer & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1988).

Cognitive variables other than time vs. reward perception have also been found to be strong predictors of procrastinating behaviour; for example irrational beliefs (Beswick, Rothblum, & Mann, 1988; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), attribution style (Rothblum et al., 1986), self-esteem (Beswick et al., 1988), optimism (Lay, 1988; Lay & Burns, 1991), and self-handicapping strategies (Ferrari, 1992) – and these are elements of human response in which it is claimed a more sophisticated approach to cure than mere future reward scenarios might reside.

In a theoretical development which can be seen as marking the second broad theoretical area of explanation of procrastination, its nature is instead understood in terms of conscious, active choices that are made, rather than

being an automatic response to stimulus. Albert Bandura (1986) conceived of personal achievement of goals in terms of 'Self-Efficacy', which he described as a person's ability to control elements of their everyday world and derive personal satisfaction from that capacity.

In a later description, Bandura (1994) wrote:

'Self-Efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-Efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.' (p. 71)

Self-Efficacy is then understood as a self-referential activity that centres around a person's beliefs about their ability to perform activities at a certain level of ability, as well as the consequent effects those actions will have on their lives. Self-Efficacy in self-motivated study has been shown to be strongly negatively associated with procrastination (Klassen, Krawchuk & Rajani, 2008; Tan, Ang, Klassen, Lay See Yeo, Wong, Huan & Wan Har Chong, 2008).

The concept of Self-Efficacy entails two further assumptions: that people are able to control and decide the level at which they will perform, and that their level of performance will be the means to shape, affect and contribute to the enjoyment of their lives. In relation to procrastinating behaviour, Bandura saw the pursuit of Self-Efficacy as residing in a person's cognitive and motivational processes. Cognitively, Bandura claimed that a strong sense of Self-Efficacy – namely achievement-orientation and the successful solving of life's daily

problems – would contribute to a sense of well-being. High Self-Efficacy would also result in positive motivational feelings as a result of challenges met rather than procrastinated over, and would further result in a sense of high self-worth and self-esteem.

An appreciation of self-esteem as a factor in the process of self-realisation lends a very human dimension to our understanding of why we behave the way we do. Self-esteem is variable and procrastination has been linked with low self-esteem (Berry, 1975; Burka & Yuen, 1983; Effert & Ferrari, 1989; Ferrari, 2000; Owens & Newbegin, 1997; Schubert-Walker & Stewart, 2000). Importantly though, the feelings of positive self-worth and high self-esteem that strong Self-Efficacy is characterised by are not static in this sense – they are in a dynamic relationship with a lived reality that must include task initiation, persistence and achievement – or lack of it. Sources of Self-Efficacy are referred to as ‘mastery experiences’, where persons succeed in goals they set themselves. Persons who have high procrastination scores, however, were found to be related negatively to a mastery-approach orientation and positively to a mastery-avoidance goal orientation. (Howell & Watson, 2007).

Tuckman and Sexton (1992) also found there to be an inverse relationship between efficacy-orientation and procrastination, and surmised that it was efficacy-orientation which mediated between the task environment and the performance of the task – and that lack of efficacy therefore resulted in procrastination. This view was supported with regard to academic procrastination by Ferrari, Parker and Ware (1992).

In what can be conceived of as further development in the understanding of procrastination as a non-automatic response behaviours, are ‘locus-of-control’ orientations. At the heart of the various locus-of-control theoretical

standpoints is the notion that there are individual differences in the extent to which it is believed that innate factors and the environment in which we operate affect our actions. This *intrinsic* vs. *extrinsic* explanation has given rise to a number of theoretical views, but the original basis for these is generally accepted to be Rotter's (1954) Social Learning Theory of 'expectancy values'. Rotter believed that persons with high expectancy values, i.e. high locus-of-control, would have high intrinsic motivations – meaning that they would view their ability to achieve the reward that was perceived as being available for the successful completion of a task as largely dependent upon the behaviour which they displayed in pursuit of it. Those with low expectancy values would have a greater external locus-of-control, and consequently believe that rather than their behaviour determining the outcome of a situation and therefore the likelihood of them achieving a possible reward, it would instead be external, environmental factors over which they had no control that would determine the outcome.

Research has supported this view directly, and students revealed as having high internal locus-of-control were found not to be high procrastinators, and would both start and complete work sooner than those who had a high external locus-of-control (Janssen & Carton, 1999). This high internal locus-of-control, non-procrastinating tendency was confirmed in further, later research which also showed that students with internally-orientated locus-of-control had less test anxiety and higher academic grades than those who were externally-orientated (Carden, Bryant, & Moss, 2004). It was also found that procrastinators would be more likely to attribute exam success to external, uncontrollable factors – such as luck in questions asked, for example – rather than internal character factors, thereby suggesting increased external locus-of-control for procrastinators generally (Brownlow & Reasinger, 2000; Flett et al., 1992; Rothblum et al., 1986).

A development of locus-of-control theory which sought to explain such behaviour was Attribution Theory, proposed initially by Heider (1958) and developed by Weiner (1974, 1980, 1986) and in Jones, Kannouse, Kelley, Nisbett, Valins, and Weiner (1972), which stated that behaviour was not only explained in terms of internal or external motivators, but that people would be caused to change their behaviour based on the attributions that they made about their and others' observed behaviour (Rothblum et al., 1986). Locus-of-control theory is developed by Attribution Theory in that persons are conceived of as being aware of the fact that assumptions and explanations about situations are *learned* – and are consequently therefore *re-learnable* in a different way. Having considered that self-esteem is affected by feelings of Self-Efficacy, which are in turn affected by locus-of-control, a third element, namely that of motivation can now be added to our procrastination equation, in the form of Self Determination Theory (SDT).

There is a considerable body of research which operates under the rubric of SDT, and the best known proponents of it are Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, who have developed 'Self-Regulation Theory'. The novelty of Self-Regulation Theory in respect to the ideas which preceded it, is that in a similar way to Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory having introduced the element of self-belief to the early Social Learning theory of Miller and Dollard (1941) and the later developments of Rotter (1954), Deci and Ryan similarly introduced the notion of motivation to Bandura's Self-Efficacy. It was one thing, in Bandura's terms, for an individual to have assessed their capability to perform a task, and for the ability to do that task successfully to be developed through mastery experiences – but it was another, in Deci and Ryan's view, to ask what motivation there might be to take up such a challenge?

Deci and Ryan's theory has as its central theme, the notion that to be self-determined is to 'endorse one's actions at the highest level of reflection. When self-determined, people experience a sense of freedom to do what is interesting, personally important, and vitalizing'. (Deci & Ryan, <http://selfdeterminationtheory.org> (retrieved 27 December 2009)).

In essence, Self-Regulation Theory states that humans have an *innate* as well as a *potential* tendency to self-development. However Self-Development Theory acknowledges that this does not operate in a vacuum: that all human development is encouraged or discouraged by a dialectic with the personal and social milieu in which it occurs. And Self Regulation Theory states, in keeping with the writings on locus-of-control, that the greatest assistance to development is when the motive to change is intrinsic.

Deci and Ryan (1985) extended the notion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and distinguished a continuum of four types of motivation:

- Intrinsic motivation
- Self-determined extrinsic motivation
- Non-self-determined extrinsic motivation
- Amotivation

In this hierarchical description of the desire to perform, Deci and Ryan state that motivation to engage with a task decreases as a person moves from their perception of an intrinsic motivation to perform, towards a state of amotivation. Amotivation is a state of experiencing no motivation and a perception of, in Bandura's terms, complete lack of Self-Efficacy and control over outcomes.

Research which examined procrastinating behaviour within this context found that students who perceived themselves as having high levels of intrinsic motivation were much less likely to procrastinate than were those who perceived their motivation as being extrinsic. The natural corollary to this was also shown, that when a sense of autonomy is reduced, or, the greater the perception of the requirement to perform a task being other-determined, the greater the level of procrastinating behaviour would be (Lee, 2005; Roig & De Tommaso, 1995). In these circumstances, positive and negative emotions are predicted by autonomous and non-autonomous behaviour, accordingly.

Interestingly however, other research has shown that this relationship is not necessarily a straightforward one. In a study which asked how successful people had been at fulfilling the tasks they had set themselves over a summer holiday period, Conti (2000) found that the tasks which had elements of duty – and which therefore must be acknowledged to have a higher degree of extrinsic motivation – were those that were more likely to have been completed. One is left to consider that the relationship between procrastination and extrinsically-motivated tasks is more subtle than merely being a rejection of lack of autonomy: that in these circumstances, the procrastinator may have been able to overcome their personal inertia in order not to incur the disappointment or displeasure of the one for whom the task would be completed?

The direction of flow of the theories that have been outlined over the preceding pages as explanations of how, when, why – and if – people succeed in the performance of tasks, has moved from mere response to a stimulus in the case of the behaviourist view of the world, to a conscious response to the lived environment by cognitive theorists, through the vision of learning and action as being decisions that are made and which will

contribute to a sense of well-being by merit of a sense of mastery, to our most recent perception of human action as a deliberately-plotted course that is the result of various types of motivation.

However of course, none of these describe procrastination. Moreover, procrastination can only be assumed to exist when there is in fact an *absence* of action, of learning or of motivation. Should our question then be one of how or why we are motivated, but instead – why might it be that we are not?

A development of self-regulation theory that is of interest to procrastination research in this regard, is Nicholls' (1984) Achievement Goal Orientation. Nicholls writes that rather than view motivation in terms of task mastery or performance goals, this distinction can be better understood, instead, as task- or ego- orientated goals. Put simply, Nicholls' suggestion is that the more task-orientated a person's goals are, the more likely it is that they will engage with the learning that is necessary to perform the task well. However if they are engaged in a task which they perceive has a large emphasis on performance, and they have a concomitant wish to perform well in order to satisfy ego-requirements – through being seen to do well in relation to *others*' rather than in terms of the *task* parameters – then these persons are more likely to procrastinate. If we conceive that a healthy ego and a favourable perception of self-worth or self-esteem are inextricably linked, then we can also surmise that, as Burka and Yuen (1983) wrote: 'procrastination is not just a bad habit but a way of expressing internal conflict and protecting a vulnerable sense of self-esteem.' (p. 73). Shanahan and Pychyl (2007) substantiated this claim with empirical confirmation of their hypothesis that a higher level of ego-identity development would be negatively related to procrastinating behaviour.

In this regard, work which relates to the question of self-esteem and is of interest in any investigation of procrastinating behaviour, is that relating to 'Self-Handicapping', and particularly the early work of Berglas and Jones. In a seminal piece of research, Berglas and Jones (1978) designed an experimental situation in which participants believed they were being offered a choice of drug in advance of a test they were due to take. The important result of this experiment was that under certain circumstances, participants would make the seemingly self-defeating choice to take a drug they believed would make the task *more difficult* for them to complete successfully. Berglas and Jones attributed this behaviour to 'Self-Handicapping' which they described as 'any action or choice of performance setting that enhances the opportunity to externalize (or excuse) failure and to internalize (reasonably accept credit for) success.' (p. 406.)

The fundamental contribution to an investigation of procrastinating behaviour that self-handicapping theory can be seen to make then, is the notion that persons may make a conscious choice to utilise a strategy to prevent themselves from having to consider that it is their ability which precludes successful completion of a task, and that it was instead the unfavourable circumstances under which the task was completed. In this context, self-handicapping bears an important relation to procrastination in that instead of procrastination being simple aversiveness to an unpleasant task, or poor time-keeping ability, it can instead be seen as a means to protect the ego from poor assessments by important others. And the relevance of this concept to procrastination research is potentially considerable: – if self-handicapping is a self-protective measure to assist in the protection of self-worth (Berglas, 1985), then procrastination may in turn be a self-handicapping strategy used as a means of self-protection to bolster the individual's fragile self-esteem (Berry, 1975; Burka & Yuen, 1983). Other research moreover

bears this contention out, as procrastination has been associated with low self-esteem (Effert & Ferrari, 1989; Ferrari, 1994; Ferrari, 2000; Owens & Newbegin, 1997; Schubert-Walker & Stewart, 2000) – though contrarily, Ferrari, Keane, et al. (1998) have claimed that the empirical evidence to support this view is ‘modest’ and cited the 1988 study by Beswick et al. which found that only 5% of variance in procrastination was accounted for by self-esteem.

To investigate this possibility, Jones and Rhodewalt (1982) developed the Self Handicapping Scale (SHS) which is a self-report questionnaire. The results of its administration showed that self-handicappers were more likely to believe that abilities were determined, *a priori* facets of human existence – and were consequently a statement of who a person was, rather than give weight to who they might become. High self-handicappers were found to be more performance-orientated, whereas low self-handicappers were more likely to believe that ability could be improved and developed. Low self-handicappers were thus more learning-orientated than high self-handicappers, who were more innate-ability orientated.

In these terms, if procrastination is a self-handicapping strategy, it is reasonable to consider that procrastinators will attribute their performance to internal factors, because as Meyer (2000) notes:

‘If participants were attributing their performance internally, it is more likely they would utilize an ego-defence such as self-handicapping than if participants were attributing their performance externally. If participants were attributing their performance externally, then there would be no need for an ego-defence such as self-handicapping. The

external attribution itself would serve as an ego-defence.’ (Meyer, 2000, p. 92)

When the SHP and other tests were applied to procrastinators, positive results for self-handicapping were found (Ferrari, Johnson et al., 1995; Ross, Canada, & Rausch, 2002). Further, in a meta-analysis of 121 studies, van Eerde (2003) found that with high trait procrastinators, the largest positive relation was found with self-handicapping.

However the results of this research cause two further questions to be posed: firstly, assuming there are individual differences, would there be particular pre-conditions that would dispose some to make use of this self-handicapping strategy? And secondly, would self-handicappers continue to self-handicap when it would make no difference to the impression they gave to the world – as would be the case if their performance result was to be entirely private? With regard to the first question, Harris and Snyder (1986) claimed that in order to feel the need to make use of self-handicapping, a person would need to experience a sense of vulnerability, and that there would need to be both a sense of self-worth, and a desire to protect it. Notably however, in other experiments (Arkin & Baumgardner, 1985; Tice & Baumeister, 1994) researchers were unable to provide substantiation for this hypothesis.

In regard to the second question, Kolditz and Arkin (1982) argued that self-handicapping is more than merely an individual’s personal defence strategy to protect their self-concept, it is instead, they claimed, a self-presentational strategy designed to maintain their public image. They consequently replicated the Berglas and Jones (1978) experiment, but introduced privacy as a factor. They found that drug choice was in fact dependent on whether the results of their test would become public, or would be merely for the

participant's own records. This meant that when participants believed their results were going to be made public, they were significantly more likely to take the debilitating drug that was offered than if their results would remain private. Participants were also found to be more likely to choose a drug which they perceived would hamper their chance of success in the task when they believed that the person conducting the experiment would have knowledge of their test score, and if the person conducting the experiment was present at the time when the participant made their choice of drug.

Similarly, Leary and Sheppard (1986) described self-handicaps as being able to be categorised into two distinct groups: namely 'behaviourist' or 'self-reported'. Whereas *behaviourist* handicaps were observable activities which were able to be seen as a reason for poor performance due to them being beyond the control of the one being tested, those that were *self-reported* could not be confirmed other than by the results they produced. They concluded that self-handicapping was in fact in the service of 'impression control' and was for the purpose of protection of a person's *public* image rather than their *personal* self.

Importantly though, the majority of experimentation into self-handicapping has been conducted in the laboratory, and Harrison (2005) and Meyer (2000) note that such studies are largely silent about the robustness of this phenomenon outside the laboratory. One of the benefits of the research which follows therefore, will be to determine if any notion of self-handicapping in protection of self-esteem will be evidenced using a different methodology, and particularly if the rich textual reports of a phenomenologically-based methodology might also reveal this posited element of the condition we have referred to as procrastination.

*The Theoretical Case for a Phenomenologically-Based Research
Methodology*

All research praxis has at its root a particular philosophical view of the world. The field of psychology is no different in this regard and since the days of Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), who Thines (1977) suggests it is 'customary to quote ... as the founder of scientific psychology' (p. 56) – until at least as late as the latter half of the twentieth century, the dominant approach has been an attempt to apply the same rigorous rules of investigation that have been exploited with considerable success in the study of chemistry, physics, and biology, to the investigation of human behaviour.

This 'natural scientific' method is positivist in character, and its epistemological foundation lies in its assertion that true knowledge relies upon experience, which can only be achieved by experimentation and observation. Benton and Craib (2001) state this empiricist view to mean that 'Any genuine knowledge-claim is testable by experience (observation or experiment).' (p. 14)

Within the context of psychology, application of the natural scientific method entails that researchers measure elements of human response in relation to other, variable factors, and in this way attempt to move towards an understanding of that human behaviour. Such empirical studies may be conducted in a laboratory environment if the sample size is small, or by means of questionnaires or survey, for example, if the sample size is larger. The benefit of such an approach when applied in psychological research, its proponents claim, is that it will deliver replicable, objective conclusions about human nature that are fundamental, verifiable and value-free.

Following early work establishing the simple framework upon which the natural scientific method was built, and the principal kinds of conclusions it would claim to be able to draw, there has been considerable debate and development of theory. For some, the natural scientific starting point took the route of logical positivism, which, through members of the Vienna Circle under the leadership of Moritz Schlick and Rudolf Carnap during the 1920's, proposed that whilst it was the case that knowledge was achieved through experimentation and observation, it was also true that the results of experimentation could be encoded into a language – which might be verbal or mathematical for example, that could be analysed independently of the original experiment. Thus, they claimed, more wide-ranging conclusions than those of the immediate results might be inferred. Still others have applied a reductionist framework to the basic theory and claimed that larger clusters of effects – in the psychological experimental context, complex behaviours such as emotional responses including fear, happiness, or love for example – can be explained with reference to their 'constituent parts'. The ultimate reduction in this regard is the possibility that emotion could be explained in terms of the chemical reactions in response to stimuli within the physical body of the person – if such an experiment could be conducted.

In psychology, much research of the natural scientific type has been conducted during the last century and continues to this day, using ever-increasing sophistication in style of measurement, such as the descriptive or inferential statistical techniques that are used to interpret the results recorded of the behaviour under investigation. The goal of this work is to determine psychological meaning in terms of causal explanations – and thereby permit prediction to be made about the behaviour which can be applied across both populations and time.

This method is well and good in terms of its application to the quantifiable data that is achieved through observation. However the twin difficulties for psychology are firstly, as Kruger (1988) notes, that to be able to be subject to such analysis, it is necessary that persons and their behaviour are able 'to be conceived as being measurable' (p. 20) and secondly, as Benton and Craib (2001) state: 'This rules out knowledge-claims about beings or entities which cannot be observed.' (p. 14)

These are both practical and conceptual hurdles which must naturally have consequence for any field of study where elements of the subject-matter of the research are effectively non-observable. And a criticism aimed at the scientific method of enquiry when applied in the context of psychological research then, is one which questions the efficacy of that method to examine the fundamentally non-observable elements of human experience – such as the previously referred-to emotions of fear or love, for example – other than merely through the observable behaviour they produce. Put differently, it may be the case that the human skin's electro-galvanic response to a situation such as fear is 'observable', but what does that galvanic response recording tell us about the *nature* of the fear? And what can be learned about the human *experience* of that fear using such a result-example of the natural scientific method?

This question caused to be developed a different attitude in the attempt to understand human behaviour, namely a more *qualitative* rather than *quantitative* mode of enquiry. And a core difference between *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods of investigation then, is that the latter has been concerned to consider that a fuller understanding of the totality of human responses might dwell in more than merely observable behaviour – and that

there is a world of non-observable 'personal experience' that must be of consequence to a more complete understanding of human nature.

It is then, ironically, through one of its major claims to success – namely its value-neutrality, that the natural scientific method was assessed to have shown its vulnerability. And this is because the question can be asked:- if human experience contains elements of subjectivity, can it be adequately investigated by an entirely objective methodology?

The response by advocates of the natural scientific method to this dilemma was straightforward, in that it was claimed there are two fundamental ways in which an objective view can answer this criticism and accommodate the question of values: one is to treat those values as if they were facts and count them accordingly; the other is to simply discount them as being of no consequence to a coherent explanation of objective reality.

Towards the end of the twentieth century however, and in earnest since the early 1970s and the so-called methodological crisis in sociology and widespread criticism of the existing functionalist paradigm of the time (Gouldner, 1971), there has been increasing reticence to simply ignore human lived experience, and treat it as being of no consequence. A contrasting approach to the positivist natural scientific method has therefore developed, that has embraced personal experience as being fundamental to an understanding of human life as it is lived. This qualitative rather than quantitative view of human being-ness is one which, rather than discount a person's lived experience of a situation, instead puts it at the forefront of explanation and understanding of the human condition.

Accordingly then, in the context of the present research, it is suggested that any study of procrastinating behaviour must investigate more than simply a rate of incidence. As the interviews that were undertaken for the study will reveal, procrastination has at its heart an array of emotions that range from dread to elation to intense apathy, and it is proposed that any statement of understanding of the behaviour that did not reveal the personal experience of these emotions in their fullness could not be considered to have investigated the topic fully.

It was therefore concluded that a qualitatively-based enquiry would be best suited to the subject of this investigation, and such a method has consequently been applied in the current study.

As is the case in natural scientific enquiry however, a philosophical substrate to the qualitative enquiry must be acknowledged; and in the case of the research which follows, it is Husserl's phenomenology that has been adopted as the broad conceptual underpinning to the practical method.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is generally referred to as the 'father' of phenomenology. Unusually, for one who was to have such an impact on the world of qualitative psychology, his early university academic training was in mathematics, physics, and astronomy and it was in mathematics that he was awarded his doctorate at the University of Vienna in 1882. His attention turned to studies in philosophy however, when after his military service in 1883/4, he attended lectures given during 1884/5 by the philosopher Franz Brentano. (Misiak, 1973)

Brentano became Husserl's mentor and Husserl's early work – specifically his *Logical Investigations* (1900) – accepts Brentano's main thesis, namely that of 'intentionality', which Brentano describes thus:

'Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself... (Brentano, *Psychology*, 88)' Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/brentano/#Intentionality> Retrieved October 26 2009.

As we can see, this meaning of 'intention' is distinct from the more commonplace usage as in the sense of a 'plan to do'. Rather, Brentano's intentionality is considered instead as a directedness-towards-objects. It was moreover this mental relationship with the objects of the world that was, for Husserl, at the root of his conception of consciousness. (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p. 11)

Adopting this view, Husserl stated that whenever we are conscious, we are aware – and we are moreover aware of some *thing*. This 'thing' can be an inanimate object, another person – or something which is intangible and therefore not physically visible, such as an idea or concept. What was key about such a view of the world was that it opposed the fundamentally dualist notion that had been generally accepted since the time of Descartes, that mind is conceived of as separate from body, and therefore considered human

contact with the world as being an internal one in which the world impinges in an 'inward' direction upon our brain. Instead, intentionality entails a relationship with the objects of the world which is directed outwards, 'towards' the object and so constitutes our consciousness thus.

This meant that a psychology which has at its root a phenomenological attitude, is not required to be concerned with the mechanism by which our understanding of the world is manifested, only what that understanding, itself, is. Furthermore, a phenomenologically-based psychology is one that is free to concern itself with individuals' experience of the world and the objects in it, rather than in a search for an understanding based in a translation of the information gained into a language of 'explanation-data', such as for example a mathematical one of 'frequency of occurrence'. It is in this context that Husserl's often-repeated maxim 'Back to the things themselves' has its greatest import: that we should concern ourselves not with the means or mechanism of our internal reception of the object, but rather our entirely human experience of it.

Husserl's phenomenology developed Brentano's intentionality using the twin concepts of *noesis* and *noema*. Whilst the natural scientific method speaks of 'subject' and 'object', by which it distinguishes between the 'perceiver' and the 'perceived', Husserl's terminology sought to understand this distinction – and what the natural scientific method considered consequently to be a separation – instead, as a *relationship*: namely the *way* of experiencing (*noesis*) and what is experienced (*noema*). Husserl believed that *noema* and *noesis* should be viewed as a relational *continuum* – rather than being constituted by discrete elements or stages. By adopting this attitude, the dualistic notion of a consciousness without anything to be conscious of, is redundant.

It is important to note however a point that has been made by numerous writers, namely that phenomenology is of course a philosophy: it is not a psychology, nor a method of research (Langdrige, 2007). Phenomenology is the justification for the praxis rather than the praxis itself: it is a stance from which to view the experimental 'facts' at our disposal. However to begin to conduct any phenomenologically-orientated research in psychology – which we understand as a search for meaning in the human experiencing of the physical and metaphysical world, we must devise a means of practically applying the philosophical outlook – of developing a praxis.

Polkinghorne (1989) writes 'A primary difference between phenomenological philosophy and phenomenological psychology is the use of persons as the primary source of original naïve descriptions of experience. Although psychological research might include a researcher's personal descriptions, its focus is on data generated from subjects.' (in Valle & Halling, 1989, p. 47). Moreover, as Van Manen states: 'Phenomenological research is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness' (1997, p. 9) and furthermore its intent is to answer 'the questions *what* and *how* something is, rather than *why*.' (Karlsson, 1993, p. 14). And as De Castro (2003) observes: 'by doing this kind of research, we focus on grasping the whole meaning of the experience, instead of dividing it into parts without understanding the basic meaning structure, which gives sense to the whole experience.' (p. 47).

This approach does however lead us to a practical issue that must be contended with, namely that Husserl considered experience of any noetic object – tangible or intangible, first hand or by report – would be achieved through our 'natural attitude'. Karlsson (1993) describes this 'natural attitude' as being constituted by our 'life-world experience' (p. 44) which we take for

granted – and is the result of the ‘historical, cultural and social factors’ (ibid) which comprise that experience. The practical issue revolves around the difficulty that for the purpose of conducting research – and as a consequence, therefore, any approach to an understanding of another’s experience – we must consider that any reported understanding will be apprehended through our own ‘natural attitude’. This view, however, begs a question: can two persons’ experience – one the first-hand report that is given, the other the reading of that report – be considered to be the same if their historical, cultural and social factors are not? And if there is any doubt that this is so – what can be learned about the world by reading others’ experience of it when that reading will be filtered through our personal, cumulative experience – our own ‘natural attitude’?

Husserl’s response to this question was to state that in order to fully understand the essential nature of another’s experience, it would be necessary for us to ‘bracket’ our own natural attitude. Bracketing requires that any assumptions and pre-suppositions we might hold about the world generally, and the experience under investigation in particular, be set aside. Husserl referred to this as *epoché*, which is to be understood as the process by which we describe the ‘things themselves’ – namely the essence of the experience – rather than the experience as filtered through the assumptions and world-view of the researcher. *Epoché* is, in Husserl’s view, the first prerequisite phase of achieving a description of the essence of an experience; the first phase of the phenomenological *reduction*.

Karlsson (1993) claims that phenomenological reduction is a ‘reflective procedure’ (p. 53) and similarly, Van Manen (1997) states: ‘Phenomenological knowledge is empirical, based on experience, but is not *inductively* empirically derived.’ (p. 22). In practical terms, this requires we approach the

description by another of their experience, in such a way as to ensure that 'every statement initially is treated as having equal value' (Moustakas, 1994 p. 97) and the result of such a practice will be a description 'free of prejudgements and preconceptions.' (ibid) (p. 90).

It must be noted that the usefulness of *epoché* was not universally accepted by Husserl's followers, and was questioned by critics who asked how, realistically, it could be possible to put aside the views and assumptions one held about the world? In his later work, Husserl, addressed this difficulty and described the attitude that the researcher should adopt as a 'transcendental view' of the phenomenon under consideration. By this means, he claimed, it would be possible to remain entirely detached from the experience under examination – and so access its essence in its purest form. Despite such philosophical differences which exist however, Husserl does share with other phenomenologists the goal to conduct good qualitative research by putting aside the assumption-laden stance through which the other's experience would be viewed, and the desire that the results of such a practice will permit appreciation of the fundamental essence of the experience.

The value of phenomenology to psychology, then, is seen to be at the root of the purpose of psychology; namely to understand human experience which is, in Heidegger's terminology, their '*Dasein*' or human being-in-the-world. And whilst this portrayal of the relationship between the objects and experiences of the world and the individual that perceives them is a simple one, the consequence of such a view is that we are not separate from the world we live in: we are constituted by it and it in turn is constituted by us.

Phenomenology has a fundamentally *descriptive* attitude towards the objects of our consciousness, and a further practical device to assist the researcher

in assessing the experience being described entails the research participant, with assistance from the researcher, deliberately altering various features of the phenomenon in their imagination, in order to throw into best relief the essence that is being revealed. This can be understood as metaphorically 'walking around' a mental object to see it from different angles. This 'different angles of view' strategy is actively encouraged by the researcher asking the participant to consciously explore the various elements of their description to see how they might impact upon the view of the whole. Could there be, for example, elements of the whole which when omitted from the description of the experience, do not materially affect its essence? The goal is to achieve the richest description possible of the phenomenon under investigation – as 'there is not a single inroad to truth, but that countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of experience.' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99)

A notable difference then, between phenomenology as method and the traditional positivist method of collection of data in psychology, is that the factual content of the information gathered is of less consequence than the *meaning* of those facts, of that *experience*, to the *experiencer*. This will perforce, however, entail that 'A phenomenological description is always *one* interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary or even potentially *richer* or *deeper* description.' (Van Manen, 1997, p. 31) and further, that 'In point of fact, all interpretative phenomenological enquiry is cognizant of the realization that no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond challenge.' (ibid p. 7)

Descriptive phenomenology then has as its purpose the discovery of essences of the phenomenon that is being investigated. And consequently, at

the heart of this method is the collection of recordings of persons' descriptions of experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. It follows that the primary unit of investigative currency and the object of the researcher's attention is a report of an experience of the phenomenon under investigation as revealed to the researcher, by a participant. This is the 'data' that is to be analysed by the researcher.

The Application of a Phenomenological Method

At its fundamental level, the steps to be undertaken in a phenomenological investigation are not remarkable. De Castro (2003) (who refers to the participants or respondents in the research as 'co-researchers') lists them as:

'1) The formulation of a question (in which the researcher delineates a focus of investigation), 2) The data-generating situation (in which co-researchers give a description of his/her experience), 3) The data-analysis (in which the researcher reads the data given by the co-researchers and reveals the meaning of his/her experience), and 4) The presentation of findings (the researcher presents the research results in public).' (p. 49)

A similar schedule is described in von Eckartsberg (1998) where phenomenological analysis is taken to entail three primary activities, namely description, reduction (including bracketing), and a search for essences. He describes *Description* is the phase of the research in which a respondent relates to the researcher their experience of the phenomenon in question; *Reduction* is the process whereby the researcher reveals the meaning of the experience by suspending theories and personal knowledge about

phenomenon and allowing its nature in the context of the respondent describing it to be revealed. Lastly, the search for essences entails application of psychological insight by the researcher in order to determine the fundamental and most invariant explications of the nature of the experience.

The method of research that this study has adopted is one which follows that outlined by Giorgi (1985) – but departs from that of Giorgi by the addition of a further stage of analysis, to be described later. Van Manen (2002) writes:

‘A contemporary exponent of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is Amedeo Giorgi. He too speaks about phenomenology as a rigorous science. He criticizes the interpretive approaches to phenomenology. In the view of Giorgi phenomenological inquiry should be a descriptive method, since it is through analysis and description of how things are constituted in and by consciousness that we can grasp the phenomena of our world.’ [www.phenomenologyonline.com/ inquiry/3.html](http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/3.html). van Manen (2002).

Giorgi's (1985) method ‘contains four essential steps; expressed as follows:

(1) One reads the entire description in order to get a general sense of the whole statement. (2) Once the sense of the whole has been grasped, the researcher goes back to the beginning and reads through the text once more with the specific aim of discriminating “meaning units” from within a psychological perspective and with a focus on the phenomenon being researched. (3) Once “meaning units” have been delineated, the researcher then goes through all of the meaning units and expresses the psychological insight contained in them more directly. This is especially true of the “meaning units” most revelatory of the phenomenon under

consideration. (4) Finally, the researcher synthesizes all of the transformed meaning units into a consistent statement regarding the subject's experience. This is usually referred to as the structure of the experience and can be expressed at a number of levels.' (p.10)

Giorgi elaborates on each of the four steps.

(1) *Reading through the description to get a sense of the whole.* The purpose of this step is a simple one: for the researcher to get an overall sense of the description of the experience that has been given. This may require multiple readings in the case of a long or more complex description. No analysis is attempted at this stage however. As Giorgi notes: 'The general sense grasped after the reading of the text is not interrogated nor made explicit in any way. Primarily it serves as a ground for the next step, the discrimination of meaning units.' (p. 11)

(2) *Discriminating "meaning units" from a psychological perspective.* Having read the text as a whole to determine its general sense, the researcher then examines it in more detail and the parts which comprise the whole are identified. Importantly however, the discrimination is more than an arbitrary exercise to merely render the description into smaller 'chunks' – such as by dividing the narrative into units of a set length. The divisions are, instead, the result of applying a 'psychological perspective'. As Giorgi puts it: 'Since it is a psychological analysis that we are interested in, it seems logical that the units should be made with psychological criteria in mind.' (p. 11) They are moreover '... spontaneously perceived discriminations within the subject's description arrived at when the researcher assumes a psychological attitude toward the set description ...' (ibid)

(3) *Transformation of the participant's description into psychological language.* Giorgi describes this process as being through 'a process of reflection and imaginative variation.' (p. 17). A simple explanation of this part of the process is to describe it as the researcher re-phrasing the meaning content that they have perceived, in terms that reveal the meaning from a psychological perspective. An example of such might be to reveal the meaning, for example, of a dented cigarette tin to the respondent, as a treasured reminder of a much-loved grandparent whose life had been saved when a bullet struck it – and without which the respondent might never have been born.

(4) *The statement of meaning units as an intelligible whole.* This stage of the analysis requires that the researcher review the individually transformed meaning units, and present them as 'a consistent description of the psychological structure of the event.' (p. 19). So doing, Giorgi claimed, would reveal the fundamental essence of the experience.

Importantly, when Giorgi first described this method, he used only one participant to exemplify it – although at that time he wrote that this type of research would be rarely conducted with only one person. In a later article, he recommends the use of 'at least three participants ... sufficient number of variations are needed in order to come up with a typical essence.' (Giorgi, 2008, p. 37)

After participants have presented interviews that have been analysed according to the four steps above, a fifth step is taken, namely to present each individual set of meaning units as a concise and intelligible whole. This distillation is referred to as the *Situated Structure* of the experience.

The final step is to review the individual Situated Structures in order to achieve an overall structure of the experience under investigation, which is referred to as the *General Structure*. The General Structure is then the essential constituents of the phenomenon of procrastinating behaviour, as revealed by participant protocols.

With regard to the current study, a recently-commonplace and minor amendment to this procedure has been adopted. This is that rather than record the multiple steps that were involved in Giorgi's original method – namely to present the text as a whole, then separate that text into discrete meaning units, and then transform those meaning units into psychological language, this research will report only the meaning units that have been extracted from the original text, then again in their transformed state. The full text versions of all interviews are thus dispensed with in order to save space and repetition in the main body of the report. If the reader wishes to confirm the wording of the interview however, the meaning unit contents should simply be read as a whole.

Additionally, a further stage of analysis has been applied to the data of this research. When the Situated Structures and General Structure of the experience were prepared, a number of repeated, discrete elements in the experience were revealed. This is usual, and the aspired-to result.

However, to focus further attention on the detail of these elements, they have been reported and developed separately as 'Themes'. Whilst this is not a standard practice in Giorgi's method, the particular context of this research has been to not only investigate the nature of procrastinating behaviour *per se*, but also assess the usefulness of a phenomenological approach in any future study of procrastination – and gauge some of that potential usefulness

through reference to and comparison with results achieved using non-phenomenological methodologies. To this end it has been considered fruitful to compare the results described in the literature survey, which have been achieved using methodologies of a different philosophical orientation to the phenomenological one, with detail from those resulting from the present study – and such comparison has been made clearer, it is suggested, by this device.

A further methodological point must be made for clarity. This is that it will be noticed that during the interview, the researcher often asks questions of the participants in order to allow them to clarify or on occasions give richer descriptions of the experience they are relating. Importantly though, this is not to be confused with a dialogual interaction. As will be seen, the researcher has not intended to contribute to the description by offering opinion or personal examples – only by questioning to clarify the intent behind the participants' words.

Practical Methodological Steps

To this end, and in line with these methodological intentions, the following steps were taken:-

1. *An advert was placed on a selection of university notice boards.* The advert enquired if the persons reading it considered themselves to be procrastinators? – and if so, asked if they would be prepared to speak to a researcher who was investigating the topic. An e-mail address was given for interested parties to reply to.

The participants in this research were therefore self-selecting. However a pilot study conducted by the researcher showed it was possible to have a high level of confidence that respondents to a request for volunteers could accurately assess themselves as procrastinators. In short, respondents knew what was meant by the term 'procrastination' – and they knew that they fitted the bill. The pilot-study assumption was moreover entirely substantiated by the protocols that were taken in the main research.

No further procedure to select specific respondents was applied and the five persons who replied to the advert are those whose data is recorded here.

Interestingly, it was observed by more than one participant in this study that they had known of others who had been interested to apply, but who had apparently 'not got round to it'. Further, more than one of the eventual participants said they too might not have got around to responding were it not for the fact that they had a test to study for or essay to write, and were merely finding other things to do to prevent them having to start that work!

2. The data was collected in the form of protocols

Each volunteer made an appointment to see the researcher individually at an on-campus office. All participants were told in advance that when we met, I would require them to respond to the research question I would put to them, namely: *'I would like you to tell me in as much detail as possible about an instance when you procrastinated'*. It was explained to participants that this question was being given to them in advance so they could give thought to deciding upon an incident to relate which they felt would most fully reveal their experience of procrastination.

3. *The protocols recorded were conversational in character, and the researcher asked for clarifications whilst the respondent was speaking, rather than waiting until the end*

The purpose of this procedure was both to immediately clarify any elements of the statement which were not clear to the researcher, as well as to also permit elaboration of apparent themes. Generally, such questioning resulted in fuller reports and the illumination of the narrative. On occasion however, questioning did lead to inconsequential digression. These details have been noted in abbreviated form when not considered pertinent to the matter under discussion.

In this regard, Participant B is of special note. Although participants had been asked to prepare to relate an example of when they procrastinated, it soon became evident that Participant B was relating an incidence of procrastination that she was currently engaged in. This would have meant that whatever resolution of the difficulty that occurred, would not be able to be reported on.

Upon clarification with the participant, it became apparent she had another instance of procrastination she could relate. However the time required to complete the interview was insufficient, and an arrangement was made to meet again later. (This juncture is noted in the protocol.)

At that stage it was not clear the protocol would be used in the final compilation – and the opportunity was therefore taken to thoroughly explore and clarify the participant's meaning. (If the protocol was not to be used, it would at least be useful 'practice' – as it was in fact also the first

protocol taken.) Ultimately though, it was felt that despite the more interrogatory nature of the interview, and the slightly different report format of the first part (up to section 105); the information gleaned was too important to disregard, and the protocol is included in the compilation.

4. All responses were recorded onto audio tape and the audio tapes were later transcribed in full

A technical point is necessary to be made: in Giorgi's own research, the meaning of 'protocol' is often as an explication that is *written* by the participant. However in the context of this research, participant protocols were all verbal, recorded on tape, and later transcribed by the researcher.

Whilst the audio tapes were transcribed in full, not all of this data is reported here in full, as stated in (3) above, in the regard of inconsequential, non-contributory factual material. An abbreviated summary is always however included within the transcript.

It is worthy of note that when reporting for interviews, punctuality was not an issue with participants. Furthermore, participants (with the noted exception of Participant B) were generally well prepared for the task for which they had volunteered.

A specimen protocol is included immediately after this statement of methodological practice. It has been chosen as an example only because it is shorter than the others, whilst still being typical of the general style and content shown in the remainder. The remaining interviews and their relevant analysis-steps are all recorded in the Appendix entitled 'Participant Protocols'.

The Situated Structure resulting from each interview is however included in the main body of this report, as is the General Structure.

Data Collection – Procedures

1. Overview of Participants

Data was collected from current or recently-graduated university students: one first year student, one second-year student, two honours-year (i.e. fourth-year) students and one participant who had completed a Masters degree and was working in a non-academic position at the university. All were or had been studying in non-science faculties – namely Arts or Humanities.

No participant showed reticence when relating their experiences – nor did any seem reluctant to tell of what could be considered quite personal events in their lives, and which would not be thought of as normal ‘conversational’ material.

Although interviews all began with the same request – for participants to describe an incident in which they procrastinated – as will be seen, each description has a different focus which relates to the participant’s particular world view, or concerns.

Participants spoke differentially on some themes more than others. It was the case that some observations were made by only one respondent; though in line with the philosophical premise this research is based upon, this was not

considered to be a reason not to note them, or view them as of less value than those which were mentioned by more than one participant – or in fact consider that they would be a unique response within the wider context of the behaviour being investigated.

2. Method of Reporting the Results of Participant Interviews

Five protocols were recorded, transcribed, read as a whole, then divided into meaning units as described in the methodology. As has been noted previously, merely to save space and repetition, the full text of the interview before it has been divided into meaning units is not recorded here. An example of a protocol that has been divided into meaning units is included in the main body of this report, and the remaining four interviews can be found as appendices. In line with Giorgi (1985), a Situated Structure of each participant's experience of procrastinating behaviour was formed, as was a General Structure of the phenomenon based on all participants' experiences.

3. The Development of Themes

As noted previously, in what it is hoped will be a welcome addition to the standard methodology, meaning units from all protocols which described similar themes were noted, collated and presented as examples of themes for further detailed discussion and comparison with results achieved using other methodologies.

Sample Protocol – Participant ‘C’

Natural Meaning Units	Transformed Meaning Units
<p>1. I can use something from this weekend.</p> <p>2. The thing about procrastination is that I get it done, but, always always always ... last second.</p> <p>3. And basically it starts ... Friday – I knew I have 2 essays due for this – i.e. last – Friday. I had a tutorial Thursday, tutorial Wednesday, tutorial Tuesday and tutorial for Monday. And the tutorial for this morning was philosophy. The incident was, that on Friday I said, OK, I’m going to go out for lunch, come back, going to sit down and try to do this philosophy.</p> <p>4. Er. Of course, go out for lunch, talk to friends, ja, about – always thinking about that I have to do the philosophy. I know that I have to do that. But then I go, OK, cool, get home, get out my philosophy book – of course I don’t have the question for philosophy yet – erm, get out my philosophy book –</p> <p>5. – and then I think right, I’m going to go see what my friend is doing. Go to his room ... we go and ... we then chat – for about an hour or two – about, ... random things ... y’know, what he did, er ...just, ja ... rubbish things. Then, he goes ... ‘OK, cool, what are we doing tonight?’ He says yeah, he’s going out with some friends, but I don’t really want to go up there, ... see what the other’s doing, another friend of mine, er, talk to Jan, - he’s another friend of mine, – he says</p>	<p>1. C procrastinated very recently.</p> <p>2. C completes due tasks but always at the last moment.</p> <p>3. C has a due task and plans to commence it without undue delay.</p> <p>4. C thinks about the task constantly. He goes to his work-space and prepares to begin, as planned.</p> <p>5. Instead, C leaves his work-space and pays a social visit to a friend. C makes and fulfils plans for the evening which do not involve his task.</p>

<p>cool, we'll go out to the old jail - so we go to the old jail, sit and chill ... 9, 10, 11 – about 1 o'clock we come back.</p>	
<p>6. And I'm, OK, I had my fun night tonight, I'm now going to do my philosophy tomorrow.</p>	<p>6. C resolves to begin work on his task tomorrow.</p>
<p>7. And tell me again how you get the question?</p>	<p>7. Interviewer enquires how C discovers detail of his task.</p>
<p>8. It's posted on the internet. So you just download the question, ... and I know this ... and I didn't.</p>	<p>8. C knows he must discover task detail from the internet before he can commence, but does not.</p>
<p>9. So ... I know that I should, ... I can tell you more about the fact that I procrastinate, ... when I procrastinate ... it's just ... firstly, I want ... (pause) ... I want to – and then I don't. Y'know, I really – I don't ... I would like to, but ... I really couldn't care. At that point. Erm. Y'know ... there are much better things to do. Like ... do ... absolutely nothing. Or sit and chat, or, talk – I can ... long conversations on the fact that I'm actually procrastinating about doing philosophy. Erm.</p>	<p>9. Procrastination for C involves wanting to work yet not wanting to; wishing to yet not caring to. There are better things to do than that which C is obligated to do. Sitting and doing nothing is preferable to commencing the task.</p>
<p>10. So. Like. On Saturday morning , ... wake up, erm, go to lunch – because I was up a bit late – go to lunch, come back, - OK – should really actually get my philosophy done, today, right now.</p>	<p>10. The next day, C has a sense he should begin and complete his task immediately.</p>
<p>11. I sat on my bed and I contemplated ... thinking about doing philosophy ... erm ... then I went ... OK – well let me organise my room.</p>	<p>11. C contemplates starting his task, but instead decides to tidy his room.</p>

<p>12. Cleaned my room, put my papers on my desk, everything, ... sort that lot out. Erm – it's now about 3:00, I would think.</p> <p>13. Er ... then I go no, OK cool, maybe I should just go to my friend's to actually go on the computer – I don't have the internet in my room – my friend's got the internet in his room – I go there with a piece of paper and a pen, to write down the question.</p> <p>14. Erm ... he's got two friends there and they're busy watching South Park. So ... I sit down and watch South Park and ... we consecutively watch South Park until about 9 in the evening. (pause) Erm ... then, cool, he decides he's going to go out ... I'm like, no, I really don't feel like going out.</p> <p>15. I actually do need to do ... sit and erm .. look, look on the internet to get my question. I haven't got the question – I really need to get the question.</p> <p>16. I then go on the internet, - and do everything except get the question. I answer e-mails, I go on to this ElfTimes which is a chat site I have, look up jokes, whatever ... erm, then ... one of my friends also comes in and he's like, ... OK, why don't we watch a movie? OK, cool, ... we download 2 movies – watched that until about 2 o'clock in the morning. I then take my pen and paper back to my room, put it on my desk and say cool, and say it's now definitely time for me to do philosophy tomorrow ...</p> <p>17. But you haven't actually got the question yet?</p>	<p>12. C readies his work-space in order to commence.</p> <p>13. C goes to a friend to retrieve details of the task from the internet.</p> <p>14. The friend is socialising with others and C participates in socialising until late. Later, he turns down an offer to socialise further.</p> <p>15. C feels obligated make progress with his task, but does not yet have the preliminary information that will be required.</p> <p>16. C goes on to the internet but engages in personal and social activities and avoids the web site which relates to the task. C leaves the internet after receiving a social invitation. C resolves that tomorrow he will commence with the task.</p> <p>17. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>18. No. ... Then, Sunday – got up for breakfast. Said ... this is going to be good, going to get a lot done today.</p> <p>19. I don't know, then, maybe a good 5 minutes after breakfast, a very similar feeling that I get most of the time, when it comes to work or study or anything, is I get an incredible sensation of apathy and ... lethargy. In that, I really don't care, I really don't want to do it. (silence)</p> <p>20. Can you explain the feeling of lethargy a bit more? Is it physical or mental?</p> <p>21. It's all. It's physical and, emotional and everything – and I just say, physically, I just don't want to do it. Really, I could actually just sit and look at paint drying more than I actually want to do this work. Erm. ... Mentally it's that fact that the way I'm going ... I'm just not in the mood. Y'know. I could sit and chat about random stuff – 'cos that's what I love doing ... chatting ... more than I would like to actually do, what I'm supposed to be doing.</p> <p>22. It's this ... real sense that ... it's more like a complete nightmare ... I would say – dread. But it's not a real dread ...</p> <p>23. y'know, I know what I have to do ... well, I don't know what I have to do, because I don't have the question –</p>	<p>18. C still does not have the fundamental material required to commence the task, but has high hopes of making good progress on his task today.</p> <p>19. The positive feeling disappears when the time to commence his task approaches, and is replaced by one of apathy and lethargy. C no longer cares about or wants to do the task.</p> <p>20. Interviewer.</p> <p>21. C's lethargy is a physical and emotional feeling of not wishing to become engaged with the task. C would rather do anything other than the task he is obligated to do. C is not in the mood to work and would rather talk to friends.</p> <p>22. C experiences intense antipathy akin to dread about engaging with his task.</p> <p>23. C has not yet discovered the detail or extent of the task he has to do.</p>
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<p>24. I know that I have to do it – but I really, really, really don't want to. And I'd rather do absolutely nothing, I don't feel like work, I don't feel like anything.</p>	<p>24. C knows only that he is obligated to engage with the task but doing nothing is preferable to engaging with it.</p>
<p>25. So you know you don't want to do it – even when you don't know what the question is?</p>	<p>25. Interviewer.</p>
<p>26. Yeah. Don't want to do any of the actual work. And I've had this – well – throughout my life ... high school ... before high school.</p>	<p>26. Not wishing to engage with the required task is something that C recognises as a behaviour of his, throughout life.</p>
<p>27. Right then, getting on to it: Sunday ... I ... what did we do? – breakfast, spent the morning – I went back to my room and listened to music, sorted out a few things,</p>	<p>27. C does not engage with the task and instead occupies himself with diversionary non task-related activities.</p>
<p>28. – read a book on my, - started a book on my computer, - I've got all the Star Wars books – just random fiction books, I've got the entire selection – so I read one of the books from about ... 9-ish, until about ... half past eleven, got up, went to my friend's room and knocked on his door and said 'Are you ready to go to lunch' he said OK cool, we sat and chilled for half an hour in his room – then we went to lunch. Er ... after lunch, I came back, er ... we then sat and watched ... ja ... more South Park ... erm ... and we sat and chilled and chatted.</p>	<p>28. C then leaves his work-space and goes to lunch with a friend. After lunch they return to the friend's room and engage in social activities.</p>
<p>29. Did you think about your philosophy at all?</p>	<p>29. Interviewer.</p>
<p>30. Oh of course, all the time. Knowing that I have to do this but, not really wanting to.</p>	<p>30. The task is always present in C's mind as something he has to</p>

<p>31. Thinking ... y'know I can probably get away with another hour, get away with another hour, get away with another hour ... erm ...</p> <p>32. When you get these questions, how long do they normally take to answer?</p> <p>33. OK. In philosophy, as in most of the other ones – philosophy is the mainly one – specially now – er, basically, if you attend all the lectures, you get 4 lectures, and then you get specific reading work which you have to do ... erm ... normally it's 2 sets and a previous one you've already read. So you have to read the 2 new ones and then go over the last one you did – they always intertwine, when you do it. And then it's the PowerPoint presentations that they show. All the new ... all the stuff that they discuss.</p> <p>34. So basically it's – you have to read the work, then when you read the question, you read the work, read the question, read the work ... then you probably have to sit for half an hour thinking about what you're going to write - and then you use your work to make your answer.</p> <p>35. So how long is the writing?</p> <p>36. Erm ... well normally, well, about a page and a bit. So it's not so terribly long – but, I know that I write a bit faster – I've well, I've made myself do things like this and go a bit fast because of my pressed thinking – so, I've made myself be able to write a page and a bit in</p>	<p>do but does not want to.</p> <p>31. C continuously reassesses how much time is available to complete the task.</p> <p>32. Interviewer.</p> <p>33. C's task relates to preparatory work which should have been done during the week and the discussions that have surrounded it.</p> <p>34. For C to complete the task, he must read and understand material, think about an answer, then commit the answer to paper.</p> <p>35. Interviewer.</p> <p>36. The amount of writing C needs to do is not great. C can usually write the required amount in about half an hour.</p>
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<p>about, I'd say, in about ... half an hour. Just ... faster than most people can really write a tutorial.</p>	
<p>37. Erm ... but the build-up to that takes ... ja ... takes a good ... three or four hours of work. Of actually reading, understanding and thinking about stuff.</p>	<p>37. The preparation required is seen as considerable, and requires C to show he understands the topic.</p>
<p>38. And had you been to the 4 lectures?</p>	<p>38. Interviewer.</p>
<p>39. No. I hadn't been to one. And that's another thing the procrastination makes me go into ... I'd rather sit and do nothing than go to the lecture –</p>	<p>39. C has not prepared and would rather do nothing than prepare.</p>
<p>40. – not that I don't find them interesting – philosophy is incredibly interesting – I like philosophy- but ...</p>	<p>40. Paradoxically, C claims to find the subject matter interesting.</p>
<p>41. – sometimes I can, when I read the work myself, I can understand it better than if I go to a lecture. Em .. sometimes lectures are very beneficial, as I, did find ... lately. But because I've missed them, I've missed out on a bit of ... understanding, that some of my other friends, have had. Ja</p>	<p>41. Sometimes C can achieve a better understanding of the work if he reads it himself. He has however missed out on understanding which others now have and he does not.</p>
<p>42. So then from, I'd say, about mid-afternoon, about 3 or 4, erm, I decide, it's now time that I get the question. I go to my room, I get my book, my pad and my pen, come back, and say cool, I'm going to get up, and get my question now. Erm ... go on the internet, finally open up the page, get the question, write the question down in my book, em, and –</p>	<p>42. C decides it is time to get the question from the internet, goes to the site that contains it, and writes the question down.</p>
<p>43. – then I consecutively find that Oh – there's a</p>	<p>43. C also completes the rote</p>

<p>whole lot of essay questions that we have to do for philosophy. And this is due for much later in the term, but still, I'd rather, might as well get it done, get these down now. And ... there were 8. So I quickly scribbled those down.</p> <p>44. And how did you feel about the question when you eventually saw it? Did you know what it was about?</p> <p>45. Yes ... er, because it had been based on, er, the previous week's work, so, I had an understanding of what it was arguing against, but, at that point I actually, ... what I did was, I didn't,</p> <p>46. when I read – I was using my funnel method where I was just reading – put it down. So ... reading and writing. I didn't ... I wasn't ... interpreting as I – I'd rather get it down on paper now – and then I'll ... because I find sometimes when I think about something I confuse myself. And if I don't – if I think about something when I'm not actually focussing on it, I can confuse myself with it.</p> <p>47. Get myself into new arguments about it that I really don't want to.</p> <p>48. ... OK, then, ready to start – I had the work, I've got it in my room, so OK it's now, it's ready for me to come and do, -</p> <p>49. - after supper. Went to supper, ... er, met up with a guy who I didn't see for 2 days, - saw him Friday, then didn't see him Saturday and Sunday ... said, what was</p>	<p>task of writing down questions that will only be due to be answered much later in the term.</p> <p>44. Interviewer.</p> <p>45. C is broadly familiar with the material the question is based on but does not have an in-depth understanding of it.</p> <p>46. C had employed a method of reading and writing which permits him not to need full-understanding contact with the material.</p> <p>47. To not use this method results in unanswered questions which C does not wish to have.</p> <p>48. C has the task detail and can begin.</p> <p>49. C leaves everything in a state of readiness to be started later</p>
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<p>he doing, said, no he was playing a computer game. I said oh cool, I'd like to come and see this game.</p> <p>50. And then, I think we spent ... the next ... 4 hours – from about half past five to half past ten – ja, erm ... playing. Erm ... we had a lot of fun.</p> <p>51. Erm, but at about half past ten, I knew that it was time that I left him ... because, em, I had a ... I was ... I know that I can spend, stay most of the night up, but that these guys really do need to get to sleep.</p> <p>52. However, I get really distracted if I'm having conversation, which is what happened after. I went down to my friend's room, he was busy studying, he had a test this morning.</p> <p>53. Then I went to the opposite door, Sean, and I spoke with him for ... two and a bit hours. Just on a complete arb conversation. Arb everything. We normally have these conversations at about ...</p> <p>54. – he had just finished his politics essay that was due today – but he had started it previously, just done a bit, a bit, a bit. He had finished his work and he was fine to talk. He's very good at that, in the sense that he actually, he doesn't ... when you knock on the door, and you say, 'do you have free time?' and he says not right now, 'cos he's doing work.</p> <p>55. So. Then. From about, I'd say we talked from about, I'd say half past 10, 11-ish, 'til about half past 12 – 1 and then he said he was going to bed so, I went to my room, and then started with it.</p>	<p>50. But C is distracted by a social invitation and does not.</p> <p>51. C leaves that distraction out of concern for others' ability to contend with their own tasks.</p> <p>52. C goes in search of further distraction without success.</p> <p>53. C seeks elsewhere for distraction which he finds.</p> <p>54. C recognises and admires two qualities in a friend which are an ability to do work bit-by-bit and not socialise if he has work to do.</p> <p>55. C socialises with a friend until the friend wants to go to bed. C returns to his work space and begins his task.</p>
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<p>56. I read the question, and began work at about 1 ... and then ... I stopped writing when the work was complete.</p> <p>57. But ... in a sense that's ... my procrastination gets to me even more, that, I write a rough draft, when it comes to philosophy. So I write 1 page of basically, my arguments – I've written everything out, what I want to say. But I've written it out in very simple words. In my basic understanding in little jotted ideas all over the place. Er. So it takes me about ... about two and a half hours to think about everything, read all the work and then about another good, another half an hour to write it and put in all the justifying stuff. Erm. And then I leave that, and then I put that down, and I go to sleep, go to sleep at about 4. Er ... woke up at 7.</p> <p>58. Before we get to 7 ... when you actually started doing this work, did you have that feeling of apathy again?</p> <p>59. Erm ... No. When I actually sat down, to do the work, it was, the sense that I'd, like, I hadn't felt like working, the whole day. And then basically when I sat down and worked, I said, you have to do this. You have to do this because if you don't do it, you're going to lose your DP. More 'obligation' than 'want to'. Er ...</p> <p>60. Then, you know you, when I get into the work, - and this is, this where, the part where it's kinda weird, is that, to get to work, I don't, - I have apathy. When I get into the work, I really, I do enjoy the actual work. So. The erm, the question is very very ... I like the questions.</p>	<p>56. C begins at 1 am and writes until the task is complete.</p> <p>57. C completes the task in three hours, but only to rough draft stage.</p> <p>58. Interviewer.</p> <p>59. When C starts the work, the feeling of apathy is not present. The feeling of obligation that he had to do the work is greater than his antipathy towards doing it.</p> <p>60. If C starts the work and enjoys the activity he does not feel apathy.</p>
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<p>61. ... So when I get into it, I really enjoy arguing, really love expressing opinions. Erm. I enjoy the whole arguing sense, it's just the actual ... the fact that I have the obligation to work, is what makes me not want to work. The fact that I have this tutorial for Monday, that I have this tutorial for 8:40.</p> <p>62. Y'know. The fact that mind goes from days into hours to minutes, basically, as to when I'm finished. So that, y'know, this morning, I wake up at 7 and go to breakfast, come back, and then I start, actually writing this out in neat at about 7:30, 7:40 – then I put on – well, my music is always playing, all the time.</p> <p>63. I put my music a bit loud, sing a bit to it, go to go shower, come back, er ... new set of clothes, and then went, OK, - I think that was at about 8:10.</p> <p>64. Then I said OK cool, let me just start this, I start writing out half of it, in neat, and then I go, OK, fold that up, go to the tutorial, and then in the tutorial, finish writing.</p> <p>65. And after the first half, is there still more thinking to do – are you still elaborating on the points you put in?</p> <p>66. Yeah. So that basically ... Em. Ja – what I allow – and my friends – a lot of people have told me that it is highly dangerous to do</p> <p>67. – is to, I leave, a lot of the time, many of my answers are very open-ended so,</p>	<p>61. C enjoys expressing opinions but dislikes the obligation to do so.</p> <p>62. C starts to write out his answer neatly. His assessment of time available to complete the task is made accurately.</p> <p>63. C experiences a sense of satisfaction at the progress he has made.</p> <p>64. C writes half of the task neatly then goes to his tutorial where he plans to complete it.</p> <p>65. Interviewer.</p> <p>66. C and peer-others feel that this tactic is dangerous.</p> <p>67. C's tactic is to write the answers in such a way so that extra information can be added during the tutorial.</p>
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<p>68. I don't like handing in stuff ...</p> <p>69. I prefer, actually, everything to be in audio, erm, verbal, oral, kind of work. That's, but. For example, I can use examples in high school, where we've discussed things in English, that, I don't write an answer down to, and yet I'm one of the most open-answering people there are. In the class. Simply because, when she says it in one way, it can be slightly different to the way the question is put. Then you get the insight into understanding of it. Then you can change, and mould an answer to actually be better than previous one.</p> <p>70. So. Oh yes, I'll write down an answer, I'll maybe write down 2 words. An idea. And then – and that'll be the idea that I'll base my answer on. And there won't be anything actual, like concrete, but it will be a verbal thing that comes out. – And then, ... because of the verbal, I can elaborate further on my verbal, well it's so I can explain more. Instead of actually having the written work.</p> <p>71. And so in philosophy, as many times, I can ... erm ... it was less today, because of the fact that I didn't go to the lectures enough, I didn't have the insight that a lot of my friends had – erm, but, still ... just with the reading that I had done, I had insight and knowledge as to what I knew.</p> <p>72. And then, when they started expressing arguments, I started, you know, giving new arguments,</p>	<p>68. The moment of commitment to a final answer is something that C dislikes.</p> <p>69. C prefers other means of assessment, such as discussion. This permits continuous beneficial amendment of the answer eventually given.</p> <p>70. C writes down a suggestion that his answer exists without committing himself to the detail of it. C feels a verbal answer is preferable as it is more easily able to accommodate other views in a way that a written answer can not.</p> <p>71. C's knowledge is not as good as others' in the group.</p> <p>72. Listening to others' viewpoints allows C to ameliorate</p>
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<p>new ideas. Even though I hadn't written those down. So what I'd done is, I'd left half my work, and then, allowed myself so that, as I started thinking about things, I allowed things to settle, my mind's arguing – I started arguing ... other ways ... and that's how I would finish the tutorial. Just making sure that I've allowed myself.</p> <p>73. So you use the stuff that you've got <i>from</i> the tutorial to finish off the stuff <i>for</i> the tutorial?</p> <p>74. Ja. During the tutorial, to finish off the tutorial. So. Y'know.</p> <p>75. So ... you're not at risk of being – found out – doing this? Or do you just look studious, as if you're taking notes?</p> <p>76. Well, no, em, because, er, I have the draft in front of me. My original draft. So. If ever. And, y'know, I've told the tutor that's how I do things ... the fact that I have a draft, because, of the fact that I – I don't like having ... my work neat in front of me, and then arguing off my neat work. I prefer to ... argue off my papers: - as soon as I start arguing I start developing new ideas. So. I've discussed this with my tutor and she says that it's not ... properly, you know, not completely appropriate – but – it's fine, because of the fact that I still stick to my draft. – Even if I see that I've made a mistake, I will still ah ... keep with my draft.</p>	<p>his own.</p> <p>73. Interviewer.</p> <p>74. C uses information gained in the assessment situation to finish his preparation for the final assessment. His answer is then as good as it can be.</p> <p>75. Interviewer.</p> <p>76. C believes he is complying with the rules of assessment, if not the spirit. His tutor authority-other is not in agreement with this method but allows it to pass. C does not commit himself to an answer until the last moment.</p>
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<p>But, I elaborate further on different ideas, in my tutorial. Erm. Ja. So, I haven't had any complaints about it yet.</p> <p>77. So what sort of marks do you normally get when you do these things?</p> <p>78. Well, you only get 3 marks – you get 0, 1, 2. And that's: you didn't do it, you did it and understand, you did it well. Erm ... I get ... on bits and pieces, I get between 1 and 2. So ... some weeks it's 1, some weeks it's 2.</p> <p>79. It depends on ... how much work I have done for it.</p> <p>80. So that, I could probably presume that, er, the one that I did today, I'm going to get a 1 for. Erm ... last week's one I got a 1 for – but I did exactly the same like tonight – er last night, it was late.</p> <p>81. However, I've done one in my past that I've gotten a 2 for. And that was when I'd taken a Sunday afternoon to do it, rather than a Sunday night – or, Monday morning.</p> <p>82. So sometimes, under certain circumstances, you are actually able to do the work before the last moment.</p> <p>83. Ja.</p> <p>84. Do you prefer doing it that way? ... Would it make your life easier?</p>	<p>77. Interviewer.</p> <p>78. Grading for C's participation is generally good to very good.</p> <p>79. C's grade is dependent on the amount of work he has done.</p> <p>80. C is good when he has done this much work.</p> <p>81. C expects to be very good if he does more work by starting earlier.</p> <p>82. Interviewer.</p> <p>83. C is able to start earlier.</p> <p>84. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>85. Oh, tons. It would take a lot of strain off my heart, a lot of stress out of my brain. Er ... but ... (pause) ... I find that if I were to do that, my biggest thing – and, it's weird, take nothing away, erm but, it's not 'me' to work like that. (pause)</p> <p>86. This is where – I don't know if I'm similar or not to other procrastinators, which is not, the main issue ... when I ... when I like, do work, -</p> <p>87. the fact that I procrastinate, is because, I know, that's ... who I am ... do procrastinate ... the way I do. Em ... I prefer to talk to people about completely arb things – rather than actually sit down and do any of my work.</p> <p>88. I know that I do enjoy – I do enjoy working, if it's for things like politics or philosophy – I do enjoy it. ... If I could sit down, er ... with at least some determination, to get through the work – and actually sit down with not having the complete apathy of not wanting to do it, but actually sit down and say, 'Lets do it now' ... then ... do stuff, because of the fact that I don't want to do the work. I would actually be a bit happier.</p> <p>89. What is it about that work that makes you not want to do it?</p> <p>90. I think it's ... got a lot to do with the fact that – which I've just been thinking about now, actually – a lot to do with the fact of – the fact that it is an obligation. ... I'm not a person that likes ... to be obligated to do this. Y'know, you have to do it, for specific reasons.</p>	<p>85. C prefers to start the work earlier as it causes less physical and mental stress. But it is not C to work in this way.</p> <p>86. C doesn't know if other procrastinators behave the same as he does.</p> <p>87. C procrastinates because that's who he is and he would rather talk and socialise than work.</p> <p>88. C enjoys tasks such as politics and philosophy – and wishes he could sit down and get on with the work without experiencing his usual feeling of apathy. This would make him happier.</p> <p>89. Interviewer.</p> <p>90. C doesn't like to start work when he feels obligated to do so. C doesn't like to feel obligated to do things.</p>
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<p>91. Er ... I know that I've had issues already with my DP being (indecipherable – but gives the impression of 'jeopardised') twice – because of obligations – y'know, you have to attend so many lectures, and you have to attend these other tutorials. And I've already missed one tutorial, and they said OK, but now, I've missed too many of the lectures, and my DP is ... With Politics there's no obligation ... to actually go to the lectures – but I go to every single lecture. (pause) Erm ...</p>	<p>91. C experiences practical difficulties resulting from obligations not complied with.</p>
<p>92. Why do you think that is?</p>	<p>92. Interviewer.</p>
<p>93. Because it is something that ... because it is something that I highly, highly, highly enjoy. Em ... and, it's one of my key interests in life. Erm ... But then added to that as well, because it's ... (long pause) ... ja ... because there's not obligation, to have to do it, - and I enjoy doing it. It's as soon as someone – for me, it's as soon as someone puts an obligation on me to work, like ... (pause)</p>	<p>93. C attends lectures if he enjoys the work and is not obligated to do so.</p>
<p>94. I am a very – I don't like being like this. Em, I've got a very ... I've got a mind set that I don't like – I don't do things, to make other people ... (pause) ... rephrase my words ... (pause) ... - There's parts of me that care a lot about what people think. I don't like being fitted into a slot ... and said, that's who I am. That's ... I'm completely against that. Em. I don't, ... it's not,... who I ... I can't er ... I don't like to be filed and slotted in anything. As a number, and a person, - and y'know that's who you are, for the rest of your life, or whatever.</p>	<p>94. C doesn't like being this way. C cares what others think of him. C does not want to be incorrectly assessed by others.</p>
<p>95. I mean, basically, I still would prefer if you didn't</p>	<p>95. C has concerns about</p>

<p>have to hand stuff in. er, simply because, when you, when I write something out, you get, as I said, you get one normally set of statements. Even if you elaborate for more than one side, you still get those understandings –</p> <p>96. – but then when you come to the tutorial, someone comes with a new idea, and you argue about and everything, and then you get these new insights - and I want to put down on paper. Because I think that it's vital. Even if I just know about it, it's vital that you must put it down –</p> <p>97. ja, I do believe it's got to do with a bit, how I value people see me.</p> <p>98. You want the assessor to know you've had them (ideas). Because maybe, a person who has had <i>all</i> thoughts, is then not able to be criticised. But a person who is missing some thoughts –</p> <p>99. – can be criticised. Ja. That does make quite a bit of sense.</p> <p>100. It seems if – OK I've been through my whole life, being, knowing, stuff, and being slightly more knowledgeable about a lot of stuff than most people. So I make it a part of me to go out and learn things, new, erm, because I want to have that knowledge.</p> <p>101. And it's not that – although I always question my, the reason why – it's not that I want to be a know-it-all ... but then again, it is.</p>	<p>handing written work in that it will be an inadequate representation of his thoughts.</p> <p>96. This is so when viewpoints are put forward that he hasn't included in his written work..</p> <p>97. This will affect others' evaluation of C.</p> <p>98. Interviewer.</p> <p>99. A person who has had <i>all</i> thoughts will not be able to be criticised</p> <p>100. C wants to have more knowledge than others.</p> <p>101. C wants to be a know-it-all.</p>
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<p>102. I like to know things. I like to know things that people don't. I like to teach people things. I don't want to be a teacher, but ... I do love that whole ... erm, you know, someone comes up and, you know, you tell them something new, and they actually, they say, Oh, OK, I didn't know that. I do enjoy that feel. Erm. (pause) ...</p>	<p>102. C enjoys having knowledge that others do not and then passing it on to them.</p>
<p>103. How I've gotten by ... and you know, how ... never ... I've just basically, I've, you know, when I've learned something new, (pause) I could say I've maybe conned myself or whatever into just stating that – no I already knew it. So I just put it back in to my knowledge, stating that it's not new, that I already knew about it, that I already knew about it. But er, ja, actually, I still do learn quite a bit of things, every day.</p>	<p>103. C deceives himself that he already knows new facts he hears.</p>
<p>104. So you don't enjoy the feeling of –</p>	<p>104. Interviewer.</p>
<p>105. (interrupts) – being 'out of the know'.</p>	<p>105. C does not like to not know everything.</p>
<p>106. . ' Em. What is that feeling about; that dread – what is it you dread?</p>	<p>106. Interviewer</p>
<p>107. I'm thinking that actually I, I, but, it is, it is a dread. But I don't know exactly what I'm supposed to be ... what I'm dreading. I just know that when it comes to me thinking about actually getting on with work, there's this –</p>	<p>107. C dreads working on a task but does not understand why.</p>
<p>108. I get this incredible sense where, Number 1, I really don't want to. I really don't feel like doing the work at all. Just like. OK.</p>	<p>108. C's response to a task-obligation is to intensely not want to do it.</p>

<p>109. Number 2, - I really don't care about the work that I'm going to be doing. Erm.</p>	<p>109. C's response to a task-obligation is that he does not care about it.</p>
<p>110. Be it the fact that it might be, my most interesting thing, I really don't – I couldn't really care enough to sit down and do it.</p>	<p>110. This is despite the participant matter being something C says he is interested in.</p>
<p>111. But then there's that awful feeling of that absolute, like, (pause) because I don't care enough and because I don't want to, it becomes such a core feeling, that it's actually this, almost this er, really, ja this dread or hate towards the work.</p>	<p>111. C does not care about the work. He dreads and hates it.</p>
<p>112. Dread or hate? Could it also be interpreted as an intense feeling of unsureness?</p>	<p>112. Interviewer.</p>
<p>113. Oh yes! (Enthusiastic realisation)</p>	<p>113. C feels unsure of himself.</p>
<p>114. Because when we dread something –</p>	<p>114. Interviewer.</p>
<p>115. (interrupts) – it's because we're not sure about them –</p>	<p>115. C dreads things he is not sure about.</p>
<p>116. Do we always dread what we don't know about or do we sometimes dread stuff we do know about?</p>	<p>116. Interviewer.</p>
<p>117. Ja. I think it's ... I do get a very, strong feeling about uncertainty, because like, you know, you do one political tut, you get 76%, you do another political to your totality – you know you want to keep a certain standing – and I don't want to ...</p>	<p>117. C is anxious about uncertainty and wants to maintain a good impression.</p>

<p>118. I get dread because I don't want to like, write something that I believe is right, and then have it be wrong.</p> <p>119. That, I mean that for me is a horrific.</p> <p>120. That's something to dread, is it?</p> <p>121. I feel that actually does pose a good point to it. I don't (long pause) ... well, it definitely is a key part, about the fact that I really do want to understand more ... I need to, either, I would say that I have ... an embedded need to actually ... understand work, I need to understand what I'm doing and everything, and if I don't, I really feel ... like a dunce.</p> <p>122. – <i>That's</i> what I feel. Not really with the rough draft, but with the final thoughts. You know actually <i>stating</i> them, OK, erm, I got this idea, this idea, this idea, this ... right now I'm going to wrap this all up in one final idea, that – I can't do that. I don't want to.</p> <p>123. Because, as soon as you do that, you close yourself off. You close your argument off, you close your ... insights and everything off. And once that happens, you don't allow yourself open-mindedness to allow new insights in. At the point. You have to. See I think that ... right up until the thing and after, still experience a few insights. And I don't want to close myself off that. Or, write my answer, which does not have an insight I haven't experienced yet.</p> <p>124. Mm. I want to like show that I'm seeing it from the broadest perspective, as well as in the broadest</p>	<p>118. C dreads writing something he believes is right and it be wrong.</p> <p>119. This prospect horrifies C.</p> <p>120. Interviewer.</p> <p>121. C needs to understand all things and if he does not, will feel inadequate.</p> <p>122. The final draft is C's final thoughts and ideas that he is unwilling to present.</p> <p>123. The final draft can not be further altered and reflect any new insights that are gained. It is the final intellectual statement.</p> <p>124. C does not want to be considered lacking in any aspect</p>
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<p>perspective, detailed into every perspective there is. So, you see it from, everything, as the whole, and you see it, the whole, with all its bits and pieces.</p> <p>125. All of the answers?</p> <p>126. Ja. And I know that it's quite a possible thing to actually do. I understand that. But it's still, I still, I dislike ... not that I dislike it – I know you can't get 100% all the time, I understand that, and even when I get my 71% and so on, it's like, you know, I'm happy about giving this ... - better than some of the marks I've had, but the fact that, in a tutorial, you know, someone comes up with an insight that, she, they're there – all your insights and one more, I kind of think, well, why didn't I think of that? Why didn't I go into - what happened that it blocked off?</p> <p>127. And how do you feel about yourself that you didn't think it?</p> <p>128. Erm. Well. It's kind of a bit of a mixture. (pause) I feel slightly , erm, - I wouldn't say upset, but I feel like, oh well, OK, I was stupid like, I should have thought of it. A real, - it was common logic, ... kind of thought. Erm. (pause) ... I can't say that I feel ashamed, cos I don't really. No, I accept that some people can see things in different ways that I can. It's just, I don't particularly enjoy it when I haven't thought about it as well.</p> <p>129. Like, ... in an argument, we have, there's an argument going on, between me and my friend, I always seem to just get a little stumped, which is like</p>	<p>of his answer.</p> <p>125. Interviewer.</p> <p>126. C believes it possible to have all answers and is frustrated if he does not have them.</p> <p>127. Interviewer.</p> <p>128. C must have all answers in order to be satisfactory.</p> <p>129. If another is more knowledgeable, C loses status in the relationship with them.</p>
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<p>probably what everyone does, when he throws in a new argument that I haven't heard. Then I go – then I have to take that, consider it, ja, and as soon as you start considering on something, you're gone – they've got the upper hand. You've lost your foot exactly and now you have to re-establish your argument, re-establish ... where, you haven't had that before.</p> <p>130. You're on the defensive?</p> <p>131. Ja. You're not on the offensive. And, that I don't like. That is something that I really don't like, I don't like having my work, it's like it being, on the defensive. At a point. If a new argument has been put forward.</p> <p>132. And yet you say that, when you get into the work, you really do enjoy it. That feeling of –</p> <p>133. (interrupts) – exploration. I really do, yeah. Last night, last night, today and yesterday I thoroughly enjoyed it, the idea of politic – of, of Africa. You know, when you get into like a little safe section like er, trade, or – you start arguing about – how, erm, you know, the colonising powers took everything that they had developed in Africa, leaving Africa poor. And then, you know, when Africa, now that Africa needs, now they've put in these trade things, and say, ja, you know, you can buy stuff from us, that's fine. Now, Africa doesn't have any money to pay, so you buy on credit, - now that's why we've got this huge debt on our – on our shoulders. You know, that whole, exploration in different fields, I do enjoy it. (pause) Still.</p> <p>134. There's that ... Even though I'm enjoying the</p>	<p>130. Interviewer.</p> <p>131. C doesn't wish to be on the defensive.</p> <p>132. Interviewer.</p> <p>133. C enjoys exploring new intellectual areas within territory he is familiar with.</p> <p>134. Even when C has enjoyed</p>
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<p>work, loving the work, I still have a feature that, once the work's finished, I don't think about it.</p> <p>135. OK. Up until the point when I have to argue about it. Or, get it remarked, or whatever. Get it marked. But, before, before I'm finished, I'm like, this is going to be critiqued – have I said it properly, have I written it properly, erm, you know, everything like, down to, going, reading and reading and reading over the same paragraph, just making sure everything ... makes sense. So ja.</p> <p>136. You said that you had a feeling of 'obligation' to do the work. You said that 'When I get into it I really enjoy doing it I love it, expressing opinions. ... It's just the fact that I have the obligation to work is what makes me not want to work.'</p> <p>137. That's a major factor, in me not working. ... See, if you have a choice of doing it, normally you express it in a very opinionated – and a very ... and you enjoyed it. Like, me being passionate about the fact that I'm liberal. You know, when I argue about it, I argue and I'm very passionate about it – but, if I'm obligated to do something, then I have a, this kind of, sense that, well, if I'm obligated, I really don't want to do it.</p> <p>138. So tell me what the word obligated means.</p> <p>139. Well, obligated is the sense that erm, first of all that, you have to do it. There's a sense of this ... need, but over the need, that you actually <i>have</i> to do it.</p> <p>140. Where does the '<i>have to</i>' come from?</p>	<p>a task, once it is finished he does not dwell on it.</p> <p>135. C is anxious about how well he has performed the task, but only until it is has been submitted.</p> <p>136. Interviewer.</p> <p>137. C does not want to do things that he is obligated to do.</p> <p>138. Interviewer.</p> <p>139. Obligated means not only necessary, but required.</p> <p>140. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>141. From the people who prepped the course – who started the course. The Deans, the – no they've written, OK, that you have to attend this many tutorials, this many lectures or whatever, - not with politics however, but anyway, and you have to er, submit a certain amount of questions, now, although the questions are quite cool, and they're enjoyable,</p> <p>142. – when you hit like, a set of questions that aren't that enjoyable, I get an immediate sense of, well, I really don't want to do them. You know I don't, if I won't enjoy writing answers to them, then why should I give them.</p> <p>143. And why won't you enjoy writing answers to them?</p> <p>144. Well because either they, either they dealing with very mundane stuff, like, you know, definitions and, really, ... theoretical stuff – I really don't like that. That's not one of my favourites.</p> <p>145. I want to deal with, stuff we've already spoken about, you know, I want to explore more, newer, versions of thinking. You know, so they give you something that you have to go back and think about and create. Not that you constantly go back to old stuff. Or for whatever other reason. Simply the fact that – I have to do it, brings about the sense that I really don't want to. I don't want to be restricted in it.</p> <p>146. Two last questions: one small one and one bigger one. Just tell me again, in your own words, what this business of judgement is all about. What's being</p>	<p>141. This requirement is from authority others.</p> <p>142. When the going gets difficult for C, he doesn't want to participate.</p> <p>143. Interviewer.</p> <p>144. C doesn't like to answer questions as he is concerned it will reveal his lack of command of that material.</p> <p>145. C prefers to create new versions of ideas and make it impossible for his work to be compared with existing ideas and assessed in that fashion.</p> <p>146. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>judged and how you feel about that judgement.</p> <p>147. Well I believe that, er, two things are being judged, mainly, my intellect and my insights. And I feel – I don't feel cool about that. In a, in a true sense. I understand the need for it, you know, you have to do it, because, you know, you're developed for it.</p> <p>148. But, I don't like being – I love arguing, because, arguing is me testing my own. You know I have tested my arguing skills so I always keep them always refined by arguing all the time</p> <p>149. I keep my intellect skills up by, er, constantly er, learning new things. However when, when someone else is testing it, when I'm being tested for, on a certain amount of work or something, there I find that's actually ... (pause) ... and my arguments are being tested, I find that I really don't enjoy it. Because I don't want to be assessed as something by someone other than myself. I don't think, ag, it's got to with other things, but, it isn't much to do with it, but it's like, I just don't like the feeling of being judged.</p> <p>150. So you don't like being judged by other people?</p> <p>151. No. It's like ... I know this is like, breaking it up, but, even I judge people. I'm not saying that, you know, I don't mind judgement, but, I don't like having my intellect and understanding questioned.</p> <p>152. If ... we were to talk just about 'existence', ... if you were to lose your intellect, or your intellect were to – disappear, how much would you exist?</p>	<p>147. When C's intellect and insights are judged, he does not feel happy about that.</p> <p>148. C would rather debate.</p> <p>149. C endeavours to maintain his intellect but does not like it to be tested.</p> <p>150. Interviewer.</p> <p>151. C does not like to have his intellect and understanding questioned..</p> <p>152. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>153. Er ... well, ... - I don't believe you would.</p> <p>154. You don't think so?</p> <p>155. Mm-mm. I think that ... the reason is because ... if, if your intellect and understanding goes, right, although there is a real world, out here, that, others perceive you ... I believe that as soon as your intellect and your understanding and your brain activity is, lost, almost completely, then you as a person is lost.</p> <p>156. So what about if you just lost the ability to be 'good' intellectually? – in your own personal world –</p> <p>157. Well. If I were to lose that like, now – I would ... I would actually be, very upset. Because, ... my intellect ... is my uniqueness. Not that I'm unique in being intellectual, but, it makes me unique – it makes me different. It's – I have different drives than other people, I have different ... er ... wants, and er, how can I say, ja – turn-ons.</p> <p>158. But. Y'know, because I'm on – on a – I don't want to like, say it, but, it always sounds, every time I try to put it like, out – it sounds like I'm slightly, - egotistical and everything – but, it seems to be that ... where some people – OK – I'll put it in different words – some people are on a different plane ... of their drives – I'm on a real intellectual one, which, makes me apart from society, but also, you know, it can make me slightly respected by it.</p> <p>159. I mean, I know, my friends, er, they say that</p>	<p>153. C's intellect is what fundamentally constitutes him.</p> <p>154. Interviewer.</p> <p>155. If C's intellectual ability is lost, so is his personhood.</p> <p>156. Interviewer.</p> <p>157. C's intellect is his uniqueness, his individuality and his self.</p> <p>158. C exists intellectually because of the knowledge he has and it is through this that he derives respect.</p> <p>159. C gets confirmation in this</p>
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<p>although, yes, I'm really different, and I've got, you know, I'm, really interesting – they respect me because I was, I'm, I'm quite different from most other people. Because I've got these different drives, because I know, like, random stuff. And, I know a lot about, - a bit – well, I know a bit about everything. Almost. I also know specifics about other things. You know. Which is what makes me me. The fact that enjoy knowing these things and enjoy exploring new ideas and everything, is, what makes me me.</p> <p>160. If I was becoming just normal, regular, intellectually, would really ... stiff me.</p> <p>161. That's why ... although there's a side of me that actually says, you know, I don't care about the marks, - the marks are – they're meaningless to me, because you know, they're different, I'm indifferent to them, - there is a side of me that actually says, that actually those marks are very important.</p>	<p>way from others of his existence and respect for it from others.</p> <p>160. If C was viewed as normal, intellectually, that would demean him.</p> <p>161. C wishes to believe that marks are meaningless – but the marks he is given are very important to him.</p>
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Situated Structure - Participant 'C'

Inadequate completion of an academic task will reveal to the participant (C), his peers and an important assessing authority other than C is inadequate.

C is anxious when considering commencement of an obligated task that is never far from his mind. C reduces anxiety by preparing a favourable environment in which to work. 'Tomorrow' is always viewed as such.

C avoids the task and engages in activities that are pleasurable and diversionary.

C's anticipation of engagement with required reading for the task invokes anxiety that the content will not be understood. C scans the required reading material in a superficial way that does not reveal to him if he is unable to understand it. Sufficient familiarity only is gained with the material to permit C to give the impression to himself and others of having read and understood it.

C commences rote parts of the task which do not commit him to it fully and experiences an anxiety-reducing sense of making progress towards completion of the task. C constantly recalculates the amount of time left until his deadline to ensure it will be met, so the authority other who set the task and deadline will not be disappointed.

In time, it is apparent to C that committing to and engaging with the task is less anxiety-provoking than the prospect of not meeting the authority other's deadline. Whilst C is obligated to commence the task, the trapped-ness of that makes C angry as well as anxious.

C commences the task proper and is overcome by intense lethargy which is likened to dread in response to the prospect of his performance being considered inadequate by an authority other. C completes his task at the last moment when there is no time left to improve it. C is sure the task could have been done better – but by how much is not necessary to contend with as there is no time to improve.

C submits his task but is anxious it is a representation of himself that will not be satisfactory if he has not provided all answers. C is anxious that whoever assesses his work will think it is all he is capable of and they will equate poor-quality work with the poor quality of his person. C constructs answers to task-questions from an obscure angle so his ability to understand the source material can not easily be assessed. When called upon to present himself through his thoughts to an authority other, C avoids this and does not wish to commit himself to a final answer. C does not wish to attract criticism. Criticism of his work is equivalent to criticism of his self. The more complete is C's knowledge about all things, the more complete as a person he will be and C does not wish to be seen by others as lacking.

Lack of knowledge concerning a topic that has been introduced by an authority other makes C anxious as he desires to make a good impression. C prefers discussion as a means of assessment which allows him to continuously amend his position in relation to his assessor and maximise the chance of a favourable review. C does not finish written work until he can accommodate in his written answer, peer others' and the assessor's views and insights which will then allow him to be seen to be fully knowledgeable.

Work submitted is not thought about until it is returned after assessment. In this interim, C is able not to dwell on the possibility of inadequacy.

Situated Structure – Participant ‘A’

A delays until the last minute before starting an important task. A claims no opportunity to engage with the task, but does spend time in activities that are of no consequence to the task. A adopts any excuse not to engage with the task. A is however never free from an obligation to perform the task which is constantly in the back of her mind. A feels guilt at non-engagement with the task.

A prefers a moment in the early morning to commence the task, when everything has been prepared. When this idealised situation is not met, the day is spoiled for work. Any obstacle to A's plan contaminates it and the plan is entirely ruined.

Making lists and cleaning her work environment permit A to consider she is working on the task, without being fully engaged with it.

A is anxious at not making progress but gains relief by telling herself that the present is not the right time to work. The promise seen in 'tomorrow' is preferable to the reality of today. When tomorrow becomes today and A does not begin, anxiety exists until A is able to believe again it is not the right time to work. This is repeated in a cycle of days, weeks, months – and years.

A avoids authority others to whom she feels obligated to be engaged with her task. A deceives the authority others that she is in control and making progress. Authority others disapprove of A if she is not working on the task and A manipulates their perception of her progress to allow her to continue to delay.

If the task is commenced without the pressure of a deadline, A's resolve quickly weakens. If a break is taken, the inclination to work passes. A does not wish to engage with the task but becomes angry with others if her lack of progress is able to be considered to be their fault.

When there is no structured, other-enforced schedule to comply with, A is mentally paralysed and is unable to make progress. Approaching deadlines produce anxiety. Anxiety that the work has not been done eventually exceeds the relief at not doing it, and the task is commenced.

A accurately assesses the task's final deadline, which is often the result of arranging an extension to an earlier deadline, and the task is completed at the last moment. Completion of a task is preferable to rejection by the authority other for not meeting the final deadline. Doing work at the last moment is a good excuse for not doing it well: if A had worked all the time available on a task, expectations of her would be very high.

A's goal is to please others and gain their approval. A gets to know what the others want so she can give it to them and satisfy them. Not knowing how to do this makes A insecure. When A is not confident what a task requires of her, she wants the reassurance of being told what to do. She does not however want to be criticised for not knowing what to do. A acts so there is no opportunity to be criticised by authority others.

A is concerned if authority-others or peer-others see her as a failure as she will believe they are correct. A's satisfaction with her performance in a task can only be achieved through the satisfaction of an authority other.

Prior success is of no consequence in the face of a new task. A compares her progress with others'. A questions the value of her self in relation to others and is anxious she be considered of low value. A's sense of self-worth is based on completion of a task and feels useless if she does not complete it satisfactorily. Criticism of A's work is equivalent to criticism of A's self, and rejection of her task-efforts is equivalent to rejection of her self. Not completing a task to an authority other's satisfaction is the 'end of the world' as how good her task performance is, is an indication of how good A is.

Authority figures however lose power over A if they approve of her.

A sets higher standards for herself than others. For others not to achieve does not diminish them, but for A not to achieve makes her sub-standard. It is unfair that A has these demands of herself, but cannot escape them. Others' requirements of A take precedence over those she might have of herself and others' requirements can be unpredictably changeable. When A completes a task, she can not own the credit for it as A could always do better. Negative opinions are more believable than positive ones. Another will not have a positive opinion of A without an ulterior motive.

Standards are set high for A, and rather than be congratulated for good marks, deficiencies are pointed out. Imperfection is a permanent record that A is not good enough and should keep trying to improve.

A task is equivalent to an emotional relationship: it is in another's control. Failure in the task and therefore 'relationship' is painful and A is distraught at the rejection.

Situated Structure - Participant 'B'

B has good time-management skills and completes work at the last minute.

When delaying, B engages in activities she would not if there was no onerous task outstanding. B is thereby occupied without having to be involved with the obligated task. B becomes angry when she is aware of this strategy.

B has a continuous intention to engage with the work but does not do so. 'Tomorrow' is a satisfactory time for B to resolve to commit to the task. When there is no pressing deadline, a commitment does not translate to action.

B tells herself she will work soon, but later. B accepts her own reassurances that other non-important tasks must be undertaken immediately, even if she knows this is not true. B blames forces beyond her control for her lack of progress.

Despite all experience to the contrary that she will complete the task satisfactorily, B is reticent to start and so reveal her unsatisfactory intellectual ability.

Academia is a competition with others. B understates her progress on a task when speaking to others she views as competitors. B sets up low expectations which if they are met, mean she does not disappoint others. By exceeding the low expectations she has set up, B is thought clever.

B does not delay over rote work which is not seen as revealing of her intellectual capacity. Tasks which require intellect and where her performance may be judged to be of poor quality make B anxious.

Before starting a task, B is agitated. When work is begun in advance of a deadline and a break is taken, B does not return to the task. B feels satisfied by making a start and the feeling of satisfaction is sufficient in the short term.

B repeats this cycle of behaviour until the nearness of the deadline means there is no further escape from the work. Tension increases, and B becomes moody, irrational and aggressive.

B does not compare her progress towards completion of the task with others' – B is concerned only with the deadline. When B calculates that if the work is not begun immediately, there will not be enough time to finish, she makes a start. B works long hours at a stretch and completes the task at the last minute. B believes she could have done better and wishes she had spent more time on the task.

The assessment of her performance in a task is very important. The possibility of poor assessment is made less threatening by B having started and completed the work at the last moment. The work is only representative of B at the last minute, rather than B at her best.

When B completes work before it is due she is anxious and unable to relax as she realises there is time to consider what improvement can be made. B always believes her work could be improved, but does not take the opportunity as to do so would be to allow the work to reflect too closely what she is capable of doing and would be revealing to others of her true intellectual capacity: a task performed using all of the time available to do the best job B is capable of would be too anxiety-provoking.

B gets to know the assessor of a task to determine what they want, so it can be given to them. B is ambivalent about this information as complying with it allows assessment to be too easy for the assessor. Instead, B does things differently.

B takes assessment of her work to be equivalent to assessment of her self and is concerned that an opinion of her intellectual task performance as inadequate will be extended to be a general statement about her person. B does not want to be thought to be lacking intellectually. B makes direct criticism impossible by completing the task at the last minute.

B hands in the task to be assessed, then immediately puts it from her mind.

When B receives high marks for work she has submitted, she does not accept that the work is as good as the mark suggests. High marks in relation to the amount of work she has put in worry B that the world is not real. B feels artificial – that she is an impostor amongst others who are genuinely qualified to be present.

B does not like her intellect to be valued in case it is not valued highly. B views her intellect and her person to be the same thing. B would not consider herself to exist if she lost her ability to be intellectual. B considers marks she receives to be evidence of her existence and the quality of it. B does not want to leave the university environment where existence is confirmed in this way for fear that she will not know how well she is existing.

B is concerned about the amount of success she can achieve. She is afraid of finding out how much success she is capable of achieving as that would set a limit to her existence: she would know the limit of her person.

B has different criteria for herself than for the rest of the world: her standards for herself are higher. For herself B wishes that a good judgement be of her true ability, rather than the unreal one she has submitted.

B does not strive for perfection. That would be a neurotic striving as perfection is unattainable.

Situated Structure – Participant 'D'

All work D does is a reflection of him and this is particularly so of tasks he believes to be revealing of his intellectual ability which he submits to authority others for appraisal.

Before commencing such tasks D is confident of his ability, though preparation must still be undertaken prior to committing himself to them.

D puts tasks off one day at a time. At the outset D easily accepts excuses he makes to himself not to start work. Anxiety results when D considers the reduced time left to complete the task but the anxiety is put aside by a promise to himself to begin tomorrow.

When D does not start work tomorrow he attributes this to environmental factors outside of his control.

Anxiety caused by task-related inactivity is allayed by engaging in non-threatening elements of the task. D is then in control and conceives that progress is being made and anxiety subsides. While enjoying having no anxiety, D ceases work. D repeatedly reassesses how much time is left to complete the task and reassures himself that by starting tomorrow he will be able to finish.

D sets goals which require engagement with the task. D however does not wish to be engaged with it, so takes a break. When a break is taken, anxiety builds up but is removed by again resolving to work tomorrow.

When a deadline is too close to permit further delay, D begins in earnest and completes non-threatening elements of the task first. D could do these better, but is under pressure from the limited time remaining and easily disengages from those segments of the task. D finally starts work because a bad result is preferable to no result.

D's intellect is an important part of his being and without it feels he does not exist entirely. D is afraid when required to commit to ideas and thoughts that will be assessed by an authority other. Having done work at the last minute excuses lack of quality – but D is concerned the assessing authority other will not know of this condition and think poor quality work is all D is capable of.

D sets great store in others' opinion of him, and particularly of work which reveals his thoughts and understanding. Others' opinions of D's work is equivalent to their opinion of his person and is an assessment of whether he is good or bad. A bad assessment makes D feel bad throughout himself and affects his self-esteem negatively. Receiving a bad mark affects D adversely but receiving a good mark does not affect him positively.

When D starts a task that is to be evaluated at the last moment, he does not do it as well as he could, but doesn't leave enough time to do it properly. Starting things at the last minute means not having to accept responsibility for them if they are not of good quality. D equates himself with his work and does not wish to take responsibility for work he has done if it is assessed as sub-standard, as D would have to accept that he too is sub-standard. As D becomes more familiar with a type of task, he begins work on it ever closer to the deadline. This gives ever less opportunity for D to be equated with the work if it is assessed as of poor quality.

Situated Structure – Participant 'E'

E does not procrastinate on all tasks. E does not procrastinate on routine or rote-learning tasks which require effort but not intellectual thought.

The assessment result of rote learning is possible to be faultless. The study of science has appeal as there is no opinion about answers and E would know when knowledge was missing.

It is important to E that she performs well, academically. Academic essay writing is anxiety-provoking as there is a necessity for new ideas. Anxiety is provoked by the thought of not doing such tasks well, or in a new, fresh way. Anxiety is provoked at the thought of being mediocre. When understanding is necessary, the task is difficult for E to commence. E is anxious she will not understand academic readings and commences only when they cannot be put off any longer.

E delays starting, telling herself that there is further preparation required though she knows this is not so. Instead, E engages in social, diversionary activities as they are more important.

E makes a skeleton plan in order to be engaged with the task, yet knows she is in reality, not. Anxiety develops. It is not possible for E to enjoy herself whilst procrastinating as guilt lingers.

E postpones engagement with the task past the intended time of commencement. Anxiety ensues and E is motivated to start work on the task.

E completes the task to a standard she deems adequate for the time spent, but which is not as good as it would have been had she invested more time.

Delay in starting permits E an excuse for not doing well. When E leaves something until the last minute she does not have to take responsibility for a poor task result as would be the case if she had spent all the time available on it. E is not accountable for work she does at the last moment. E does not consider such work a reflection of her true ability. E is scared to face the prospect that she might be academically inept and in delaying prevents herself from having to contend with the fact that she might not be competent to do well.

E is distressed when she sets herself standards but does not live up to them. E is scared of doing well, but also of not doing well. If E achieves a high standard for herself she is anxious she will have to maintain that high standard.

E is assessed by others on the strength of the work she hands in. The work E hands in is also an assessment of how she feels about herself and the extent to which she is able to be satisfied with the standard she operates at.

E enjoys people thinking she is good at what she does but is anxious that they will expect this to continue, which is stressful.

E is anxious about discovering the limit of her talent: she is concerned that it might not be as extensive as she wishes it to be.

A General Structure of Procrastinating Behaviour

When an onerous task is undertaken, participants have no intention to delay and plan to make steady progress towards a timeous completion. Early progress may be made, but with rote elements of the task that are not considered to be revealing of intellectual ability.

While there is ample time until the task must be completed, participants distract themselves with activities that are of no consequence to completion of the task. As the completion time becomes closer, participants distract themselves with activities they perceive as more relevant to the task, but which are not yet direct engagement with it.

Motivation to engage directly with the task will arise only from a source that is external to participants, such as a time-deadline. Participants meet time-deadlines with skill and accuracy, but at the expense of completing the task to their complete satisfaction. Participants always feel they could have done better.

Participants engage in self-deception, when, despite all previous evidence to the contrary, they show confidence that on this occasion they will not delay. Participants engage in further self-deception when they reassure themselves that having not made adequate progress today, they will do so tomorrow. Tomorrow is always another today, until it is accompanied by an immovable time-deadline.

Peers undertaking the same task are viewed as competitors by participants. When communicating with peers, participants convey they have made little progress. This intends peers will not have high expectations of participants.

Participants rationalise that if they then perform the task poorly, it will be perceived as due to not having spent all the time available working on it. This tactic has further benefit in that if participants are assessed to have performed the task well, they will be considered clever to have succeeded after investing less effort than peers. Being thought clever is a positive outcome to participants; being thought not-clever is a negative outcome. Participants' deception of the assessing authority-other intends to convey the opposite of that to peers: that they are more engaged with the task than is so.

Anxiety is experienced by participants contemplating their non-engagement with the task. Participants do not experience anxiety if they are occupied by distractions which permit them to not think about the task. Anger may be reported, but at objects or circumstances perceived as preventing progress with the task, rather than at themselves for not making progress.

A procrastinated-over task has significance to participants that it is more than merely a chore to be completed. Instead it is a demand to perform well in relation to others' expectations. Approval is sought by participants through satisfactory assessment of their performance by an authority-other. A poor assessment is to be avoided and participants endeavour to make direct comparison of their performance with that of peers difficult, by doing things differently. Participants interpret poor assessment or rejection of their work as equivalent to poor assessment or rejection of their self.

Participants are concerned if the work they produce is thought the best they are capable of, rather than the best they were capable of in the limited time taken to complete it. Participants judge themselves by harsher criteria than they apply to others. Poor marks are viewed negatively but good marks are not viewed positively. Participants are likely to believe criticism and discount

praise. Receiving praise from an authority-other however diminishes the value of the opinion of that authority-other. Participants do not aim for perfection as it is not considered to be achievable.

Participants lack insight into their motives but do perceive a benefit to their behaviour in that work done in a time shorter than that available will permit them to conceive they could have done better, and how 'good' they are will not be revealed by the work they have presented.

Participants equate what they do with who they are, and their intellectual being with the 'goodness' of their physical presence. They are concerned that if their intellect is not good then their self is also, in the view of important others, similarly not good. This is to be avoided at all costs.

Discussion of the Data

1. A Development of Themes Elicited from Participant Protocols

As has been noted, it is an essential part of the phenomenological method to derive and state individuals' personal experience of a phenomenon as a *Situated Structure*, as well as to generate an overall statement of the experience as a *General Structure*. This General Structure is thus intended to reveal the essences of the experience under investigation, set free from attachment to any particular individual's experience.

This is an excellent way to approach an understanding of the fundamental nature of an experience. However such a procedure does not mean that the detail out of which the essential generalities were extracted should cease to be of interest. For example, it might be the case that as a general rule, instead of commencing with a task participants are likely to indulge in other activities that are not related to making progress with it. But if it is also revealed that such diversionary activity is pursued with a dedication that results in some participants reading books or watching DVDs they have read or seen many times before, the importance of this detail which would otherwise be missed, is highlighted.

Consequently, in addition to the Situated and General Structures which have been derived, and through which we have sought to divest the report of individual detail in search of the fundamental essences of procrastinating behaviour, this research has also sought to compile an additional, composite, real-world view of the behaviour, constructed from examples in the protocols that were taken.

It will be seen, of course, that similar themes as were described in the General Structure will be found again in the detail which follows – however it is hoped that this elucidation will contribute a lived-reality dimension to the description of the fundamental essences. This stage of the description, to distinguish it from the Situated or General Structures, will be named the *Composite Reality*. It is moreover intended that this Composite Reality will be useful tool to enable comparison of the phenomenological research results with those gained by other methodologies as have been described in the review of the literature.

A limitation to any wider generalisation of this Composite Reality is, it might be suggested, that university students were the participants, and the onerous tasks they delayed over were those academic ones that were found to be threatening to them. It is proposed however that there is nevertheless much that may be gleaned regarding the experience of delaying behaviour from this practice that will enable interpretation of other, non-academic delaying behaviour.

In constructing the Composite Reality, five fundamental themes that are shown in all protocols, and which are generally in line with the General Structure, are demonstrated:-

Theme 1: Participants' descriptions of the nature of their procrastinating behaviour in an everyday context: How exactly do they procrastinate? What makes them finally start their task?

Theme 2: The role of deception for participants, both of themselves and in interaction with others in their procrastination scenarios

Theme 3: Participants' emotional responses to their procrastinating behaviour: How does behaving this way make them feel?

Theme 4: The meaning that work tasks and the assessments of those work tasks by others has to participants

Theme 5: Participants' observations on their delaying behaviour: Why do they think they do it? What understanding of their behaviour do they have?

Notation Key

Elements of a respondent's experience as revealed through their protocol is notated according to the following scheme: *Participant Denotation* and *Paragraph Number*. 'A1' therefore refers to participant A and meaning unit 1 of their protocol as recorded in the results section. If > is used, this should be taken to mean 'including paragraphs subsequent to the numbered one'.

References are listed in alphabetical order, rather than their aptness as an example of the behaviour being described.

The Composite Reality

Initially, it is worth noting that although the research question put to all participants was that they 'describe an incident in which they procrastinated', and there was consequently no need to make any reference to the onset of this type of behaviour, some respondents did begin their accounts by making mention of their childhood and early school years, before such behaviour had registered as a type in their consciousness. One noted that before she had started to behave in a way she has since come to view as procrastination,

she was entirely able to start and complete tasks to her own and others' satisfaction (E 83>) describing this as the ability to 'work then play'. Others noted that there was a time in their youth when a 'change' came about, after which they noticed their usual strategy was no longer adequate to get them through the task that lay ahead and achieve their usual level of success (A1>; E95>). The essential point to make about this observation is that participants did not view their procrastination in the same way they would consider their eye colour – it was not something that had always been part of their lives as far back as they could remember. Instead, they recognised it as a behaviour that had begun at a particular time.

Theme 1: Participants' descriptions of the nature of their procrastinating behaviour in an everyday context: How do they procrastinate? What makes them finally start their task?

It can be seen from participants' descriptions of their behaviour, that procrastination is never a 'plan' – it is instead always a 'consequence'. In fact participants stated specifically that having determined they had a new task to complete, they had no intention to delay making a start on it (A1; B19>; C3; D2>; E4) and given the fresh beginning that the new task presented, their intention was to not only make good progress, but to start 'early' (C3; E1). The ability to begin a daunting task and persist with it is not behaviour that is disparaged – rather, the ability seen in others to make solid, steady work progress is admired (C54).

Any delay in commencement of or making meaningful progress with an important task, after early enthusiasm, is not the result of a lack of confidence by participants in their intellectual competence to complete the task – at least at the outset – as belief is voiced in their ability to complete the task

satisfactorily (A257; B12; D2) as is a conviction that they will be able to meet the deadline (A59; B13).

Despite this seeming self-assurance, they struggle to begin (B13) though their intention to make progress remains constant (B22; C42; C48). Reasons given for delaying starting at this early stage of the task are laziness (E98, E130) and distraction (C49, C52). However a delay in starting does not mean an escape from a feeling of responsibility to make progress with the task, which is always in the back of their mind (C4, C30).

Instead of commencing work on a task when there is still the luxury of considerable time before a deadline, participants engage in unconnected, or at best very loosely associated activities. Unconnected activities include watching TV, films, videos and DVDs, attending meetings and socialising. An important characteristic of these unconnected activities is that participants display a level of interest in them they claim would not have existed in the absence of the perceived requirement to get on with the task. Participants describe watching DVDs they have already seen many times before, visiting web sites they would otherwise not be interested in, and reading novels they have read previously. – In fact, anything to avoid working on the task they believe they should be making progress with (A4, A20, A40, A41, A68, A107; B2, B6; C4, C5, C9, C14, C27, C50, C87; D22, D34; E13, E15, E17, E24).

A loosely-associated activity engaged in prior to and instead of commencing with the task is cleaning and preparation of the work area. A distinction must be drawn however between a brief and sensible tidy to ready the workplace for action, and that which has been described as 'wholesale' cleaning. Wholesale cleaning requires that cupboards and drawers be emptied and given a 'spring clean' – all available laundry be done, and the car washed

(A24). Such cleaning of the work environment (C11) is viewed as part of the process of preparation to begin with the task (A283). The work environment is spoken of as being required to be 'ordered' (E75).

Despite participants having assured themselves that such cleaning is a step towards commencement of the task, after this preparation has been completed, it is usual for work not to commence (A11, A30; C48; D15; E5; E50). Participants note that a good job of cleaning done allows them to feel satisfied (A73) and the feeling of satisfaction at having engaged in cleaning the work area gives a sense that 'enough' has been done in relation to the task for the moment, and they are relieved of the responsibility to make any further progress with it. A 'break' is then taken (B21; D26, D30).

After such a break, it is usual that the work will not be returned to until a later time, or more frequently, a different day (A19, A135; D14, D26).

In the search for a favourable moment to begin work on a task (A26, A191) a 'fresh start' is viewed as a good thing (A86); and there is much evidence to suggest that 'tomorrow' is viewed as such a fresh start (A10, A13, A17; B4; C6; D9, D28). The reality is, however, that tomorrow is only ever another today (A11, A27; B5; D13). Moreover if the moment that has been anticipated and in which hope has been invested that work would be commenced is missed, such as by oversleeping, participants are likely to feel their plans for the day are now *entirely* spoiled, and they will not wish to start work at all in these non-ideal, later-than-planned circumstances (A14, A16). Such a reaction to the circumstances that are available to begin work in is viewed, even by participants, as being quite 'unrealistic' (A13-14, A99).

Other behaviours which can be construed by participants as being related to the task whilst not requiring direct involvement with it, include arranging of files (A24; D14, D20, D110), the devising of schedules and making lists of elements of the task which must be completed (A28, A42, A221; C12, C31; D5, D21). These can be viewed as activities that allow participants to feel usefully occupied with the task, whilst not having to commit themselves to full engagement with it (A23, A285).

It is easier for participants to overcome their tendency to delay starting work on a task if they undertake what they view as the 'rote' work elements of it (B18, B19, B107, B109; D60; E189). Rote work is that which participants perceive as not requiring the type of intellectual input that will reveal their capacity – or lack thereof – for creative or analytical thought. (And this is a subject that will be returned to in greater detail, later.)

In the case of rote work, it is easier and more likely for participants to decide that what they have done is adequate – meaning it is easier for them to assess their work as 'good enough' to be beyond criticism, and consequently are able to be satisfied with it (E251, E253). Examples of rote work are those that are often preliminary to analysis – such as conducting interviews on a topic, or transcribing those interview recordings into hard copy (B19).

In this regard, a distinction is made by participants between *quantitative* and *qualitative* tasks, describing quantitative work as being less threatening (B52, B55, B107). When faced with two essays, a quantitative and a qualitative, participant D begins the quantitative one (D2) – then delays and leaves insufficient time to complete the qualitative one to his satisfaction (D40, D53).

A distinction between the type of work that is more- or less-likely to be procrastinated over includes 'mental' work being more difficult to begin or complete, as it will reveal intellectual capacity (D58). This is also described as 'things that require their own ideas' being more difficult to commence (B113). In a reference to qualitative reports, such work is described as 'more personally revealing' and 'requires more' (D50). Participants find interaction with such work they must do, to be 'threatening' (B54, B57, B94, B95). This distinction caused it to be suggested that a B.Sc. degree was easier than a B.A., because it was believed there are no opinions associated with a B.Sc. – in courses such as mathematics or physics, a calculation is either right or wrong (E253) and this is considered easier because there is always a 'correct' answer (B117). Non-mathematical subject-matter however requires answers that are not necessarily right or wrong, but are instead assessed for their *intellectual* fitness (B125).

Participants prepare to begin a task by obtaining readings that have been prescribed, making photocopies, visiting the library (E1). But having assembled the tools they require, will – as is the case after having cleaned and readied the work environment to begin the task – then abandon it until later.

As the necessity to make progress becomes more immediately apparent, participants may begin writing topic headings they intend to later expand into paragraphs. This is a way to approach engagement with the topic they must write about without, again, having to contend with it fully or directly (E32).

Participants require a motivating force that is external to themselves to cause them to begin work on a task (E28, E29). The role of a deadline is central in motivating participants to move from inactivity or preparation for work, to

active engagement with the task. The role of a deadline is to give participants an other-enforced limit to the time available in which to complete their task, because they are not able to apply one themselves (A21, A95, A104, A119; B39, B44; D41).

The nearness of a deadline affects which non-task activity will be engaged in. The wholesale cleaning that is the luxury of earlier stages of the opportunity to complete the work on time is reduced to a brief tidy, and lengthy and detailed schedules are curtailed until they become redundant – as all the time that remains until the deadline is of necessity spent in pursuit of meeting it (A295, A297).

Participants do have confidence they will ultimately complete the task (C2) as they are good at meeting deadlines (A22; B106), even when it is anticipated it will be necessary for them to work long and arduous hours to finish (A22; B7, B17, B58; C56; D62; E50).

Participants report that the tactic of leaving work until the last moment occasionally results in some parts of the task having to be 'skimmed over' or not completed in a way they consider adequate (A226; D43, D53, D65; E2, E56). This results in a belief they could have done 'more' (B71).

A way of avoiding a deadline in the short-term is to apply for an 'extension' – an authorised permission to hand an item in after the original deadline has passed. However an extension, often achieved for a bogus reason, will only be applied for after having weighed up the likelihood of such a concession being permitted by the significant authority other in possession of the power to grant it. Moreover, such a concession will already have been factored into

any estimation of the maximum time available to complete the given task (A367)

When completing work in response to a deadline, this is achieved with considerable accuracy. As one participant noted 'I'm impeccable at time management' (B106). However participants do not also factor in time to check and review their work. There is instead a seeming need for there to be no time left to review the work (B67) and thereby admit its potential shortcomings.

The absence of an externally-imposed work structure or programme is perceived by participants as not conducive to making progress with a task. Externally-enforced structure is preferred, and the absence of a demand to be at lectures or perform functions by a set time, contributes to participants' inactivity (A5, A37). One participant had attended boarding school as a child and reported that she longed for the days when her activities were controlled by a school bell (A359, A360). Despite trying to do so, she was unable to re-create such a situation in her adult life, as she knew it was she and not another who was ultimately in charge of the bell (A363, A364).

Despite the distress caused by progress not being made on important tasks, participants do not seek help from those perceived as authority others whose role it is to assist, such as tutors or lecturers. Participants are in fact more likely to avoid such people as those authority others are also perceived as potentially *critical* others – and if a participant admits to needing assistance, their fallibility will be revealed (A32, A92, A106).

When the task has been completed and handed in to be marked, the participant ceases to be preoccupied by it. They have done all they can at the

last moment, after which the completed task can be put from their minds (B65, B66; C134). This lack of concern about the completed task continues until it is time for the assessment the work has achieved to be made known, when it is returned with a grade (A239; D81, D85).

Theme 2: The role of deception by participants, both of themselves and in interaction with others in their procrastination scenarios

When there is an 'audience' of peer or authority others that are aware of and take an interest in progress the participant is making towards completion of their task, behaviour that can be considered deceitful in self-presentation is employed in order to not be poorly assessed by those others (A22, A101).

In the case of interaction with peer others, a way that deception is achieved is to prepare peers' expectations, telling them of a lack of progress (B34) right up until the deadline. This results in peers logically anticipating a poor performance of the task and a consequent sub-standard result because the work has been done at the last moment with seemingly inadequate preparation or attention (B29, B30, B31).

A benefit to completing the work in a shorter time and at the last minute, is that the participant will not be judged 'not clever' if a poor result is achieved, as they have completed the task in a much shorter time than was available (B34, B35). A substandard result would be one which the peer group audience had been led to expect, having been informed that only a small amount of the time available to complete the task had been spent on it.

Participants give the impression to peer others that they are interested to know what progress those peer others are making with the task. Such

discussion is however more useful as an opportunity to ensure that the peer others receive information that the participant has not made much thus-far progress (A63; C66). Participants do not display shame about their lack of progress when telling peer others about it – their intent is, on the contrary, to suggest they do not care.

In direct contrast to their interactions with the peer group, participants try to deliver an aura of industrious activity to authority others (A88, A115, A216) and create a 'good impression' for their benefit (A234). Participants attempt to cast themselves in a beneficial light with the person who is to be the assessor of their task, in the belief it will assist them to be more favourably assessed. They will make themselves known to the assessor so that 'work is not the only thing being marked' (A201, A202, A203; B76, B77) by which it is intended that when their written task performance is reviewed, the marker will recall the person who has presented it, as well as the interest and trouble the participant has taken to deal with the topic, and which they intend will be interpreted as being complimentary to the assessor.

Deception is not limited to others in the group or the assessor of the task – participants also display a capacity for self-deception (A24, A28; B14, B22; C18; D11, D16, D18; E12, E18).

If the concept of participants setting out to deliberately deceive themselves seems, rationally, to be a nonsensical one, it may instead be thought of as them applying little or no rigour in their assessment of the verity of the 'facts' *about* themselves they place *before* themselves. An early example of such behaviour is participants' ability to accept – despite substantial previous evidence to the contrary – that on *this* occasion, with *this* task, a delay in making steady progress to a satisfactory and timeous completion of the task

will not be indulged in (B15, B22). Having not managed to begin as they had wished, however, this assertion is followed by repeatedly accepting their own assurances that despite not having made any thus-far headway, they will definitely start 'tomorrow' (A17; C6, C16; D12). Such undertakings are moreover matched by participants' ability to accept their excuses when they don't manage to start 'tomorrow' (A9, A68, A100; D16; E51), and such procrastinatory interpretations of the facts are accepted seemingly without question (A41).

It is notable that after the task has been completed, participants are in retrospect willing to assess that they know their statements that they would begin tomorrow are simply part of an elaborate, self-deceiving ruse to get them through the anxiety that is produced by not starting the work (A25, A29, A287; B23, B43).

When working on a task, participants also deceive themselves regarding the true progress they are making. As has been reported, when engaging in pseudo-work activities such as wholesale cleaning, making schedules and lists and visiting the library to photocopy reading materials, all this can be viewed as activities that allow participants to feel usefully occupied whilst not engaging with the task-proper (A23, A285) and so permit participants to deceive themselves they are engaged in meaningful progress towards completion of the task, without being so.

Participants are able to accept with minimal critical appraisal that external circumstances have placed their ability to make progress with a task beyond their control (A33; B3, B8, B41). This extends to unavoidable everyday-life events being seen as contributing to a lack of work done (A57, A107; D18).

There is also self-deception in participants' statements that any delay making meaningful progress after early enthusiasm is not due to lack of confidence in their intellectual competence to complete the task (A257; B12; D2) or a conviction that they will be able to meet the deadline in good time (A59; B13) as the amount of anxiety participants admit to suggests that such statements of confidence are mere bluster – and will again be referred to in greater detail, later.

Theme 3: Participants' emotional responses to their procrastinating behaviour: How does behaving this way make them feel?

Participants describe an assortment of emotional responses to not making progress on a task they should be engaged with. These emotions range from dread to apathy and lethargy (C21, C24). The predominant emotional response to not starting or making progress with work that has to be undertaken is however – anxiety.

Participants may become anxious at the outset, in contemplation of a task (A145; C68; E119) or out of concern that they may not be capable to do what is required of them to complete it in time (E136, E138). They are anxious *before* they start work on a task (B38; D90); anxious that they are *not currently* engaged in the work they should be doing (A38, A257, A259; D33); anxious *during* the time they are working, that the end-product will not be seen by the assessor as being 'complete' (B10); are anxious *finally* when the time comes to present the final finished item to the assessor (B65; D95) as well as being anxious *subsequently*, immediately prior to the work being returned to them, concerned at how it will be judged by their assessor or peer significant others (A239; D81, D85).

Initial anxiety in anticipation of the requirements of the task and commencing it can escalate to the extent that participants are incapable of making a start (A40, A175, A184; B38) as previous performances that are viewed as inadequate rather than successful are brought to mind and dwelt upon (A50). Anxiety is in response to a felt need to make progress (A264, A265) and that requirement to work is perpetually in the back of participants' minds (E14). Participants however don't know *how* to make progress at this point (A30).

Anxiety may be induced by comparison of self with peer others if those others are making better headway than the participant (A40, A121, A122). Participants feel pressure from others to perform – even if this pressure is entirely inferred. (A33).

Participants chide themselves for their inactivity (A95, A97), do not wish to be 'left behind' (B36), but do enjoy the experience of making progress when the work is going well (C61; E209). The preceding suggests that any reasonable opportunity to make progress will be grasped. However, paradoxically, participants will take a break from their task as soon as they are at the stage when they claim not to be experiencing anxiety because they are making progress. This is ultimately self-defeating, as anxiety is provoked once more when trying to begin again with the task after their break (D122).

Stating their opinions and ideas to others can be anxiety-provoking for participants (D118) but this is not due to a lack of professed interest to engage creatively with the topic: rather it is an unwillingness to be viewed as ill-informed. A way of avoiding the risk of appearing ill-informed is to approach the task from a 'different angle' to others. This tactic is intended to be seen by those others as a 'creative' or 'intelligent' answer to the question. It is likely instead however, to be a means to prevent the participants' work or

intellectual self being subject to direct comparison with others' (C145). Furthermore, potential lack of comparative success can then be self-protectively attributed by the participant to that 'different-ness'. Further anxiety is however generated by the pressure to continuously generate ideas that will be perceived as new and different (E219).

Anxiety also exists for participants before they present a task as complete, if they have not been able to determine exactly what is required of them in order to comply with the wishes of the authority other who will be assessing the task, (A331, A333; D43). When task criteria are set by others rather than by the participant, a sense of powerlessness results. (A311, A312, A316, A320, A324, A327; E181).

Anxiety is therefore then a perpetual undercurrent to participants' relationship with the task they must perform. The level of the anxiety experienced ebbs and flows in relation to the reason for it, or participants' ability to avoid it. Strong anxiety is voiced when it is in relation to a fear of rejection (B175). This is the anxiety that participants' work – and so they – will be found wanting (A11, A114; B67).

Other emotions expressed relate to a lack of fulfilment of others' expectations and include the guilt (A215) of not starting (A31); of not making as much progress they should have (A31, A34, A91); as well as the 'panic' at what should have but has not yet been done (A5; E52, E55). Regret is reported at not having started the task earlier (B98; C85; E215).

Still other reported emotional responses include a feeling of dread in anticipation of having to engage with the work (B67; C22, C107), and anger - though this anger is generally directed at objects rather than participants' self

when they perceive they have been prevented from working by circumstances or objects they are happy to construe as beyond their control (A33; B3, B8, B41).

When external circumstances are perceived to be preventing participants from starting a task, this is a satisfactory temporary outcome, as participants do not have to take responsibility for their lack of progress (A31; D25) and may even be able to briefly enjoy the anxiety-free time that is delivered as a result of having an excuse that is not of their own creation for not engaging with the task (A275, A278). At such times participants are capable of a hopeful attitude (A39, A156; B26).

Importantly, it is when the participant reports that they are effectively procrastinating and so distracted from the task that they do not feel anxious (A278, A279, A281).

Judgement of the standard of participants' work by a significant assessing other is importantly of consequence to them (D65; E173, E175). Participants expect that the significant authority other will be critical (A47) and a poor assessment will be tantamount to rejection of the participant by the authority other (A92, A141).

Participants care how others value them (C97) and are likely to believe criticism and discount praise (A338, A343). Participants rely on the feedback they get through the medium of tasks and the marks they receive for them as indicators of their more general acceptability in the world at large (B162).

Participants have concerns that they will be discovered to be 'impostors' – that they will be 'found out' to be none of the things they aspire to be perceived as by others – such as clever, and competent (B80).

Anxious self-doubt exists (A64, A130, A146; B64) for participants as a result of others' expectations of them (E148) and the assessment that will be entailed by that expectation. At the heart of their concern about assessment is the procrastinator's wish to avoid poor assessment by a significant other as this is equivalent to rejection by them (A84). Participants are left anxious at having to live up to others' expectations (A64, A66), or that they are not competent to meet others' requirements (A200, A208, A211, A218, A224). Participants do not like to be tested (C149) and a consequent lack of confidence relating to this exists (C113).

Further lack of self-confidence is shown in participants' unwillingness to commit themselves to the final statement of ideas by which they will be assessed (B67; C122). Participants report that their work is 'not good enough' (A47, A94) and that they have 'not done enough' (A49, A106, A129).

Having work marked is interpreted as equivalent to being personally judged, as much as merely having the work assessed (B121). While judgement of the participant by others in categories deemed by the participant to be superficial such as style of dress or social behaviour is not of consequence, that which is admitted to be of great consequence is if their intellect is thought poorly of (B155). Participants do not wish to be judged poorly by significant others, but want to 'please' them (A201, A314; C94).

Theme 4: The meaning that work tasks and the assessments of those work tasks by others has to participants

When a participant contemplates a task that is to be undertaken, it is viewed as more than simply a job that must be done: participants view tasks as a demand to perform (A46) that will, on completion, be judged by a significant other (A42, A112).

The task is seen as an obligation (C9, C10, C59, C90, C139; D12). This obligation involves duty, responsibility and commitment to someone or thing outside of their self and participants are keen to avoid poor assessment by the significant other in their performance of that obligation (C72, C118, C161; D103; E64, E65).

Participants view their struggle for a good assessment as a competition (B28, B92; C131) with others who are also being assessed by the authority other. Anticipation of assessment results in delay in commencement of the task (C148). In a group task, participants are less likely to delay if such behaviour will be perceived as letting the group down (B107)

The competition (or comparison) with others rests in marks awarded for work done. Participants however attempt to render any such comparison impossible (C145) by approaching the subject matter in a novel or 'creative' way, which makes their response different from – and thereby difficult to compare with – others' work.

Participants equate the quality of their work assessment with the quality of their person. Put simply, poor quality work is personalised as being done by a poor quality person (A152, A153, A166, A168, A169, A172, A183, A209). This

is also interpreted by the participant as rejection by the assessing other of the work done, being equivalent to a rejection of their self (A350; D127).

Their work being judged is therefore understood to be equivalent to the participants' self being judged (B70) and successful academic task performance is a metaphor for their acceptability to the authority others who assess it (A67). If the assessment that the participant receives is poor, this is taken to mean that they are personally of poor worth (A120, A146, A151; C121) and overall, as has been reported previously, there was considerable anxiety at the prospect that participants' work – and so they – will be found wanting (A11, A114; B67). One participant described the need to be approved of in this context as a 'need to know all the answers' (C126).

A poor assessment is therefore to be avoided. One participant describes failure in an assessment as being equal to 'the end' (A354). Another said that a bad mark 'destroys you' (B171).

Participants describe their quest for a good mark as being a desire to be unable to be criticised (A188; C68, C98, C99). In this regard, two participants made mention of a parent as being a critical other (A53, A54, A123, A158, A250; E112, E126, E140).

Being a disappointment to someone of consequence is considered by participants to be worse even than merely their work not being satisfactory (A174, A214).

When participants have handed their work in to be assessed, having spent only a fraction of the total time available for the task actually working on it, their concerns turn to the assessor thinking that the work they have submitted

is the best of which they are capable. In the words of the participants, they worry that their work is assessed as having taken the full '3 weeks' available, rather than the '3 hours' they had allotted to it (D104).

Participants were generally happy with the marks they received for their work, stating they felt they did quite well 'within the time available' (A268; D49, D73). However when it occurred that participants received high marks for work they had done in a short time, they felt unworthy of the success they had achieved (A242, A245, A247, A249, A299, A304; B75).

Contrarily, however, it is also the case that despite getting good marks, participants feel that they are not receiving the credit that is due to them or getting appropriate reward for work (A48). They believe that in reality, the good marks they achieved were for work that had been done in a much shorter and more intensive work time than was the case with those others in their group with whom they perceive themselves as competing, and that they do not receive adequate recognition of this fact.

Poor marks affect a participant negatively; whereas good marks are not seen in a positive light (D140, D141).

Some participants note that the success which could be achieved by consistent effort is to be feared – because if they are identified as a person capable of operating at a high level of competence, this standard will henceforth be expected of them. The prospect of always having to be continuously 'good' is sufficiently anxiety provoking for them to wish to avoid it (B177; E100, E120)

Participants show a marked tendency to judge their own performance more harshly, and make demands of themselves that are stricter than the criteria they apply to others (A307, A308; B156; E247).

It is notable that having submitted a piece of work to an assessor, if the assessor thinks the work is good, the assessor will cease to be of consequence to the participant (A306, A369, A370). Another participant commented: 'As soon as I started doing well – I stopped participating' (E146).

Theme 5: Participants' observations on their delaying behaviour: Why do they think they do it? What understanding of their behaviour do they have?

Suggestions by participants of the reasons they believe they delay do not flow easily. This is not the same as saying that participants do not grasp, or are not capable of grasping that there might be some meaning to their behaviour that is more subtle than appears at first sight. However as delay is tied up with the favourable presentation of self, it is not an insight that is divulged easily.

Participants are quick to put the reason for non-progress in a task somewhere other than their own lack of involvement and are quick to blame 'circumstances' for lack of progress (B42). They suggest that unavoidable life events can be seen as contributing to lack of work done (A57, A107; D18)

Upon a request for elaboration, participants reveal some insight and understanding of their delaying behaviour. They claim it is the case that delay has a pay-off (A260) – meaning that in their eyes there is some advantage to this kind of behaviour.

Amongst the benefits cited is that leaving something until the last minute means not having to take the same responsibility – or ‘ownership’ – for the end result as would be the case if all the time available was spent on it (E99). This means that last minute work ‘lets you off the hook’ as far as any assessment of performance of the task was concerned (B169; E177, E224, E226).

Only one participant claimed lack of confidence in their mental abilities (B115, B129) as a reason for delay in commencement of a task. And whilst it might be guessed that some procrastinators do not commence with their tasks as they fear being unable to do it ‘perfectly’ – and there is some suggestion of aspiring-to-perfection in the previously-recorded desire to be ‘un-criticisable’ – when perfection is mentioned by two participants, they state that it is not logical to strive for (B101, B104) as perfection is not achievable (A188; B102, B103).

There is little comment by participants on how they could resolve their difficulty beginning a task in good time and making satisfactory progress with it over the full duration available. Whilst there is widespread distress at the experience of procrastinating behaviour, only one participant claims to have searched for a way to cure the problem (A177, A178, A180) – though without any success.

One participant suggested a remedy for procrastination might be if their level of self-confidence was greater (E162, E169).

Participants distinguish between types of academic success: namely that which they regard as proper academic ability – which is the ability to think and analyse – and what was called ‘parrot clever’ or ‘book smart’ (B149; E247).

The latter is thought of as the ability to memorise and regurgitate facts, without the necessity to have understood them. This is an ability that is not admired.

Participants note without exception that they believe that the work they hand in is not the best of which they are capable – it is instead the best they are capable of within the time constraints they set for themselves. More time spent would mean better quality work being produced (A271; B64; D48, D71). All believe they could do better if they spent more time (A83, A95, A96; B64; C88; D83; E66, E67, E74).

2. A Comparison of Results Achieved using Different Methodologies

i) The Definition of Procrastination

As has been reported, definitions of procrastination in the relevant literature were found to include some or all of the following elements:-

- A. There is an intention to commence a task but a delay in doing so
- B. The delay in starting is not necessitated by the task itself
- C. Emotional discomfort is occasioned by the delay
- D. The task that is delayed is viewed as onerous
- E. This delaying behaviour is repeated in other situations

In the protocols that were provided for the current study, all of the above have variously been shown to exist. More specifically:-

- A. All participants in the current research displayed an intention to commence their task in good time but did not fulfil that intention (A1, A2, A5, A10, A13, A14; B4, B5, B22, B23, B26; C3, C4, C5, C9, C10, C11; D 2, D10, D11, D16; E1, E2, E11, E22, E23, E24).
- B. It was shown in the phenomenological study that the delay in starting was not necessitated by the task itself. This statement should however be accepted as true in its simplest form, namely that the participant assessed the task as offering no practical reason to prevent engagement with it (B12). A more sophisticated interpretation of delay in starting being the result of the task itself is considered in point D., below.

- C. There is considerable evidence in the current research to support the claim that emotional discomfort is occasioned by contemplation of and engagement with the task – and which has been described in detail throughout Theme 3.
- D. On first examination, describing a task that is procrastinated over as onerous would seem to conflict with B., above, which stated that the ‘delay in starting is not necessitated by the task itself’, and which was taken to mean there was no obvious intrinsically task-orientated reason for it not to be commenced.

In the current experiment however, whilst there is every stated intention to begin the task, this intention is met with inactivity – or if not inactivity, then activity that does not make progress with the task proper (A4, A14, A20, A23, A24; B2, B6, B14; C5, C9, C11, C12, C14, C16; D11, D14, D20, D21, D22; E15, E17, E18, E34). This suggests that it is not merely the task but more accurately the *participants’ response* to the *requirements* of the task which cause a delay in starting it. This is evidenced further in that those elements of a task viewed as rote and therefore not intellectually challenging or revealing of mental ability may be commenced without great difficulty (A28, A86; B18, B19, B54, B107; C42, C43, C57; D38, D40, D55, D57; E2, E32, E47, E49). So, whilst the participants in the current research did find the undertaking of the task unpleasant and to be avoided, this was due to their response to its perceived demands upon their self, rather than any practical onerous-ness. This distinction, as well as the similarity in participants’ responses to the task and reasons for avoiding it will be referred to again, later.

E. The fifth in the list of general components of procrastinating behaviour is that which relates to the behaviour being repeated. The importance of this point is twofold. It firstly suggests simply that participants' procrastinating behaviour is not limited to a particular circumstance. This does not surprise as it is easily possible to imagine that a person who delays completion of some important tasks will also delay completion of others. However the second observation it is possible to make is that despite procrastinating in a particular circumstance on a previous occasion and suffering distress as described in D., above, as a result – the person procrastinates again in similar circumstances in the future and experiences the same distress again. In short, they do not learn from their previous experience.

In the current research, participants indicated both that the instance of procrastination they related was not the first time they had done so, and that they had behaved similarly at other times (A1; B60; C2; D9; E83, E85, E96).

Additionally then, not only should such behaviour be interpreted as a general statement that participants will delay commencement of a task, it can also be seen to highlight instances where delay is *not* engaged in. In the case of the current research, the nature of that which was considered to be onerous and result in a delay in commencement of the task is quite specific, in that the task required intellectual competence from the participant, rather than the mere energy of engagement.

The preliminary elements of the definition of procrastinating behaviour that have been elicited from the literature are then seen to be substantiated in the

current phenomenological research. The results of the phenomenological research, however, suggest that the description in the literature is not exhaustive, but rather indicates only a worthwhile direction in which to look to search for the meaning of procrastination as a behaviour. This thought will be examined further as we assess other results of research from the literature.

ii) Comparison with other Research Described in the Review of Literature

The research undertaken to investigate procrastination, such as is described in the literature review, is generally of the single-issue, or single-symptom investigation-type. That is to say the research will generally have a single thesis, or investigate a single element of the behaviour it considers to be indicative, descriptive and symptomatic of procrastination. It may attempt to link one symptomatic event with another in order to suggest a causal linkage, but as is perforce the case with such a single-issue investigation, any later claim about the nature of procrastination and in consequence any suggestion for cure, will be made based in that single aspect.

As will be seen in the comparative work which follows however, the phenomenological method this research has utilised has been found to suggest there is more to procrastinating behaviour than is found in any single aspect or element of it.

1. The cited research has claimed that procrastination can occur in various areas of life – whether academic, social, or in the white-collar workplace. The current research is not able to confirm the breadth of this claim as it was conducted amongst current or ex-students. And whilst one participant is currently employed, the example given by that person was from her student days. The participants in the current research did not refer to difficulties with

procrastination in other areas of their lives: it was their academic existence that was spoken of – and this in reference to being required to produce written work which they felt would be revealing of their academic ability. (A352; B149; C118, C123; D85, D93, D96, D98; E190, E217, E225). Items that were considered to be ‘rote’ or non-intellectual in nature were generally not procrastinated over. This information supports the research done by Hammer and Ferrari (2002), who recorded that ‘blue collar’ workers reported significantly lower levels of chronic procrastination than did ‘white collar’ workers, but noted that speculation as to the reason for this difference centred on the greater academic-orientated nature of white collar work.

With regard to the occurrence of procrastination in other spheres of everyday life, although it is an early stage to make such a claim, one wonders if the examples chosen by participants in the current research were selected by them as the best example to describe their procrastinating behaviour – that whatever essence is distilled from these will also exist to a greater or lesser extent in all other examples of procrastination they might cite, whether they originate from the academic area of their life, or instead, any other part of it?

2. When Knaus (2000) wrote of social procrastination, he referred to the type of behaviour which affected others, such as not completing their part of a group project. However there is evidence to suggest that participants in the current research were less likely to procrastinate when they knew their behaviour would affect others, and one participant noted specifically that she did not procrastinate when it would affect others (B107).

3. There is substantiation for the South African study (Thatcher et al., 2008) which investigated online procrastination. With the usage of computers and the internet in an academic setting, distractions are difficult to avoid. This was shown particularly in the case of the participant C who was required to get a

tutorial question from the internet (C16) and participant D who went to the internet but was distracted by e-mails and non-related sites (D23).

4. There is evidence to support the view that procrastination knows no boundary to continent, as shown by Ferrari et al. (2005) as well as that it occurs across race and gender. The current study was conducted in South Africa, included participants of different racial groups, and was comprised by both male and female participants. It is however, due to sample size, not possible to comment on the relative proportions of procrastinators in the South African population as a whole.

5. There is evidence to suggest that procrastination occurs at all stages in a person's academic career. Participants were not only in different years of study to each other, but those in the later years did state that they had procrastinated in years prior to the current one they were speaking of. One participant however stated that when she was younger, she did not procrastinate (E83) and that it was only when she got into high school she started completing work at the last minute (E94).

Whilst this can not be taken to be directly supportive of Miller's (2008) claim that first-year students display more procrastinating behaviours than those in their fourth-year of study, as no frequency of occurrence testing was undertaken, the result would nevertheless seem to pose a question of the meaning of Miller's result. If Miller is taken to suggest that the incidence of procrastination decreases within the student population as it becomes academically more senior, it should also be considered that there might simply be fewer persons left on the course who are inclined to procrastinate at the end of their fourth year, because a proportion have either realized the folly of their subject choice and dropped out of college – or simply failed as a result of procrastinating. It is suggested then that it is not necessarily the case

that procrastination is less likely to be an issue for individual students as they get older, and moreover, such a view might be further supported by Green (1997) who claimed that procrastination was cited as the major reason for doctoral students failing to complete their dissertation.

It should however be borne in mind, that there is – for the same reason of not having tested frequency of occurrence of procrastination amongst a wider population – also no substantiation for the entirely contrary results of studies (Onwuegbuzie, 2000a; Semb et al., 1979) which show that the tendency to delay on academic matters increases as students become more senior. All that may be claimed from the current study is that not one of the participants stated that their tendency to procrastinate had disappeared nor even diminished as they became academically more senior. In short, none of the participants in this study has been ‘cured’. The preceding does possibly suggest that procrastination may not exist as a problem when a person is in their early years of school – but from the moment the behaviour first manifests itself, it is a constant companion to certain types of task that must be performed.

6. It is not possible to comment directly on the relative level of procrastinating behaviour of individuals at a selective college who displayed higher levels of procrastination than those at a non-selective college (Ferrari et al., 1998) as the current study can not be considered to be comparable. However it is interesting to reflect that there might be some relationship between the notion of a selective college and gaining admission to a higher level or course of study for which there is a restrictive admissions policy. This was the case with all participants in the current study as all were engaged on courses of study there was competition for admission to. With the exception of one participant, this was due to their being at a level of study that had a restrictive admissions policy based on academic success. However, even the participant who was in

his first year of study (C) was on a course which had a selection process due to its popularity as a premier one of its kind in South Africa.

7. With regard to the method by which participants in the reviewed research were discovered to exhibit procrastinating tendencies, the current research shows considerable substantiation for concern that *self-report* measures might be more an exercise in self-presentation than an accurate report of personal circumstances. As has been described in *Theme 2*, it is the case in all current protocols that there is evidence both of deceit and self-deceit, and for this reason it is questionable that the results of self-report studies are more than surveys of the answer a procrastinator thinks it will be most favourable to give, that will cast them in a favourable light.

8. There has been considerable work in the field of procrastination research to determine if procrastinating behaviour is *situation* or *trait* dependent. This question is one of whether the intention to delay is occasioned by *external* circumstances such as an onerous task, or if it is explained by *internal* or 'character' traits.

At a superficial level this question is easy to answer as there is substantial evidence to suggest that procrastination is the result of more than merely an onerous task. Steel (2007) claims in his meta-analytic and theoretical review, that procrastinating behaviour has adequate situational stability across time to be seen as a personality trait. However to leave the conclusion at such a level is to suggest that a *type* of person will procrastinate, and further that this *type* of person will perforce display particular traits as described by a 'personality' test such as the 5-Factor Personality Inventory. Such a conclusion would cause us to believe in turn that procrastinators would then be able to be predicted by a simple test. However, despite such tendencies undoubtedly

being revealed, that research has by no means come up with a definitive predictor of procrastination that is able to state that such and such a particular personality trait will always predict procrastinating behaviour.

A benefit of the current research is that it is capable of looking beyond a simple character-trait explanation of procrastinating behaviour, to enquire if it is in fact merely a character trait or instead, more subtly, a behaviour that is elicited in a *type of person* by a *type of task*. Such a view would suggest then that procrastinating behaviour is not dependent upon either solely the particular task or the type of person – but a meeting of both.

Simple general observation might suggest to us that a ‘type’ of person is prone to procrastination, because some but not all people procrastinate. We may additionally observe that such people behave in this fashion under different sets of circumstances in which action is required of them. However the phenomenological research has more subtly shown that those who are prone to procrastinate will *not* do so in *all* task-orientated situations, and it is quite possible to surmise that certain *types* of *task* engender, in certain *types* of *people*, a particular emotional response – and it is this emotional state that results in procrastination. Moreover if this possibility is borne in mind, it may help to illuminate the ensuing assumptions drawn through the use of other methodologies:-

9. Firstly, Lay’s (1986) notion that procrastination is either behavioural or decisional attempts to draw a distinction between a response that is merely an automatic reaction to circumstances, or a conscious decision to delay. (Or, in Lay’s terms, in the latter case an inability to make a conscious decision to choose between options.) However the results of the phenomenological experimentation make the necessity for such a distinction unimportant. If we

accept that procrastination has both behavioural and decisional components in that they are both an unwanted inability to make progress with a task, and the same response eventuates on each occasion such a situation presents itself, the distinction is rendered inconsequential.

10. Similarly, the necessity to specify an internal reason for procrastination as *avoidant*, *decisional* and *arousal* procrastination is also redundant. This is because, on a superficial level, avoidant procrastination can be seen as being entirely understandable behaviour – it is the avoidance of something that is not relished. In this sense, we are able to ask if such behaviour is really procrastination – or it is merely sensible delay? The notion of avoidant procrastination is only of interest when it is interrogated by the question which asks *why* the task is to be avoided? Secondly, to speak of procrastination as being due to *decisional* reasons might be descriptive, but it is not informative. As has been stated previously, such a distinction is of interest only if the question of *why* the decision cannot be made is able to be answered.

11. Of the three avoidant, decisional and arousal categorisations, however, that which might permit a better understanding of procrastination is *arousal* procrastination. Arousal procrastination suggests that people procrastinate due to the enjoyment of the sense of arousal which doing work at the last minute produces. However it is suggested that only by using a qualitative method of investigation, will it be possible to determine the nature and experience of the arousal that is described – and determine if this feeling of arousal is not perhaps merely an *absence of anxiety*, or a sense of relief that the task is at last being contended with? In short, to determine if *arousal* is not being confused with *elation*. Moreover, mere description of the category does not give insight as to why it is not possible to achieve such a sense of relief or elation, less close to a deadline? The question that the above begs, then, is if

a symptom is not being confused with an explanation? Is it not possible that the sensation of arousal that is described as being experienced by some procrastinators, is not in fact a symptom of the difficulty, but rather one of relief at the difficulty being overcome?

12. Other research has noted that there is a hierarchy of academic tasks that are procrastinated over, and that term papers (important essays) are delayed most, followed by readings, study for exams and administrative matters (Rothblum et al., 1986).

The current research is able to substantiate the claim that essays are delayed over more than are administrative matters, particularly if the latter are viewed as rote items that do not require a revealing of intellect. There is evidence from three participants (C46, C71; D55, D65, D114; E1) to suggest that albeit capable of generating concern, required readings are worried over less than essay writing. The concern generated by readings was similar in nature to that resulting from essay writing: that the participant had concern they would not understand the reading, and that this would later be revealed to an authority other. The difference however, is that readings in the instances cited did not have to be written about (this would have been essay-type work) but would be discussed in a group. Participants felt more confident of their ability to reveal and amend their understanding of required readings through discussion, rather than have them effectively written in final version, and so be unchangeable before being assessed. This specific quandary was discussed at length in the protocol given by participant C.

Only three participants in the phenomenological research spoke of procrastination in relation to study for exams. However it is possible to interpret from their description of the behaviour (B88, B97; C19; E199) that

whilst such activity would be procrastinated over – the behaviour would ultimately be controlled by the immovable deadline that was the test itself.

Without it having been designed to do so, the greatest amount of information the current research has provided in the regard of procrastinating behaviour is that which relates to the writing of essays. The examples provided by participants of the way in which they procrastinate was a free choice, yet all chose to relate an example of essay-writing.

This is interesting, as essay writing can be conceived of as a revealing of the writer's capacity to understand, and is a 'public' display of that understanding. Moreover, when such understanding is assessed, evaluated and made known, it is a revealing to others of how intellectually competent the writer has been. In the current research, all protocols received related to an important piece of written work being approached, delayed over, becoming anxious about, and eventually being handed in at the last moment. This supports reports in the review of literature where student procrastination has been shown to be likely when there is heightened expectation of evaluation (Senécal et al., 1997) and more specifically, if there was a perceived threat of negative evaluation (Saddler & Buley, 1999) and in which procrastinators in a high evaluation threat group delayed returning essays significantly more than those in a low evaluation threat group (Bui, 2007).

13. A further reason suggested in the literature for procrastinating behaviour is poor scheduling ability (Knaus, 1979). However this would not seem to be supported as an explanation by the examples given in the current research. While it is true that participants' scheduling is shown to be less than ideal in that they do not start early, work consistently, or finish comfortably on time – it is also true that poor scheduling does suggest an inability to judge how much

effort might be involved on a task in order to finish it on time. Participants in the current research in fact all showed considerable skill in knowing when they could start a task at the last moment and still complete it in time for a deadline. One participant made specific note of this when she said 'My time management is impeccable' (B106).

14. Elsewhere in the literature there is suggestion that procrastination is due to a preference for a particular time of day at which to work. However this conclusion is not borne out by the current research. In fact, the preferred time for the current participants to work seemed to be merely the very last minute – no matter what time of day that happened to be. There is some evidence of a preferred time at which to commence shown by a desire on the part of participants to begin early in the morning (A13). However it is also possible to imagine that such a starting time had more meaning as an object of 'purity' and 'absence of imperfection' which could be associated with their starting. This was described by one participant as 'It's ... like creating the perfect moment, when everything is just right. So that you feel that everything's in its place, and everything's fine, and now you can actually start.' (A26)

This view is supported by the claim that if work was not begun at that time, the moment was spoiled (A14, A16, A99; B4, B26). Furthermore, the reality was that participants would often start late at night (participants C, D, E) because their deadline was in the early morning. It is reasonable to assume from the current research that an eventual starting time was dependent only on the twin factors of the time of day of the deadline, and the amount of work which was left to do before that deadline.

15. Task-aversiveness is given as a reason for procrastinating behaviour and this has been referred to, earlier. Such a notion can now however be

interpreted in two ways: Firstly, one might remark that naturally, a procrastinated-over task will be aversive – it is unlikely a person would not wish to begin with something that was enjoyable to them. It must therefore be asked: what is it exactly about the task that is aversive? Simple physical arduousness is an easily understandable reason not to commence – but what other types of unpleasantness might there be? What conditions might constitute a task and its environment and cause, for example, sufficient mental discomfort to prevent commencement? And while it would seem reasonable to claim that not all tasks which are perceived to be aversive are procrastinated over – a task that is procrastinated over will definitely have been perceived to be aversive. Key then, to an understanding of why an individual procrastinates over a particular task, would certainly seem to be an investigation of the nature and experience of the aversive-ness of the procrastinated-over task to individuals – and this is certainly an area that has not been properly investigated by thus-far research. Such a study would examine the mental relationship of the procrastinator with the work-object they are delaying over.

16. A possible direction such research might follow is suggested by an investigation of *fear of failure*, which is evidenced in the cited research as a reason to not wish to commence a task (Senécal et al., 1995; Schouwenberg, 1992; Rothblum et al., 1986). Failure is a result also desired to be avoided by participants in the current research, but the question is begged – why? An obvious response is that failure in the academic context means wasted time and the necessity to repeat coursework or change one's intended life-plan. Academic failure, therefore, does not have the same meaning as failure in, for example, a sporting context – where every high-jumper will always expect their task to end in failure when they can jump no higher. Failure for procrastinators, however, has the particular meaning of not being able to live

up to expectations, whether their own or, additionally, others' (A64>, A310, A311, A312> A316; B29, B76; D116, D118; E140-142, E148, E181, E183, E231).

17. In a linked theme, perfectionism has elsewhere been suggested as a reason for procrastination (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Saddler & Buley, 1999; Flett et al., 1992). There was however no mention made of this in the current research by participants, as a reason for not being able to start a task. This omission is moreover seemingly not merely due to a lack of awareness of such a concept, as one participant (B101, B104) stated specifically that perfectionism was not an issue for her, as perfection was unachievable (B188). Instead, participants seemed to be anxious that what they did was, rather than perfect, good enough to avoid criticism – because criticism of their work implied criticism of their very self (A112, A149, A151, A152, A153, A189, A190, A191; D132, D133).

18. With regard to affect, as was also the case in the research that was reviewed for this study, in the phenomenological study, at first sight the affect found to be most frequently associated with procrastination is anxiety. The other affect the current research revealed was anger – if efforts were thwarted by conditions that were outside the participants' control. Anger was directed at objects and persons outside of the participant (A9, A92; B48; D191) rather than at themselves (B3, B8). However looking more closely at the current research, it is also entirely reasonable to conclude that procrastination was specifically *not* in fact associated with anxiety – that procrastination was instead associated with a *lack* of anxiety. In fact it can be construed that it was only when participants were procrastinating successfully, that anxiety was at bay – and as soon as procrastination gave way to a need to make progress with the task, it was then that anxiety became apparent. This finding

substantiates the view that anxiety is in fact initiated only when deadlines loom (Tice & Baumeister, 1997) and there is no alternative but to engage with the task (Knaus, 1979; Pychyl, Lee, et al., 2000).

19. The reviewed literature suggests that persons who procrastinate have low self-esteem (Beswick et al., 1988; Burka & Yuen, 1983). This is, on the face of it, difficult to find support for in the current research. In fact, participants are entirely able to voice confidence in their ability to complete a task satisfactorily and substantiate that claim with examples from their history when they have performed well in similar tasks. (C81). However it is also true that if the surface of this seeming confidence is scratched, reticence to commence can be easily interpreted as an unwillingness to risk the possibility of being seen to be inept by others, and a lack of confidence that on this occasion, unlike previous ones, they would not be able to succeed. Participants were seemingly unable to learn from the past that they will be likely to succeed, and are in fact more likely to believe that they will fail, which could be attributed to poor self-confidence or lack of self-belief.

20. There is considerable support for the results of experimentation by Ferrari, Driscoll, and Diaz-Morales (2007), in which procrastinators were examined according to Self-Discrepancy Theory. This entailed that participants showed dissatisfaction with their behaviour and believed that they ought to work differently, thus showing the *actual-ought* discrepancies the researchers predicted. Similarly, there is evidence throughout of self-criticism as suggested by Semb et al. (1979) and guilt or a feeling of self-reproach (Schraw et al., 2007; Knaus, 1979; Pychyl et al., 2000) in participants' ruefulness at not becoming involved with the work until just before the deadline. It is worth noting that Tangney and Dearing's 2002 view that guilt can be looked on as a positive, task-orientated response to non-performance,

in contradistinction to shame which is seen as a negative and self-orientated, response is also supported. Participants displayed both guilt (A31, A34, A91, A136, A367) and shame (A95; D101, D130, D131) though both were mediated by the endless supply of hope (A28, A156, A157; B22, B23, B24; C6, C18; D96) participants had access to.

3. Theories of Explanation as Possible Routes to Cure

Whereas the first part of the literature review dealt with empirical experiments that have been conducted in an attempt to determine the component elements of procrastinating behaviour and consequently, from the standpoint of the methodology that was chosen for the experiment, the essential nature of the behaviour that is revealed, the second part reviews the theories that are the backdrop to the experiments. And it is of course through the theory which underlies the explanations of the behaviour, that any suggestion for cure will be justified.

However, and to be clear, it has not been the purpose of this investigation to use our phenomenological method to support any particular notion of cure: it is instead at this early stage only to gain a comparative picture of the potential usefulness of a phenomenological methodology in any future study of procrastinating behaviour.

With this thought in mind, on the cognitive/ behaviourist front, there is certainly evidence to support participants in the current research's behaviour being viewed as more concerned with proximal reward than distal achievement. This is not to say that the achievement of completing their task successfully was not of consequence: it was certainly so and caused

considerable anxiety to participants when it was conceded that adequate progress was not being made. However proximal gain can be interpreted as always being of greater importance – even at the final moments, when an immovable deadline presents itself and the lack of anxiety that has been afforded by procrastination and consequent non-involvement with the task has less appeal in the present than to escape from the greater anxiety of not completing the task.

A behaviourist or cognitive understanding of any escape from the distress caused by procrastinating, requires that learning take place. In the case of the current research, it would be necessary the procrastinator learn that relief experienced through engaging with and completing an onerous task is preferable to the anxiety experienced due to its non-completion. However this is a process that patently does not occur naturally – the procrastinators in the current research do not learn from previous experiences of the distress caused by their behaviour. And whereas a behaviourist or cognitive approach might suggest to us that repeated experiences of the satisfaction of completing the task satisfactorily in good time will increase the probability of such a result occurring in the future, procrastinators in the current research have shown an inability to learn from previous experience. In fact, this phenomenological study instead suggests that there is a different mechanism at work here: that if we accept the logic that repeated experiences of a more satisfactory result will make greater the likelihood of repeating a behaviour – the conclusion we must be drawn to is that working on the task steadily and completing it in good time is *not* a more satisfactory outcome.

Instead, the current research can be viewed as support for the belief (Knaus 1979; Lay & Silverman, 1996; Pychyl, Lee, et al., 2000; Tice & Baumeister, 1997) that anxiety is not in fact a direct result of procrastination –

procrastination is instead the route to *escape* from anxiety. In the phenomenological study this means that when a participant procrastinates, they are able to avoid the anxiety and distress that not engaging with their task has resulted in. And it is only at the moment when a final deadline is perceived and it is impossible to procrastinate any longer, that the amount of anxiety experienced by *not* completing the task is greater than that experienced as a result of actually contending with it. The results achieved through the use of the phenomenological method in this context then do not dispute the behaviourist/ cognitive concepts of learned behaviours and proximal and distal rewards – but do add useful understanding and clarification to them.

The second area of theoretical explanation of procrastinating behaviour is that which conceives of the behaviour as being more than a mere automatic response to physical or cognitive stimuli. As has been described in the review of literature, this broad theoretical grouping holds that *choice*, or the ability to select from alternative options, is an integral determinant of behaviour.

Albert Bandura (1994) wrote that what he referred to as ‘Self-Efficacy’ could be defined as ‘people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-Efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.’ (p. 71)

In the current study, participants did have those ‘cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes’ as part of their experience of procrastinating, and these have been outlined in their results as thus-far

discussed. Further though, as is also reported in the literature review, Self-Efficacy relates to a person's beliefs about their ability to undertake and complete tasks to a certain level of ability, and the effect such self-actualising activity will have on their lives. Self-Efficacy in self-motivated study has been shown to be strongly negatively associated with procrastination (Tan et al., 2008; Klassen et al., 2008). There is substantiation for this view in the current research. On a superficial level, all participants voiced confidence that they would be able to complete the task satisfactorily. It is reasonable to accept this claim as true based on their hitherto academic success, even though on those previous occasions they have always procrastinated. Despite the reasonable nature of this claim however, there is no doubt that participants did not learn to avoid the distress caused by their previous procrastination experiences, and it must therefore be asked if this seeming confidence is not in fact an example of self-presentation, and simply a ploy at an early stage not to have to deal with the required task – or at least a ruse to avoid undue examination by another as to their competency to make such a claim? Is it moreover a self-delusional self-presentation? For one can legitimately ask of the participant – that if they are confident they will complete the task satisfactorily, what prevents them from simply starting and completing it in good time? Because, as Bandura noted, high Self-Efficacy will result in positive motivational changes and a sense of high self-worth – and this element of his theory is borne out by participants' claims to enjoy the work while they are making progress with it. It is also, however, entirely usual for participants to take a break when in full flow of engagement with their task. (A19, A31, A135; B21; D26, D123). In short, transient feelings of self worth are seemingly not sufficient to prolong the motivation to continue to make progress.

This issue of variable self-esteem is one which participants' protocols also reveal. As was noted in the literature, procrastination has been linked with low self-esteem (Schubert-Walker & Stewart, 2000; Owens & Newbegin, 1997; Ferrari, 2000; Effert & Ferrari, 1989; Berry, 1975; Burka & Yuen, 1983) and poor 'mastery experiences' of success in goals they have set themselves. Persons' high procrastination scores were found to be related negatively to a mastery-approach orientation and positively to a mastery-avoidance goal orientation (Howell & Watson, 2007). However it seems clear that people who procrastinate consider these mastery experiences to be of relatively insufficient worth to cause them to be able to be learned from. The mastery-approach orientation is then, whilst superficially descriptively interesting, not of great use in approaching any notion of *explanation* of the *reason* that people procrastinate. Similarly, theory which explains procrastinating behaviour in terms of locus of control, where those who score highly on a procrastination index also have a low intrinsic determination value – meaning that they are more likely to attribute their success or failure in a task as being the result of external, uncontrolled factors than their innate ability to get the job done (Deniz, Traş, & Aydoğan, 2009) – is also descriptively interesting, but does not explain *why* such is the case. And while these views initially make us believe they might be some route to an understanding of procrastinating behaviour, when viewed dispassionately, they are nothing more than the statement that procrastinators do not engage with tasks because they don't feel competent. Which, in and of itself, is not a great surprise: there is evidently more at play.

This 'gap' in thus-far explanation might to an extent be seen to be filled by *attribution theory*, in which Heider (1958), Weiner (1974, 1980, 1986) Jones et al. (1972) introduced the concept of a person's awareness of their own responses to circumstance – in short suggesting that there is some

consideration given by individuals in their response to the demands of a situation – and as such, therefore, is a learned rather than effectively autonomic response. The consequence of this assumption must then be that if it is acknowledged that a certain behaviour, despite being based on internal or external motivations, is consciously understood and learned – then it may at a future time be understood differently and consequently be caused to be re-learned.

In the current research, whilst it is not true that participants have shown any appreciable ability to re-learn behaviour, it is suggested that the evidence of hope and the intention to do a task better ‘this time’ must be accepted as an indication from participants that they are not inescapably tied to a belief that things must always be the same – if only they can find the key to a way that is different. And the key to that different route is seen to exist in participants’ discovering a *motivation* to perform.

In relation to the debate of whether the ability to perform a task in good time is motivated internally or externally however, is support for Conti’s (2000) suggestion that tasks which had a considerable element of duty, where non-completion would cause others to be inconvenienced, are not responded to in the same fashion as those which impact solely on the procrastinator. One participant stated specifically that she did not delay on tasks when that would detrimentally affect others (B107). This leads us to the thought posed in the review of literature which asks if instead of procrastinating behaviour being examined in terms of a search for motivation, it would not be more productive to consider that procrastination exists in the space that is left by a *lack* of motivation. And if that lack can be conceived of as an entity – should the task of procrastination research not instead be to determine the reason there is an apparent lack of intention to make progress with a task. In Nicholls’ (1984)

Achievement Goal Orientation, he suggested that the more task-orientated a person's goals are, the more likely they will be to perform the task well. However if they interpret the task as having an emphasis on performing well to satisfy *ego* requirements rather than *task* requirements – they were more likely to procrastinate. It would seem there is substantiation for this view in the current research. Participants did not claim that the task they had procrastinated over was too difficult – but they did state that the result that was achieved after it was presented to the authority other to assess was of considerable consequence. It would seem then that a necessity to satisfy an ego requirement was of importance in a way that mere completion of the task *per se* was not.

It can also be seen that there is a link between such an attitude and that which was suggested by Berglas and Jones' (1978) who stated that the necessity to present work to an authority other to be assessed, and concern that this assessment was of an individual's ego rather than their task, led to the behaviour they termed 'self-handicapping'. They described this as 'any action or choice of performance setting that enhances the opportunity to externalize (or excuse) failure and to internalize (reasonably accept credit for) success'. (p. 406.)

In the current research, it is not too great a surmise to suggest that delay in starting a task may, despite protestations to the contrary, be out of concern that the task will not be able to be completed to the satisfaction of the assessing authority other. Furthermore, there is distinct support for the notion of self-handicapping when participants admit that doing a task at the last moment prevents them having to take responsibility for it. This handicap they create for themselves by starting the work at the last minute, removes from them the responsibility to take ownership of their completed task. This allows

them to present to others – and such was voiced directly by participants in the current research – that the work done was not the best of which they were capable, but the best they were capable in the limited time available. And these two statements do not, of course have the same import.

Credence is thus given to the previously-considered statement that if self-handicapping is a self-protective measure to assist in the protection of self-worth (Berglas, 1985), then procrastination may be a self-handicapping strategy used as a means of self-protection to bolster the individual's fragile self-esteem (Burka & Yuen, 1983; Berry, 1975).

There is also support for Kolditz and Arkin's 1982 development of the notion that self-handicapping is a defence strategy, in that delay is an active self-presentational strategy designed to maintain public image. Kolditz and Arkin showed that participants in their research would handicap themselves more severely when they believed the results of their assessment would be made public. This was echoed in the current research by participants taking trouble to tell others in their assessment group that they had made little progress with the task in hand. This conscious self-presentational strategy had the advantage that if they were to perform poorly in the task, they would have excused their lack of success. However if they managed to do well, they would be thought very competent as they had done well under adverse conditions. This is a win-win situation.

Review and Summary

The intent of this research has been twofold. The first was to conduct a phenomenological investigation of procrastinating behaviour, the second to compare the results achieved by a phenomenological methodology, with those collected using other, quantitative empirical strategies.

An important point to make at this stage is of course that the examples of procrastinating behaviour cited by participants in this research relate to a delay in completing an academic task. This is reasonable, as the participants are all current or ex-students. It might then also be reasonable to ask if the conclusions of the study would then apply only to students who delay in academic tasks?

Examination of the results, however, does not bear this out: there is no particular element of procrastinating behaviour which occurs in research in non-students that is not also present in student procrastination research.

One might instead be tempted to consider that academic procrastination research could be the quintessential fount for all procrastination investigation!

It was found that there was frequent overlap in the conclusions drawn by the different methodologies. Moreover it is suggested that the phenomenological results have often given a richer seam of data to be considered. It is also additionally the case that in the individual phenomenological protocols taken, there was substantiation for the claims made in a number of the quantitative experiments which, due to their single-issue nature, dealt with only one aspect of the condition. The phenomenological method was then found to be

a useful way to gain a fuller understanding of the experience of procrastination.

The composite picture that is gained of a procrastinator, supported by both this phenomenological study, elements of the quantitative experiments, and theories as reported in the literature review, is one that is richer than any single one that has been reported in any other research. It is as follows:-

1. The person is given a task which results in them having concerns they might not be competent to complete it satisfactorily. The concern is borne out of a perceived threat to how they wish to both conceive of and present themselves as 'competent to do' to peer others or an important authority other who will evaluate the completed task.
2. Inadequate completion of the task-object will be interpreted by the procrastinator that they are personally inadequate. This is a feeling they wish to avoid and in consequence, rather than deal with this possibility, commencement of the task is delayed.
3. Concern is experienced privately and not admitted publicly. The concern is experienced generally as anxiety.
4. A reason to delay commencement of the task is found and anxiety subsides.
5. The decision to delay commencement of the task is however not made deliberately or consciously as the procrastinator feels a requirement from others whose favourable impression of them is important, to be engaged with it. A justification for the delay in commencement must

however be made, and is achieved through a distraction of the self by occupation with other activities. If the deadline for completion of the task is still far distant, those other activities may have little or no connection with the task. As the deadline nears, distraction activities have greater closeness to the task proper. To follow this course of (in)action successfully requires self-deception which the procrastinator achieves with ease.

6. Not all elements of a task-demand are felt to be sufficiently threatening to self-image to result in a desire to postpone commencement. Rote elements that are not considered to be revealing of intellectual ability are easier to start and are commenced first.
7. Starting times when the task proper will be fully engaged with are agreed with the self but are not kept to. Start times are likely to be 'new and ideal' – such as first thing on a Monday morning. There is a pristine-ness about such moments when all is correct and unsullied by incompetent involvement with it. If the start time is missed by oversleeping or some such however, the pristine nature of the moment is lost and the procrastinator will feel that the week-study-object has been tainted or even entirely ruined.
8. Any decision to begin work on the task before it is considered absolutely necessary to do so is always faint-hearted. Breaks will be taken from the task while the procrastinator is engaged with it and making progress, and even ostensibly enjoying the engagement. There will be every avowed intention to return to the task after the break, but this rarely eventuates.

9. The decision to commence with the task and continue with it until it is completed is only caused by the nearness of an immovable deadline. An immovable deadline is one which has had any opportunity to have it extended by agreement with the important authority other already used up.

10. If there are peer-others also required to undertake the task, communication with them about progress with it is deceitful. Whilst it is true when they tell the peer others that they have made little or no progress with the task, they deceitfully claim not to be concerned by that state of affairs. This self-presentation has the effect of conveying to the peer others that they do not care about the task or its inherent assessment overly. This delaying behaviour is also a self-handicap that will prevent the procrastinator from having to contend with the ultimate possibility that they are not competent.

11. When the deadline becomes close, anxiety at not commencing the task is greater than that caused by commencing it. The procrastinator will generally judge the amount of time needed to complete it at the last moment with considerable skill. Completing the task at the last moment allows no opportunity to check the work for defects or consider what might be done to improve it.

12. The advantage of this self-presentational strategy is that if the procrastinator is assessed badly in their performance of the task, they will have given good reason to excuse themselves beforehand. If however they are assessed as completing the task satisfactorily or well, they will be thought clever and competent.

13. Procrastinators are thereby able to distance themselves from having their true ability assessed. What is assessed is not how good they are, but how good they were able to be under the self-imposed constraints they had to endure.

14. The procrastinator wants to be thought well of and is unable to distinguish between their performance of a task and their value as a being. Criticism of their intellectual task work is equivalent to criticism of their very self and this is to be avoided by all means at their disposal.

Suggestions for Further Research

The key finding of this phenomenological research is then the suggestion that procrastinators are unable to distinguish between what they *do* and who they *are*: that for them, it is believable that 'being' and 'doing' are exactly the same thing – especially if the *doing* is sub-standard. To return to Husserl's notion of *noesis* and *noema*, it is possible to conceive that the procrastinator, through their task-object interaction with the world, confirms their very presence in it. Moreover, the value of their existential being is given to them by the assessment they receive for that task-object interaction.

Such an interpretation then gives an entirely different weight to participants' statements that without their intellectual ability, they felt they would be 'nothing'. It is conceivable then that this statement can be taken literally.

Such a conclusion is of course only speculation, and outside the scope of the current research. However, were such a mental relationship with the objects

of the world to be accepted, a more interesting question might then be to ask why there is a differential existential relationship with the objects of the world between some persons and others – why it is that all persons do not have a procrastinatory-existential relationship with the task-objects of the world?

An insight might exist in anecdotal evidence given by participants in the phenomenological study. From the outset, the object of this study has been to attempt to determine the phenomenological *nature of procrastination* as revealed by the recounting of such experiences by participants. This was all that was required of participants and all that is recorded in the protocols which are included. However there was also informal conversation that took place after protocols had been completed. This conversation was general in nature and often related to participants' family background.

It is notable that when speaking of their parents, participants were likely to describe at least one as simultaneously demanding and distant. It was moreover this quality that made the parent significant. A typical quality of the interaction with that parent was that it was conditional: the participant felt they needed to be *doing* something good in order to be considered to *be* good. Their own goodness was not taken for granted by the participant – it was something that had to be continuously evidenced. And classically, when having their performance assessed by their significant parent(s), they reported that the parent was more likely to be concerned about the 10% they had failed to achieve than the 90% they did.

This causes the current research to consider the possibility that procrastinators might interpret poor performance of a task to be equivalent to 'non-goodness' as a person in the world. And furthermore, that this 'non-goodness' might be equivalent to 'non-loveable-ness'. The question is then

posed – is procrastination a mechanism that reveals an existential fear of being unloved and un-loveable, and so even of ceasing to exist? If the analogy is not too whimsical, in the way that a photon ceases to have mass when it stops moving – the procrastinator similarly ceases to feel that they have goodness if they were not doing something good. In other words, without the goodness that approved-of actions provide, they do not exist as loveable entities outside of the loveable actions or achievements they perform.

Baumrind (1967) described two important elements of parenting, namely if parents were demanding or non-demanding; or responsive or non-responsive. She further suggested parenting styles that were combinations of these elements: authoritarian (demanding, non-responsive); authoritative (demanding, responsive); and permissive (non-demanding, responsive). There has in turn been research that has investigated the effect of particular parenting styles on the incidence of procrastinating behaviour.

The general trend of this research has been to suggest that children who perceive their parents to be authoritarian are more likely to procrastinate (Pychyl, Coplan, & Reid, 2002) which has also been associated with perfectionist tendencies (Flett, Hewitt, & Martin, 1995). It is important to note however that there is seemingly substantial evidence in this and other research to suggest that there are gender differences relating to these results (Ferrari & Olivette, 1993).

The former notwithstanding, it is suggested that a phenomenological study of the experience of the relationship of both male and female procrastinators with their significant parent(s) might lead to a better understanding of this element of nature and possible genesis of their distress.

With regard to any notion of cure, participants also revealed in informal conversation that they thought simple confidence-training would assist them greatly. Their anxiety at the outset of a task that they would not be competent to complete it was not borne out by reality, and they felt that having sufficient self-confidence to bridge the gap between hope that they would be competent to complete the task satisfactorily and actual engagement with it, would be of great benefit. Such self-confidence would permit the procrastinator to achieve that which is seemingly currently beyond them: namely to learn from previous successes that they are likely to succeed on future occasions, as well as also to break the link between immediately associating any lack of success with lack of validity as a loveable being.

Appendices – Participant Protocols

Protocol – Participant ‘A’

Natural Meaning Units	Transformed Meaning Units
<p>1. I think my style of getting things done was, kind of, em, waiting until the 11th hour and then jumping in and doing it, and, with my thesis I realised I couldn't do that, so, well, em, initially em,</p> <p>2. So I was more and more ... despondent about it. But even then, I was only producing work, maybe, I think, my proposal I handed in, in ... June ... - I think you're supposed to hand it in in May. Erm ... because I had re-worked it quite a few times, erm, and then, at the end of that year, we had to hand in field work, and scope and methods, and, things like that, and, every time I was just ... just a little too late ... (laughs) y'know, ... a week over, or two weeks over.</p> <p>3. Why?</p> <p>4. Erm ... I dunno – my excuse would be, at the time, is that I just didn't get time to do it. ... I would say that I didn't have time to do it – but I actually did. Erm ... I was spending most of my time just, watching TV, loafing at home. I'd spend my entire day until about 5 o'clock doing nothing, -</p> <p>5. and then it'd get to 5 o'clock and I'd start panicking and think 'Oh! I'm supposed to have done</p>	<p>1. A usually waited until the last moment then began a task but with this one realised she could not do that.</p> <p>2. A experienced increasing despondency and handed everything in late.</p> <p>3. Interviewer</p> <p>4. A made the excuse to herself that she did not have time, but knew this was not true.</p> <p>5. A became very anxious.</p>

<p>all these things today and ...</p> <p>6. There were no lectures?</p> <p>7. No, no pressure to be at certain times, a certain place.</p> <p>8. A short discussion ensues in which it transpires that P lives in digs in Grahamstown, her parents have been divorced for some time, her mother has recently moved to Grahamstown and her father lives in Port Alfred.</p> <p>9. ... So I didn't go home very often. I actually spent most weekends at Port Alfred – not with my parents, but with my boyfriend's parents, at that stage. And he (the boyfriend) didn't like me to bring work over the weekends, so that was an easy excuse – y'know, it was somebody else's fault that I hadn't, kind of, done anything over the weekend, because, y'know, they didn't want me to.</p> <p>10. And then I'd get to the Monday and think '! – I've got all this stuff to do and, kind of, have this, rejuvenated, like, need to – to do stuff.</p> <p>11. But then I'd spend so much time on planning or thinking about it, that it was already, sort of, the Tuesday, then it would get to the Wednesday, then I'd be - ! - even more panicked, and then basically get to the Friday, then kind of go away and forget about it, come back Monday, same sort of cycle.</p>	<p>6. Interviewer</p> <p>7. A felt no imperative to work as there was no programme structured by another.</p> <p>8. Interviewer</p> <p>9. A displaces blame for not working from herself to another.</p> <p>10. The need to work could only be put aside for a time.</p> <p>11. Rather than making progress with the work, A would think about it and plan to commence. Anxiety increased until the weekend arrived and with it, release. This was an ongoing cycle.</p>
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<p>12. What were you saying to your self about that – like on the Sunday evening?</p> <p>13. I think I'd say that this week I'm going to get better ... I am going to do it ... I, you know, must make a list, or, I must do this, I must do that ... erm ... but it just always, like, I wanted a starting point, a particular starting point, so it had to be like, 8:00 am on Monday morning, was when I was going to start. Instead of, on Sunday, when I was thinking about, how much I had to do, or, thinking about the next week even, it would always have to be like, Monday at 8:00 am ... must start</p> <p>14. And then ... I'd inevitably end up sleeping late or whatever, and then, it seems, quite late ... but it wasn't quite right. Y'know, now I can't do it, because I didn't get up at 8, and now I've messed up the schedule already, so I've really, kind of messed up the whole week. So by the end of Monday ...</p> <p>15. The whole week (is messed up), or just the Monday?</p> <p>16. Well, initially, it would be the whole week. The whole week is now ruined, y'know, everything's messed up. (laughs a bit) ...</p> <p>17. and then by the end of the Monday, it's like, it's OK, it's only a Monday, it's only one day, it's fine – you can start, tomorrow, and ... tomorrow I'll be OK. Erm.</p> <p>18. And some days it did work, y'know, and the next</p>	<p>12. Interviewer</p> <p>13. Before the beginning of each week A resolves to engage with the task. This resolve results in a plan to begin at early in the day at the beginning of the new week.</p> <p>14. When that moment passes without her making a start, circumstances are no longer ideal, and A does not feel inclined to start.</p> <p>15. Interviewer</p> <p>16. A believes the whole week is spoiled for starting work.</p> <p>17. Later, A rationalises that the whole week is not spoiled. A new starting time is decided upon, and that is tomorrow.</p> <p>18. On some occasions this</p>
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<p>morning I would wake up, and I would actually do the work, and, start working on something,</p> <p>19. and, I'd get, kind of, half way through, and then I'd think, Oh, but now I deserve a break ... and then, once I'd had a break, ... the less you do, the easier it is to ... do ... nothing! (laughs)</p> <p>20. So ... I'd end up watching TV, or, going out with friends, or, always prioritising something else in front of it,</p> <p>21. – and eventually it would get to the crunch where, people ... 'Look, you were supposed to hand this in last week, and now we've made a concession for you, so, we need you to hand it in this week' ...</p> <p>22. And then the night before, would be when I'd, suddenly, furiously, be typing up something, and then, end up giving it to them – without even looking at it, or reading it. Y'know – none of the ... none of the things that I should have been doing – and hoping that they would read it and still think – 'Maybe she has been working (laughs) – the whole week' ... erm ... and ... ja,</p> <p>23. ... so – I basically, throughout, the ... it was always like that. I'd always ... some excuse like – Oh, I have to go and fetch a friend from here, or, somebody needs my help, or something, or, somebody's birthday, or somebody else wants to go for a drink, or somebody else this or that ... it would be an easy excuse – erm – to just say OK, I'll just do that, - but then tomorrow I'll start, and I must do this</p>	<p>strategy works.</p> <p>19. A engages with the work for a period, then resolve would weaken and a break would be taken.</p> <p>20. Having taken a break, engagement with the task would cease.</p> <p>21. Those to whom A felt obligated would apply pressure on her to comply with their wishes.</p> <p>22. At the last moment, A begins worked but without real investment of self. A's intention is to give an impression to the authority figure of industry and involvement with the task.</p> <p>23. A allows any excuse to permit her escape from the task and put off the necessity to be present to it until tomorrow.</p>
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<p>... erm</p> <p>24. ... and then also small things, like, my room wasn't tidy enough, or this wasn't right, so then I have to tidy my entire room – which would take a day .. or two ... I mean, from top to bottom, sort of clean out everything ... erm ... instead of doing readings, I would then like, file the information, say, in the right alphabetical order, -</p> <p>25. - all these things that seem – now when I talk about them, seem nonsensical – it doesn't make any sense to do that, in order to get something done.</p> <p>26. But that's how I felt at the time, I felt like I needed to get organised.It's ... like creating the perfect moment, when everything is just right. So that you feel that everything's in its place, and, everything's fine, and now you can actually ... start. ...</p> <p>27. But then ... y'know, ... your average day happens, and so, ... y'know, the files are never used, because you're so busy tidying up the next thing or sorting out the next ... y'know, problem, or, whatever it is, and ...</p> <p>28. I used to try and make, lists, 'I'm going to do this, today, and, get these amount of tasks done' ... erm ... and even something as simple as just, y'know, cleaning a room, or, doing washing, or, little things I try to create, the biggest list possible, so that I could tick more things off and feel this need to ... accomplishment, like I have done something.</p>	<p>24. Activities that can be viewed as preparation for the work are engaged in.</p> <p>25. In retrospect, A thinks such activity is nonsensical.</p> <p>26. A feels it necessary to create a perfect moment so work can be started.</p> <p>27. That aspired-to perfection is not achieved.</p> <p>28. Making lists and cleaning are favoured tasks to allow A a sense of task-orientated accomplishment.</p>
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<p>29. But then ... you look at the list and you realise that all the things that aren't ticked are the highest priority! ... So then I tried to also change my lists to sort of reflect – OK, these are the higher priority, and these are the not so important things, - you must at least do 2 of these, or, most of ...</p> <p>30. - and still there'd always be like, seeming like, obstacles in my way, - y'know I'd like phone somebody to get this like done, - and they wouldn't be there, or, whatever it was ... and, I'd feel like there's just, ... too much to get past, for me to actually get this task done,</p> <p>31. so I, OK, y'know, give it a break – I'll, do it tomorrow. Erm. And. Eventually, you know, the tomorrows would add up, and I'd actually start feeling, terribly guilty – especially at the stage when I wasn't working, I was doing full-time Masters. Y'know, I'd kind of, y'know, I'm supposed to be doing all this stuff ... I'd ... feel, awful, I'd, ... don't know, like I'd ... kicked a dog! (laughs) y'know, like, real guilt ... about, not having done it. Erm.</p> <p>32. And then what I'd do is I'd start avoiding people who would ask me about my thesis, so, if it was my classmates, I mean I'd start – y'know, they'd phone and say 'Oh, can I come for coffee' or something, and I'd say Oh, I'm really busy! (laughs) ... a complete lie! Y'know, just to avoid them - because I felt, Oh, the first thing they're going to ask is, 'How's it going' and whether I've read this or whether I've done that ... - or they'd give me readings and say, 'Oh, I'm sure this applies to your project.' ... So ... it</p>	<p>29. A realises that this is self-delusion and determines to re-order her schedule to reflect different priorities.</p> <p>30. Further obstacles present themselves and A is unable to make satisfactory progress.</p> <p>31. Tomorrow is more appealing than today to begin. However A does not start tomorrow and feels guilty.</p> <p>32. A avoids those who make her feel guilty.</p>
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<p>wasn't that she was giving me completely useless stuff, and that's why I was ag ... (sighs) ... don't really want to talk about it, I haven't read it, because, I don't think it's relevant ... I think I felt worse because I thought, well maybe it <u>is</u> actually relevant, and she is trying to be helpful. Erm.</p> <p>33. But, at the same time I kind of felt ... harassed by everybody, everybody phoning – I felt ... well it felt like everybody would phone, and it would be like 'Oh, how's your thesis going?' and, although it would be a very innocent question, for me it would, like, ag (pretend annoyed/ frustrated sigh) man, you know, just leave me alone! (laughs) .. erm ..</p> <p>34. - and, it would, ja it would persist – the guilt would persist until eventually, I'd get, OK, now, I really do have to do something. Em ... I've accepted the fact that I'm not going to have everything the way that I want it, - erm, especially living in digs. You know, I decide I want to have supper at 6 erm, and, somebody else is cooking at that time, so you have to go back to your room and, start again at erm ...</p> <p>35. but I found it – I was trying to be too inflexible ... I couldn't just, adapt, to what was happening around me, I had to make it fit into my ... schedule, or, whatever it was. And if it didn't fit, then, I'd throw the whole thing away – and start again.</p> <p>36. When you came to the end of your first year, was there a point when you thought that this was the end of the year and I don't have to do any more this year – or did one year just blend into the next?</p>	<p>33. A feels pressure to work from others which makes her angry.</p> <p>34. Guilt persists until A accepts that she must begin the work even if circumstances are not ideal.</p> <p>35. A is inflexible when circumstances that are an obstacle to progress contaminate her schedule and another must be devised entirely.</p> <p>36. Interviewer</p>
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<p>37. Yes ... it was basically like a very, very long ... term. (laughs) ... not even year, because then you get ... breaks in between - it was just basically like a long term, because, as soon as I'd finished my term at varsity, I will start working at the student bureau, part time, over the holidays – so I'd work over June, July, and I'd work over December – and so I felt like there was no break, so, between working on my thesis, then I suddenly had to work at the student bureau – then, then I felt relief from my thesis, when I was in the student bureau, because it was like, well, this is my holiday, erm, technically, so I don't have to worry about that, so that went on a back burner, so in that way, I did feel that OK, the year is over,</p> <p>38. - but in that way, it created more, sort of, worry, because I was, sort of, whoa – I haven't quite as far as I'd ... like to have ... got ... or (wasn't where I) thought where I should be.</p> <p>39. But at the same time I wasn't ... I wasn't ... erm ... quite as bad as I was in my second year - ... sort of ... in my first year, I still felt that, this is kind of, retrievable, y'know, there's still ... it'll get done, it's fine, y'know ... I could do it, and kind of, move on, and that was fine, I felt that I was still ... making progress – and that there was still space for me to be able to complete it ... handle on this – I'm not doing as much as I can ... erm ...</p> <p>40. - especially when I spoke to ... the other classmates that I had, and sort of, kept trying to ... erm ... weigh myself up against them, like, how much have they done – and, then, you know, they come and say</p>	<p>37. When A is not required to work, she is relieved.</p> <p>38. Anxiety results when A makes less progress than she ought.</p> <p>39. Early in the task, A is less anxious at not meeting others' work-based expectations than is so in later stages.</p> <p>40. Comparing her progress with peer others makes A feel panic. A responds by trying to force herself to work. A always finds an</p>
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<p>'Och, you know, I've got my first chapter finished ...' and then I'd sort of !! Oh - and I haven't got anything ... and I haven't written a single word! And, erm, and so that would cause a lot of panic, and I'd sit there and ... sort of staring at the screen ... I just need to get something out ... but I can't! ... There's ... nothing. Erm. And I tried ... staying at home, staying in my room, you know, not going out with friends, and not doing anything out of the house ... Basically staying home and trying – I sort of put myself under house-arrest, so I'd eventually spend enough time in my room, to ... but I'd always find something else to do, y'know, whether it's make my bed, or suddenly look through old photographs, or letters, or whatever it was, whatever, sort of, material was in my room, I'd sort of manage to amuse myself for those few hours, with it ... and until eventually, you know, somebody would come by and y'know, -</p>	<p>excuse not to do so, no matter how trivial.</p>
<p>41. - 'Oh, you know, I'm home from work or I'm home from varsity or whatever, and I'd like, you know, well, the day's over. ... Erm ... which is quite funny, because, I mean, in my undergrad, my day used to sort of ... begin at 5. Whereas, those are, thinking of my days – ending at 5. So ... in my masters, I had this feeling that – my day is over, fine, so, I might as well start supper, and then just sat around and watched TV and chat with friends, or, socialise with friends.</p>	<p>41. A deludes herself by making an excuse not to think about the work she has not done.</p>
<p>42. And then I'd go over to my supervisor and say, Oh, please can we meet, sort of, twice a week? Or, once a week at least, or, - you know, we don't have any set meetings so, whether I get bi-weekly or,</p>	<p>42. A makes an arrangement to meet her supervisor regularly but does not keep to it. Instead, she avoids them.</p>

<p>even, monthly, I can just pop in and see them randomly, or eventually, they'd e-mail me, or phone me and say 'I haven't seen anything from you and am a bit worried why you haven't ...!</p> <p>43. Did you start to anticipate those calls?</p> <p>44. Yeah! (half laughs) They would follow a definite pattern, where, I'd – when I was getting to a stage where I was sort of panicking, and I was - ! - (draws in breath) – then I knew, within the next couple of days, somebody would, be phoning, me, and saying, 'Hey, how about you bring something in ...' erm ... and that would make me feel even ... more overwhelmed ... you know ...</p> <p>45. - then I'd, get to the stage where I was so panicked - ... I couldn't even think. I'd just be sitting there, think Oh! She's going to phone me again tomorrow, she's going to phone me again and she's going to ask me, and I just don't have it and, I don't know what to do, and erm</p> <p>46. ... and then I ... sometimes I get past that, - I kind of get, so stressed ... erm ... so stressed, I'd actually become calm. (laughs) It's sort of like, OK, now, there's nothing you can do, about, anything else – and now you have to just move on, and get it done. And, in those stages, I'd manage to get, quite a bit, done.</p> <p>47. But it would always be, just – not enough. You know, erm, - like I would feel I had – wow – I've done so much, but, in actual fact, what I should have been</p>	<p>43. Interviewer</p> <p>44. A can predict others' behaviour from her personal level of anxiety. This leaves A overwhelmed.</p> <p>45. Being overwhelmed leaves A unable to act.</p> <p>46. A's anxiety is sometimes so intense it results in a sense of calm during which some work may be done.</p> <p>47. The work A has done will not be sufficient or adequate in others' eyes,</p>
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<p>doing is say like, 20 pages, and what I've done is ... pushed out, like ... 10 in a day. So I'm thinking, wow, that's absolutely amazing – and they're still thinking, ... well ... I, in my mind, I think they're still thinking, 'Oh well, she's fallen short of 10 pages'.</p> <p>48. So it kind of felt like, no matter how much effort I was putting in, despite the contradiction in that, because it's only a day's worth of effort, but just, despite the effort, I felt like I was never getting any ... kind of, sort of, reprieve, or rewards, that would say 'OK, well done' you know, 'that's enough'. Erm ... I always felt – ag (sighs) I'm supposed to be doing more, I'm supposed to be doing more all the time. Erm. Y'know.</p> <p>49. By the end of my second year, I felt ... overwhelmed. I felt like I hadn't done enough, and I hadn't ... erm ... worked enough,</p> <p>50. and it's kind of like, you know how they say 'don't cry over spilt milk' – but ... it was, like a continuous worry about time that had gone past. So much, that you waste time now. You know, so, I'd be lamenting, like how I could have done this, and I could have done that, if I'd just written you know, 3 pages a day for the last however long I'd have these many pages, and, em, worry worry, worry, and then make a plan and say, yes, I'm going to do it, and then, and then, just, - it never gets done. Ja.</p> <p>51. And, 3rd year I started working full time, - well, sort of, whenever they needed me, like part-time at first, and then mornings only, then full-time.</p>	<p>48. A's effort is not understood, recognised or appreciated by the authority other.</p> <p>49. A is overwhelmed and believes she had not done enough.</p> <p>50. A is unable not to worry over work not performed and laments lost opportunities. Despite this regret and worry, progress is not made.</p> <p>51. A took a job during the time allotted to completion of her task.</p>
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<p>52. What made you start to work?</p> <p>53. Well, initially I had a scholarship for my first and second year, as well as my Dad was giving me money every month. Then, when I got to my third year, my Dad was like, well, look – you've actually taken over and above the time that you were supposed to – erm, I'm sick of paying for you now, you're now going to have to look after yourself.</p> <p>54. Erm, - and I managed to negotiate with him for, 6 months, and I said, no, OK, I'll do it, in these 6 months, I'll get it done, and ... I'll get it done. Erm ... and, obviously, time came and passed, and, I didn't get it done, and so he ... erm .. like, every month, he'd like say to me, like at first I'd said OK it's 3 months, then it was, OK, no, just give me another 3 months, or, another 2 months, or ... so, continuously negotiating, and then eventually he was like, no OK, that's it.</p> <p>55. Did you have to give him evidence that you were making progress?</p> <p>56. Er, no. Not at all. Erm, just. I mean, it would have been quite easy for me to say 'Oh, no, I've done all of this, or, blame it on someone else, erm, but I think those were sort of my ... later tactics! (laughs) You know, my initial response was just to say, if you just give me a chance, I can actually do this. This can get done. I know it's not done yet,</p> <p>57. - but at that stage he also understood that the previous year I was quite depressed. Erm. He had</p>	<p>52. Interviewer</p> <p>53. A feels a requirement to work as her usual sources of money have come to an end.</p> <p>54. A negotiated with her father to continue funding her.</p> <p>55. Interviewer</p> <p>56. A convinces her father to continue to fund her.</p> <p>57. A finds this easy, trading on the fact that she had been</p>
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<p>actually seen me at that stage, where, erm, I think my Dad had never seen me cry in my whole life, and had seen me cry and said, OK, now I understand, there actually is something going on, it's not just something that you make up to stall people, or whatever it was, so, I think he was being lenient in that way because he understood OK, no, you have had a rough year.</p> <p>58. But, I think that his continuous 'You must finish, you must finish', was, kind of a mark of – if she finishes, then she's OK now. Y'know, then she's, y'know, not – there's no more, y'know, worries about, - she's depressed, or, whatever it is. If she's finished, then she can now move on. Erm.</p> <p>59. And, with me, I was like, erm, just not moving on. (Laughs) It's difficult to sort of – I had this idea, I think – or idealised idea of my self even in undergrad, thinking that I was an organised person, who actually got things done. And then suddenly, deteriorated into this ... non-organised, mess, that just couldn't get anything done. Couldn't meet demands. And it, honestly. In retrospect, my undergrad year wasn't that terrific, I was running round like a headless chicken, half the time. Y'know, getting it done and ... procrastinated there – it just wasn't interfering as much with my progress, I still managed to ... y'know, move forward.</p> <p>60. Erm ... whereas, in my masters, I just felt like I was standing still, y'know, like those cartoon characters that are running, and, not getting anywhere. Erm.</p>	<p>depressed previously.</p> <p>58. If her father thought she could complete her task, it would mean to him that A was OK again and could move on.</p> <p>59. A does not move on. This is unlike previously – when she had managed the difficulty and make adequate progress.</p> <p>60. Her current experience is more intense, and no progress can be made.</p>
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<p>61. - I felt that other people didn't understand, what was, you know, how stressful it was. I think that, I felt like everybody else's interpretation of me, and that I'm just this ... relaxed, kind of chilled person, who doesn't have any worries or cares in the world ... that I'm not trying to do anything to sort of, move forward or help my situation – that I'm just floating around, y'know, just doing ... nothing. Erm.</p> <p>62. You're in third year ... Has the friend (classmate) that you were with in first year ... finished?</p> <p>63. (smiles ... ruefully) ... Yes! Ja. Both, in fact, of my erm, classmates had finished and got distinctions for their, for their masters. So then I felt (laughs) – that there was even more pressure, now, because I hadn't produced, and, ... the one girl I actually, I didn't – I mean, it sounds very vain to say it, but – I didn't think she was as smart as me – and she manages to finish and get a distinction.</p> <p>64. So for me, I felt like ... wow, you know, maybe, ... maybe I'm not as smarter than her. Maybe she is smarter than me, or, you know, always, kind of, erm, ... also self-doubt, - maybe I can't do this, maybe I'm not, maybe I'm not smart enough, maybe I'm not good enough to actually finish, maybe ... it's going to end badly, or maybe the end result is going to be terrible, maybe I won't get a distinction. Erm. Especially as, in my first degrees I got distinctions ... for my third year, two of my majors, and then in my honours year, and so, I think that created a huge expectation, for what I was supposed to do.</p>	<p>61. Others do not understand A as the impression they have is that she is not worried, that she is not trying to move on with her task.</p> <p>62. Interviewer</p> <p>63. A experiences pressure in the face of others' successes, especially one who A does not consider as competent as she.</p> <p>64. A considers her value in terms of an expectation that she be intellectually adequate.</p>
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<p>65. Supposed ... by whom?</p> <p>66. Well, in my mind, - by everybody else. Erm. For me, I felt like it wasn't that important. But as time went on, and people sort of got their distinctions, I realised that it was important to me –</p> <p>67. - but I think it was in order to prove to say, my father, that, look, I am worth, you know, this at least ... like I have a distinction so that makes me, sort of, OK. ...</p> <p>68. Erm, and so, ended up working in my third year – end of my third year, second half, erm – which gave me the perfect excuse to not to, sort of, work on my thesis, because then I worked, erm, every day from 8 till half past 4. And, erm, I took a keen interest in my job and, took things home to work on, and so became ...</p> <p>69. – Is that normal for you, or was that ... unusual? (to show such interest)</p> <p>70. Erm ... (pause) ... I think half far – I think at that stage I was kind of overdoing it ... you know, it wasn't necessary for me to take ... that much.</p> <p>71. Then why did you?</p> <p>72. Erm ... I think it's because then I felt justified, in, in not doing – the one and doing the other. (job vs. thesis)</p> <p>73. But doing my job ... more than well. So that, it</p>	<p>65. Interviewer</p> <p>66. There are expectations on A by others.</p> <p>67. A wishes to show to her father that she has worth.</p> <p>68. A begins a job which gives an excuse not to engage with her task. A ensures this excuse is credible by bringing job-work home.</p> <p>69. Interviewer.</p> <p>70. A has no reason to bring work home.</p> <p>71. Interviewer.</p> <p>72. In bringing work home, A justifies not engaging with her task at any time.</p> <p>73. Unlike in the academic field,</p>
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<p>would be, OK – I can actually do something, or, I am appreciated in some area, or I'm not that stupid, or, I not ... whatever. Erm. The only problem with that is, that – your employer doesn't always comply! (laughs) Doesn't want to say, well, oh, what a great job, you know, you took, ... 90% of it went completely unnoticed!</p> <p>74. Yes, it's not like university where you get marks for stuff that you hand in! Work is a little bit different, isn't it?</p> <p>75. And also, with my thesis, I found it very different to not have, erm, percentages, marks, erm, to the extent that in my third year, I actually asked my – I had got a new supervisor – 'cos the old one decided that ... (laughs) it was taking too long. Erm, and, at the end of my third year, she became my supervisor, and I actually asked her if she could possibly, in each chapter that I hand her – piece of work that I hand her – if she could give me a percentage, so I can gauge where I'm going, y'know, whether it's good or not.</p> <p>76. Erm, Cos I felt that I had no sort of, erm, objective ... viewpoint – when I looked at it, I wouldn't be able to see if it was 75 or y'know, what ever it was. So I wanted her to say, OK, if it's 56 – and then just tell me how I can fix it, so it will become a, ja, 75.</p> <p>77. And did she comply?</p> <p>78. Ja. For the first one, and thereafter, not.</p>	<p>effort at her job was not rewarded with continuous good appraisals.</p> <p>74. Interviewer.</p> <p>75. A arranges to be assessed in order to gauge her progress.</p> <p>76. A needs an authority other's opinion of her work to know if it is of an acceptable standard.</p> <p>77. Interviewer.</p> <p>78. The authority other complied once.</p>
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<p>79. First what?</p> <p>80. Erm – first hand-in. So I handed in one chapter, and she did give me a percentage and she gave it me back to me ... erm ...</p> <p>81. And what was that percentage?</p> <p>82. Erm ... it was ... 56 – I think it was. So, I had to struggle with that ... to ... OK, I passed, (laughs) y'know, sort of, erm, ... it felt like second prize.</p> <p>83. Erm ... although I knew the chapter wasn't good because I'd done it in a rush. Er. And I knew there were lots of problems with it so, ... once I saw her, and I saw the percentage, I kept on making excuses and saying: 'Ja but, you see, I wanted to put that in, and, I was going to do that, and I was going to do that' ... and I did that often when she would give me, chapters back, or even when I handed it to her, I would say,</p> <p>84. 'I know it doesn't have that and that and that – I'm going to put that in' ... erm ... and then eventually, she would say, 'But why don't you?' y'know – 'Why don't you just do that and then give it back to me'. And then I'd, - no no no, look at it first, and then tell me what you think. Y'know, and then I'll add the others in and invariably, I'd get the chapter back and I wouldn't add things in ... until, sort of, 3 months later where she's saying, 'you know that, erm, one you were supposed to fix and give back to me in second draft, ...' Erm ...</p>	<p>79. Interviewer requests clarification.</p> <p>80. The first part of A's task is assessed as requested.</p> <p>81. Interviewer.</p> <p>82. The assessment A receives gives her no reassurance.</p> <p>83. A knows the work she has presented for assessment is not good. Nevertheless, when her assessor draws attention to shortcomings, A makes excuses so she will not be responsible for them.</p> <p>84. A wants the reassurance of being told what to do at the same time as not wanting to be criticised for not knowing what to do.</p>
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<p>85. Did you carry on with other chapters and not fix the earlier ones?</p> <p>86. Ja. I just didn't fix the earlier ones. I'd carry on with the next one. ... I think I felt like I needed to go through the whole thing first, so, from chapter 1, right through to chapter, say, 8 – I needed to have a draft, first draft of each ... and work on each of them, as a separate entity, as opposed, I mean, as a ... I mean, step 1 had to lead on to step 2, step 3, as so, you know, I couldn't jump from chapter 7 and back to 1 and. You know, I needed to be like 1 to 8. Erm, and so even though I got comments in, and spoke to my supervisor, and at that stage I realised I should have gone back, because it was fresh in my mind, and I had been working with it, and so I should actually have completed ... done that and completed it – felt like I was, ... achieving something anyway, kind of, done the chapter 1 – even though I hadn't done it in completion, I felt, OK, box: chapter 1. I think it's just ... its actual existence was what was important to me. Erm, rather than sort of doing it well, or in completion. Erm ... but then I also felt like if I <u>did</u> try and finish chapter 1, until it was finished, in my mind, then I would never end up with chapter 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 ... so I think I had realised that I was going to then end up just, stuck, maybe on one chapter, ... and there was pressure from my supervisor to, sort of, show her more, erm, you know, not re-works, but new stuff, like, where was I going.</p> <p>87. So it felt as if you were looking like you were making more progress by getting on with further chapters?</p>	<p>85. Interviewer.</p> <p>86. A doesn't act on recommendations for improvements on her previous work. Instead she continues with other work. A knows she should make the early work satisfactory but is unwilling to.</p> <p>87. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>88. Yes.</p> <p>89. At this stage I asked for clarification of which academic year P was in of her Masters – her third – and some talk then ensued about factual matters which related to how she had come to be involved with the topic she eventually wrote about, which did not have any bearing on procrastination. At the end of this clarification, P. continues:</p> <p>90. ... but at that stage I had funding and I had someone who I felt was interested in my topic. Erm ...</p> <p>91. Which also caused a whole lot of ... guilt, erm, especially seeing as like I felt like I wasn't producing. I felt I was getting paid for something, but I wasn't really having any output.</p> <p>92. Erm. And then I started avoiding ... (laughs) any of the people associated with that, as well. So, sort of, the NRF grant holder, you know, I'd see her in town, and I'd be scuttling in the opposite direction (laughs) thinking, 'Oh, you're going to ask me about my project, and I don't want to tell you.' Erm, or, even my head of department, erm, at that I still was trying to work within the department, erm, had an office, which I hardly ever used, but still tried to sort of come in and see people, (D's supervisor) try and make meetings with people. In some cases, if I got told, the first time, that 'Oh sorry, I'm busy today, but maybe we can do it next week' I kind of felt that they maybe was sort of, well, you don't really want to do this, so I</p>	<p>88. A is giving he impression of making progress.</p> <p>89. Interviewer elaborates.</p> <p>90. A has funding to conduct her research and an interested sponsor.</p> <p>91. This results in guilt as A is not producing as much work as she should be.</p> <p>92. A starts to avoid all people involved with her task and makes excuses not to see them. A begins to withdraw from the task environs.</p>
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<p>wouldn't bother to reschedule, and then, maybe, y'know, a month later they'd phone me and say 'Hey' y'know 'you were supposed to come and see me'.</p> <p>93. And were you relieved when they said they were busy and could you 'come back and see me next time'?</p> <p>94. Ja – most of the time I was – phew – it'll give me a week, or whatever it is, to have a better presentation.</p> <p>95. And inevitably the week would go by and only on two days before I'd think Oh! – actually, you know, I've got that meeting, like, in two days time, now I've got to try and make – and I'd feel bad, you know, kind of chide myself, and say, you know '<u>Why</u> didn't you do it, you know you had a whole week – you could have done all of this, you could have done all of that ...</p> <p>96. erm, and then still even though if I (worked) for the two days I'd be unhappy with the end product. I'd be thinking, 'well, look what you've done in two days, think of what you could have done in seven.</p> <p>97. ' Erm ... there keep sort of like, self talk all the time, was all sort of like 'You haven't done enough, you're not doing enough, you've sort of like ruined this day if you haven't done XYZ by 8:00 am or</p>	<p>93. Interviewer.</p> <p>94. It is a relief not to have to contend with the difficulties A knew existed with her performance, and instead put them off until later. A resolves to make the most of her spare time to create a better impression.</p> <p>95. A does not make good use of the spare time however, and avoids the necessity to work until the last moment. A feels bad and chides herself.</p> <p>96. No matter how much A does at the last moment, she considers that she could have done more and better.</p> <p>97. A tells herself that she is not doing enough and the day is ruined when she hasn't done specific parts of the task by a</p>
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<p>whatever it was.</p> <p>98. 8:00 am?</p> <p>99. Ja (laughs) – I'm just exaggerating ... it was that I had to get – especially seeing as that I was working, I would think OK I have to get up early in the morning, and get up by six, and do like a reading, or two readings, or this or whatever, and then end up where I haven't finished the reading, and I'd be late for work, and, erm, things like that where it would just kind of snowball.</p> <p>100. And then I'd feel like OK I can get one right – but I can't get both of them right. So then I'd just go to work, and do my job, and, you know, by the end of the day I was tired, erm, and say, ag, I'll do it on the weekend, or, I'll make time next week, or, I won't be as tired next week, whatever, so I'd make ... excuses all the time. (pause) Work also provided me with what I felt was a legitimate excuse to not be working as much on my thesis.</p> <p>101. So if my supervisor had asked, my parents had asked, about working, I'd be like, (pretend forlorn) 'But I <u>work</u> full time' you know, and that was, sort of, my great 'get out of jail free' card.</p> <p>102. Erm. But then it sort of, erm, at the end of my third year, it was that, pressure again, 'How much have you done, have you finished?' and I think, even at the end of my third year, I'd only handed in ... one and a half chapters, in total. Erm.</p>	<p>particular stage of the day.</p> <p>98. Interviewer.</p> <p>99. A sets herself unrealistic targets and is then unable to meet all her commitments.</p> <p>100. A tells herself that she can not work in the day and do her task and do them both properly – which A uses as an excuse not to do work on the task.</p> <p>101. A uses her job as an excuse to authority figures who enquire about her task progress.</p> <p>102. Even this excuse is rendered ineffectual when A reached the end of her 3rd year and had submitted little task work for appraisal.</p>
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<p>103. Only in my fourth year did I actually start handing in a little bit.</p> <p>104. Every year would be the same. At the end of the year I would start panicking and think oh, I need to hand this thing in, - and I'd have sort of a flurry of work until January when we're supposed to hand in ... then I'd realise I'd missed the submission date, and then there'd be a lull until, sort of, May or June, and then I'd start again with a 'Well, OK, it's getting towards the end of the year, you'd better start again'. Erm. Start making appointments with my supervisor, all the rest of it.</p> <p>105. So you'd go for two or three months at the beginning of the year without seeing your supervisor at all?</p> <p>106. Yes – well, even more, sometimes. Erm. My second supervisor, she was a lot more ... em ... persistent! (laughs) you could say, you know, she would phone more often and say, 'Oh hey, haven't seen you in a while' y'know, or e-mail me ... whereas my previous one would, he would just leave me and, you know. ... he was more sort of, well, if she needs, y'know, something, she'll ... phone me and ask me, where I think (new supervisor) sort of, had this person that she now had to supervise, that was, dragging their feet and knew of the problem so she was a little bit more persistent, but ... even then, I could go up – I <u>could</u> 2 or 3 months without hearing from her. And eventually I think, after the year, it would pop into her head 'wait ... haven't seen her in a while' ... whatever it was. And by then, I didn't</p>	<p>103. Only in her 4th year does A start to hand a little work in.</p> <p>104. Each year has a similar pattern for S: the end would be a flurry of activity trying to get material submitted – until A realises she has missed the submission date. This results in a lull in activity until anxiety levels rise again and she is motivated by that.</p> <p>105. Interviewer.</p> <p>106. A manages to avoid supervisors no matter how persistent they are but has to resort to extreme avoidance tactics to manage this. A does not want to see the people concerned or talk with them about her task.</p>
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<p>spend any time in the department, I avoided them like the plague ... (laughs) – if I saw them I'd literally run away – I didn't want to talk about anthropology, I didn't want to see them ...</p> <p>107. Erm ... when I was at work, it was fine, you know, then I felt like I was being productive contributor to society, you know I'm doing something. As soon as I get home though, I get, oh – no, you know, I've got all these other things I'm supposed to be doing. Erm. And, ja just continued to procrastinate...</p> <p>108. But you said that in fourth year, you started to do more?</p> <p>109. Yes.</p> <p>110. But not at the beginning of the year?</p> <p>111. No. It took until about May, and only then I started. And then it was ... I felt like, ag, it's going to be the same situation as it was last year, where you get to December and you suddenly realise that you have to produce 150 pages, in sort of two months – and it's not really possible. Erm. Plus (supervisor) was phoning me a lot more often, erm, because she'd only become my supervisor right at the end of 2003 (third year) and so, 2004, she .. she was, also, I think, kind of new, and fresh, so that she could phone more, erm, and I kept – I seriously think it's because I kept promising, I think she thought OK, well, I'll just give her a little more time, a little more time,</p>	<p>107. Being at her job makes A feel productive. However as soon as she gets home she starts to feel anxious again.</p> <p>108. Interviewer.</p> <p>109. A starts to do more in her 4th year.</p> <p>110. Interviewer.</p> <p>111. A recognises again the pattern that a standard year takes. This year her supervisor is more proactive but A deals with that by promising to do some work.</p>
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<p>112. - and then I think she realised that the promises were a little too empty (laughs) and you know I needed to actually come in and give her something. And she even used the tactic where she was like, just give me anything, you know, if it's <u>5</u> pages, 10 pages, you know, what ever it is, just, give it to me!</p> <p>113. And how did you feel about the idea of giving in 5 pages or 10 pages?</p> <p>114. Erm ... I ... didn't tell her that I refused to do it, but I think in my mind I refused to do that. I-I thought I need to give you something more substantial, I need to give her ... a chapter ... erm ... and I felt like if I give her 5 pages, it would seem like a very, sort of, poor offering. And so I needed to give her more ... erm ...and I felt also that if I gave her 5 or 10 pages, she wouldn't maybe understand where I was going with that – so then she'd criticise me based on what's only in those 5 pages, without realising, well wait, in the next 6 to 10 I explain what I mean, or whatever it is.</p> <p>115. Erm. And so ... I was producing a little bit more but, there were still large breaks in between, I mean in terms of, the other people that I was talking to and how they were producing work, erm, it was completely different, to how – I mean I'd give one chapter, and then, sort of, see her, two weeks later, and then she'd give it back to me, and then I'd only see her maybe ... two months later. And so, by the end of the year, I think I'd only handed in ... about ... end of 2004 ... fourth year, in total I'd only handed in</p>	<p>112. A's supervisor starts to think of A's promises as empty and makes her act on her promises by requiring her to bring in work.</p> <p>113. Interviewer.</p> <p>114. A is unhappy to submit incomplete sections of work. A feels that less than a full chapter would permit criticism of the whole that a full offering would address.</p> <p>115. A did more but with long breaks. By the end of the year she had handed in less than half of the work and some synopses of intended work.</p>
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... maybe 4 chapters, to her. In terms of others, I'd done rough drafts of 5, 6, 7 and 8 ... sorry no, not 8! (laughs) But 5, 6 and 7 I'd done. Just a little bit – sort of like a 10-page synopsis of what I was going to be doing, and hoping that I could use those 10 pages and just ... expand from there.

116. Erm. And then got towards the end of the year, and I was panicking, panicking, cos now I have to finish this, and get it in ... erm. Managed to sort of, you know, throw ... something together, erm, and gave it to her

117. – but by that stage I'd lost track of all the comments, that you know, they made ... there was just so ... I didn't know what was the first draft, I didn't know what was the second version, I didn't know whether I'd actually done that, ... trying to organise which ones I corrected that tiny statement, or that date, or whatever, erm, I completely lost track ... erm ... I would try and ... label them, as clearly as possible, but even then, it just (laughs) it didn't work ... erm ... because I'd forgotten which one was which. ... At one stage I was worried about backups, so then I'd put it on to a disk, and then back onto my computer, and then I'd work in the labs, then that would be a new version, and so I'd come back home, and then put the new version from the labs onto my computer. So it was, I was kind of trying to create backups, instead of just getting rid of the old ones completely, I'd put the new one on – and I think also I was keeping the old ones and I kept thinking – maybe there's still something in there that I need ... erm ... and, I found, looking in my room now, I've got

116. The end of 4th year resulted in the usual panic for A.

117. A becomes estranged from the thus-far work and feels she has no control over its progress. A kept all partially-completed sections of the work in progress, being unsure of their relative importance.

like billions and billions of copies of even the first, first draft of my first chapter. Even though I've re-worked it and it was ... obsolete, I still kept it, because I still thought 'maybe there's something in there, maybe I've forgotten something or, y'know, later I have to refer to it ... so I've got, at home, I've actually got versions 1 through to 8 (laughs) bound on my shelves, you know and, I can honestly say that I haven't looked a single one of those, you know, and, as I've moved on to the next, actually once I'd done all the comments or whatever it was, I never, ever went back to it – it still sort of felt like I had to keep it, just in case I was missing something or, something got taken out, or ... there's your answer, - I felt...

118. generally in my thinking I like to be quite organised, in my mind, at least, and know, erm, like, for example with my thesis, my biggest problem, I didn't have sort of have like a mind map in my head, where everything was going, and what it looked like. It was kind of, all these little bits and pieces, em, which made me, I think, a little more panicked, and a little more nervous about what the end product was going to be like. So that, in the end, even though I'd written the entire thing, I honestly didn't know what it looked like, in my head. I couldn't remember what I did in chapter 1 or how this flowed, or where it went or, any of that.

119. So, when I handed it in in my 4th year, I mean it was also like a thirteenth hour – I was working full time, flat out in the day, and working after work, from, sort of 8 in the evening, to sometimes 4 or 5 in the morning, and go home, and then wake up at 7 in the

118. A likes to be organised and feels this work-object is out of her control.

119. At the last moment A hands her completed thesis in, after long hours spent completing it. On this occasion, A felt it was essential to finish.

<p>morning, and go back to work at 8 ... and so it carried on. Erm. Because I felt like – I have to, have to, just push through, and get this done.</p> <p>120. Because by then I think I had put my entire, sort of, self-worth into this thesis, and it felt like, if I never complete it, I'm just going to be useless, for the, sort of for the rest of my life, - it's going to sit with me, it will be something that I will just never get over, - so I have to just get it done.</p> <p>121. Plus there were more pressures, in terms of well, you know, I took 3 years, and then it was 4 years, and – I can't possibly go into a fifth year, because you – well technically, you're not supposed to register for a fifth year in your masters, and I mean, so it was, kind of the more, more worries there were, - my parents were phoning all the time ... and, and when are you finishing this damn thing.</p> <p>122. And what was even worse was that they had, I think, given up hope and so were like, well, weren't listening to any of the excuses that I had, sort of that I was busy, or didn't have time, or, whatever it was, it was like ag, you'll never finish</p> <p>123. so you might as well just, give up. Erm, which is what my Dad said, and my sister, well, just like, give up and I'll give you a plane ticket and you can go overseas, and ...</p> <p>124. He said 'give up' to you, did he?</p> <p>125. Ja. ... And I said no, I can't,</p>	<p>120. A bases her entire self-worth on the thesis and feels she will be useless if she does not complete it at this time.</p> <p>121. The pressure to complete the work is not only from inside A, but from multiple external sources.</p> <p>122. A thinks her parents had given up hope and no longer believed the excuses she made.</p> <p>123. A's father tells her to 'Give up'.</p> <p>124. Interviewer.</p> <p>125. A however feels she can't</p>
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<p>126. and he said like, <u>why</u> can't you, so I said ... I don't know, just, I can't ... I wish that I could just say 'Oh well, that's it, throw in the towel, -</p> <p>127. - and I thought that it would be easier, I suppose, because I could just let go and, Oh well ... and at that stage I had already started working, so I had faith that I'd be able to get a job and pay back the NFR, and I'd already started to pay back my student loan and realised it wasn't quite as scary as I thought, y'know, you can, sort of, make a plan and ... erm ...</p> <p>128. So – you got it finished, you handed it in. What were the feelings associated with the final moments of doing that?</p> <p>129. Erm. I felt like it wasn't over, because, erm, at that stage I hadn't got my result back. So, even though it was complete, I felt like, firstly I felt like I didn't have enough time, and that I wanted it to be better than it was.</p> <p>130. Erm. Then I felt also that it wasn't quite complete, because, I still was waiting for somebody else's ... input y'know, the external examiners and that. Erm ...</p> <p>131. And how did you feel about the external examiners? Had your supervisor suggested to you that she thought your thesis was good or OK?</p>	<p>give up.</p> <p>126. A wishes she could give up but tells her father she can not.</p> <p>127. Giving up would to A to be the easier option.</p> <p>128. Interviewer.</p> <p>129. After A handed the work in it was incomplete and she could have done better. A rushed its completion.</p> <p>130. A believes it is not complete because an authority figure is required to confirm it is complete.</p> <p>131. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>132. She said, ja, she thinks it's fine, they'll pass it, it's not a problem. And there shouldn't be too much worry about that.</p> <p>133. Did you worry nevertheless, or were you quite positive?</p> <p>134. Erm ... I worried ... I was worried more about the fact that I knew it wasn't worthy of a distinction. Erm ... and because I knew that for definite, I was worried that it maybe might not be a pass either. Erm. And by that stage, I don't think I had an impression exactly, of what it <u>was</u> like. – I hadn't actually read it in its entirety. I was doing you know, bits and bits and bits so I didn't actually know.</p> <p>135. Erm, and half the time I was working sort of in bursts, you know, kind of lay around and do nothing, feel like I needed a break, and then suddenly work for about 2 hours. Then I'd get tired, go to bed, get up early the next day, work for an hour, or two, then sort of relax the whole afternoon.</p> <p>136. And at that stage I'd made sure that my job was mornings only, so that I could complete my thesis, so, it felt like I'd made the sacrifice – and then I wasn't using the time ... so I'd feel guilty, so end up worrying about that, and so it would carry on, vicious cycle.</p> <p>137. Then I got my examiners results back, which they said I needed to re-submit ... which was a huge sort of Oh! (shocked intake of breath) ... it's not good enough at all.</p>	<p>132. A's authority other thinks the work is adequate.</p> <p>133. Interviewer.</p> <p>134. A worries. She is sure the work is not of distinction quality – and might not even be minimally adequate. A has not engaged with the work sufficiently to know exactly what its quality is.</p> <p>135. A works in bursts rather than continuously.</p> <p>136. A is employed in the mornings but doesn't use the task-work opportunities she has created for herself.</p> <p>137. A receives her result and is told she must re-submit. What she had submitted was not good enough.</p>
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<p>138. So the external examiner said you need to re-do some of it?</p> <p>139. Ja. Re-work some sections ...</p> <p>140. Large sections?</p> <p>141. Ja. And I felt that ... because it was quite harsh criticism – which it should have been, because I knew it wasn't good enough, but, I think it's always difficult, to sort of, hear it from other people, and think I felt that like, I had taken a gamble and pushed through, hoped that they'd kind of say – ag – well, it's OK, y'know, sort of let me slide, and then, everything would be OK. - I'd probably still be unhappy, and, you know, why didn't I get a distinction, if I'd got a pass.</p> <p>142. So, and, I think I realised, sort of, how bad it was, and that there were more significant things to worry about, than whether I got a distinction or whether – you know there was the pass/fail that I hadn't even considered, really ... hadn't really entertained, hadn't really entertained,</p> <p>143. so I, had to then put a positive spin on it, and say OK, well, they haven't failed me, - y'know they haven't passed me but they haven't failed me, either. And now I have to re-work and the beginning of that year, I thought, right, now I have to really start ...</p> <p>144. Before you describe that stage – when you first heard that you were going to have to re-submit, how did you feel?</p>	<p>138. Interviewer.</p> <p>139. Sections needed to be re-worked.</p> <p>140. Interviewer.</p> <p>141. A had suspected the work was not good enough but had hoped she would get away with it. A was not happy with that but it would be better than failure.</p> <p>142. A realises this situation is much worse than she anticipated.</p> <p>143. A extracts positive, relieving content from the assessment that has been made of her work. She makes a new commitment to begin again.</p> <p>144. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>145. Erm. I think I felt, ... when I read through the comments I felt, erm I felt, ... again, the thought was going through my mind ... and I thought, maybe I wasn't quite smart enough to do this, y'know, maybe, maybe I sort of deluded myself into thinking that I was, Masters material, and, this kind of ... proves that. It kind of says that, you know, you're not as, you're not as smart as you thought you were, erm.</p> <p>146. As opposed to thinking I had bad planning, y'know I was thinking it was more, ... it was also more personal than that. That they were attacking me personally and it was more about, like, my worth, or my intelligence, or things like that, rather than ... y'know what it actually was, - like there <u>are</u> significant problems with this and that, or, whatever it was.</p> <p>147. So I didn't see it as constructive criticism, I just thought of it as merely criticism.</p> <p>148. Criticism of yourself?</p> <p>149. Ja, of myself. Ja, not of the body of work, or whatever it was, but about myself.</p> <p>150. Is that because the body of work and you are ... the same thing?</p> <p>151. At that stage yes, I felt, I think, I tried – ja, we were one and the same thing, that it was incomplete, it wasn't finishing, it wasn't, ... - and I felt that reflected on me personally, ... my self.</p>	<p>145. A wonders if she is equal to the task and if she now has evidence that she has deluded herself about her level of ability.</p> <p>146. Rather than conclude she has planned and executed the task poorly, A feels the rejection of her work is personal and tantamount to a rejection of herself, her worth and her intelligence.</p> <p>147. A does not see the criticism as being constructive.</p> <p>148. Interviewer.</p> <p>149. A takes the criticism to be of herself, not her work.</p> <p>150. Interviewer.</p> <p>151. Her work and her self are one and the same thing to A.</p>
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<p>152. And not just my, y'know, my inability to write, let's say, or, lack of planning, or whatever it is, it wasn't just like this tiny little flaw, it was like this major flaw within my self, this major problem.</p> <p>153. And if I could just get past that, and produce something, then it would be OK. So when I handed it in, I think I felt like, OK, it'll be OK now, if I just pass it'll be OK, - if I get a distinction it'll be even better, and then I'll feel better about myself. And then like when I got the re-submission, it was never an option. It was just sort of, wow, OK, and, sort of, you know, when they criticised me, I felt that it was personal, it was against me. Not against my thesis or whatever it was.</p> <p>154. And when I had to go and discuss my resubmission with my head of department, and my supervisor, em, it made me feel very uncomfortable to have to talk about em, the things that they'd said about my, my writings ... and some of them were quite harsh, you know, then they'd say, well do you think he's right about that.</p> <p>155. And my instant reaction was to be hurt and say 'No'. You know, like I don't want to re-submit, and I don't want to listen to them, cos I don't want to hear it, kind of thing.</p> <p>156. Erm. But then something else was saying to me, look, you know, it's going to happen where people are going to criticise you, and are going to say that maybe this is wrong, or maybe that's wrong – and maybe <u>try</u> and see it as that new opportunity –</p>	<p>152. As a result of the rejection of her work, A has a major personal flaw.</p> <p>153. Criticism of A's thesis is equivalent to criticism of her self.</p> <p>154. It is unpleasant for A to confront her rejection by those who had been responsible for it.</p> <p>155. A is hurt and her first reaction is to avoid the possibility of being rejected a second time.</p> <p>156. A rationalises that she can look on the criticism as the beginning of a fresh opportunity.</p>
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<p>157. - but I have to talk myself into that ... a lot. To say look, OK, now it's a second chance, it's not so bad, and to be positive.</p> <p>158. And it felt like other people were also being negative, like my father's, like, 'Oh well, (gesture of hopelessness) well then you've basically failed and you might as well give up now. And I felt like, wah, I can't deal with that negativity because I'm trying so hard to sort of, pull myself up to a positive stage, where,</p> <p>159. - it isn't the end of the world, it'll be OK, y'know, everything's going to be fine, em -</p> <p>160. - and even then, it was in May of that year, so I'd already sort of, gone through the hoping to graduate in April, em, hadn't heard anything, then eventually it got to May, and then eventually when I heard, I was, ag ... and I hadn't made any plans for my year, because I - I kind of thought, I haven't heard, and I don't want to move on, because, I'm not quite sure if I'm going to have to do corrections, or not, or whatever it was. Erm - (laughs) eventually it was lucky that I didn't move on, because I had quite a lot to do, thereafter!</p> <p>161. I think there I also put a stop, or a hold on my life, as a kind of marker for me, to sort of, move on, and like once I've achieved this and, y'know, completed my thesis, then I can move on ... my life - y'know, whatever that is, y'know</p> <p>162. ... So everything's very like,</p>	<p>157. Such rationalisation is not easy for A.</p> <p>158. Such rationalisation is made more difficult for A by others' negativity.</p> <p>159. A comforts herself with the belief that everything will be fine.</p> <p>160. A suspects that not having made plans to move on is evidence she believed she would not be adequate.</p> <p>161. Satisfactory completion of the thesis will be a landmark in A's life, after which she will move on with her life.</p> <p>162. A must satisfactorily</p>
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<p>compartmentalised, and this is this and that's that ... erm, ... I need to do things in sort of boxes, - and as soon as – y'know, life isn't like that, you have to adjust to everything and, I find it difficult to adjust (to) things, I need to complete this one before I start the next one. Erm ...</p> <p>163. Erm ... I thought ... I'd finally got rid of this thing, ... I think ... I didn't feel complete relief, because I think in the back of my mind, it was saying, y'know, I don't think this is going to work, y'know.</p> <p>164. OK, you think that maybe you're just pushing it, or it's not going to work – and it does. And it works out – even better. And then you're, wow, that's not so bad. In some ways, what I think I was trying to do was prepare myself for if there was ... so I kind of was 'Yay, it's finished, it's gone' – and then a little voice in the back of the head saying 'maybe not!' – so that if I just got a pass instead of a distinction, then I'd be like, 'Yay, I got a pass' and if I got a distinction it would be like, fantastic!</p> <p>165. So it's kind of setting yourself up so that I don't get too excited about it, sort of, ... disappearing. Because, just in case, it doesn't and – I do that with a lot of things. Even it's like, even with friendships with people, I kind of think, ... y'know, ... don't have too many expectations because, it might ... not work out, y'know, don't be disappointed,</p> <p>166. and I think it's ... because ... it had happened before, in other things in my life, not necessarily with my thesis, but with other, sort of, emotional things –</p>	<p>complete one thing in her life before moving on to the next.</p> <p>163. A is not confident she has dealt with the thesis adequately and is not sure it will be approved of.</p> <p>164. Sometimes A worries unnecessarily..</p> <p>165. A is careful not to be overly optimistic in case she is disappointed.</p> <p>166. A's task had the ability to let her down emotionally, like a relationship disappointment.</p>
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although a thesis shouldn't be something emotional, but I think at that stage, because ... like, my thesis and my self were like ... one ... I think I applied it the same way I do with, sort of, relationships with people ... because people have let me down in the past and I've been disappointed,

167. and kind've, so now I sort of make sure I'm half-way so that the fall isn't too great. And so I did that with my thesis as well ... which I've never really done before ... - what I usually did is was – in terms of work, I wrote it, I handed it in, it comes back ... with marks. Whatever it is – pass, fail, 50 ... 68, y'know whatever it is, that's what it is – and it's over. There's no ... you don't have to discuss it, you don't have to talk about it or anything – that's just it. That's your mark.

168. Whereas after my thesis, it was more, - once I'd got whatever it was back, I still had to discuss it. And go through sort of this painful process of analysing where I went wrong, and where I could have done better, like, and inside I was like, well, I'm already disappointed in myself, I don't need other people to be ... telling me where I went wrong or telling me.

169. Any criticism, I took very badly – I mean I tried to mask that, I was like ... OK, yes, I understand, or whatever, but by the end of my meeting with my supervisor, and my head of department, I was like, completely distraught, y'know, I wanted to cry, cos it was so, I can't believe how terrible it is ...

167. After previous disappointments, A does not expect too much so that her disappointment is minimised.

168. A's distress was prolonged by the necessity to discuss her failure. Analysing where she has gone wrong is painful as A is disappointed in herself and doesn't want others to be so.

169. A tries to hide that she is distraught at the rejection she feels as a result of the criticism of her work.

<p>170. - and then you go through this same kind of process, of sort of, OK ... 'No, don't give up', like, 'keep going' erm ... but spent a lot of time being miserable and thinking, well, maybe I should give up, or maybe I should do this, ...</p> <p>171. Did you consider giving up?</p> <p>172. ... I did ... but then I considered the consequence of giving up, which would mean ... I felt that for me, I would never really be happy with that. And that, for the – I mean, it sounds very severe, but – for the rest of my life, I would see myself as a essentially a failure.</p> <p>173. You would see yourself – or would others also see you as a failure for the rest of your life?</p> <p>174. Yes, in my perception I would think that everybody would be like 'Ag shame, there goes girl that never finished her Masters – (laughs) ... and the pity and things like that ... that it was either the judgement saying , och, I'm a failure, or I'm stupid, or whatever, or the pity, which is equally as bad, which I wouldn't want, you know, 'Ag shame, you know, she never finished' y'know ... em and,</p> <p>175. - I felt that I had this great need to finish it – but that I just couldn't do it. Sort of ... paralyzed. You know, would ... think about it a lot and want to do it a lot, but just, never actually get, from sort of thinking and planning – to action. Erm, and felt that that was sort of a continuous ... theme ... throughout.</p>	<p>170. A is miserable for a long time and wonders if she should give up.</p> <p>171. Interviewer.</p> <p>172. The consequence of giving up would be A would look on herself as a failure for the rest of her life.</p> <p>173. Interviewer.</p> <p>174. A is concerned others will see her as a failure and pity her for that.</p> <p>175. A is paralyzed – she has a great need to finish the thesis, but is unable to move from thought to action.</p>
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<p>176. Like I couldn't understand – why, if I truly had this desperate need to finish it, why couldn't I actually go and finish it! Erm.</p> <p>177. So eventually, I actually, decided I should go to counselling, so ... you know, you're supposed to go for academic problems – or personal problems, so I decided well, this is – you know,</p> <p>178. maybe they can give me some ... some solutions, or some sort of ... you know, ... knack! so that I can get from where I am to, where I want to go. Erm. And so I went to counselling for that, and turned out, after the first two sessions, we didn't even talk about that any more, it was about, myself, and where, how I felt and, erm, sort of what my thesis meant to me, rather than kind of, here's your plan, you know, you get up at 8:00, you work from 8 to 10, or whatever it was, ...</p> <p>179. And which would you have preferred? The plan, or talking about what the thesis meant to you?</p> <p>180. Em ... I think I got frustrated by the 'what the thesis means to you' stuff, because I felt like ... this is great, fine, y'know, let's talk about ... but I wanted to discover what's wrong, or at least ... kind of ... open up the door in my head that's ... stuck – y'know the one that I keep trying to push through, so that I could just get through that, and get into the, sort of, action stage.</p> <p>181. Erm. And I expressed that a lot, you know, and sometimes I said, it's all very well coming and talking</p>	<p>176. A doesn't understand why her need doesn't translate into action.</p> <p>177. A went to counselling to try and solve her problem.</p> <p>178. A was not in search of understanding, A wanted a simple method to complete the work but instead spoke to the therapist about the meaning of the thesis to her.</p> <p>179. Interviewer.</p> <p>180. A would have preferred a method to move herself to action.</p> <p>181. A tells her therapist that she wants to move from talk to</p>
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<p>about it, but I still haven't done anything this week, and I still haven't, y'know, - now I'm thinking about all these other things, y'know, instead of (laughs) doing my thesis now. Now I'm sitting at home wondering, like really, do I have an issue with that, or, whatever it is.</p> <p>182. Were there any particular issues that they brought up for you that you can remember?</p> <p>183. I couldn't get ... past ... em, ... this – like my masters thesis – personally, without saying – this is going to reflect badly on myself. Not on somebody else, or ...</p> <p>184. In some ways I went from trying to make it as perfect as possible, to so much so, that paralysis set in and I did nothing.</p> <p>185. As perfect as possible?</p> <p>186. Well, sort of, perfect in ... my mind. Which is very difficult, because obviously it changes all the time.</p> <p>187. Could perfect be a synonym for 'un-criticisable'?</p> <p>188. (pause) erm ... I think... from me, yes. Un-criticisable? ... people will always – in my mind – people will always criticise what you do, so, I think that maybe my definition <u>is</u> un-criticisable, because, I never get to the perfect stage, you know, it's never obtainable.</p>	<p>action. Instead she starts to wonder about personal issues rather than write her thesis.</p> <p>182. Interviewer.</p> <p>183. A is concerned how non-performance of her task will reflect badly on her.</p> <p>184. A is unable to make her task perfect, and paralysis sets in.</p> <p>185. Interviewer.</p> <p>186. Perfect, at least, in A's view.</p> <p>187. Interviewer.</p> <p>188. A agrees with a definition of perfection as 'un-criticisable'.</p>
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<p>189. Erm. But then become very dissatisfied with the fact that it's unobtainable.</p>	<p>189. A thinks this is unattainable and frustration ensues.</p>
<p>190. And so end up, kind of, - sounds a bit bizarre – end up doing nothing. It's kind of like I either want it this way, and there being, you know, a right way, - or not at all.</p>	<p>190. A stops trying and does nothing. There is no route to the place she wants to be with her task.</p>
<p>191. Then I don't ... anything and I don't want to do this and ... don't, y'know. The lighting's not right, the desk's not in the right place, the computer's not right there – they're not the right conditions, it won't produce the right or perfect kind of, ... kind of work. Which I think consumed a lot of my time ... initially ...</p>	<p>191. A does not commence as the ideal circumstances to do so do not exist.</p>
<p>192. – and then eventually, it was, ... I was just procrastinating I think, mostly out of habit. I was, kind of, not dealing with my thesis, not dealing with that, just putting, putting it aside – saying, Oh well, I'll do it tomorrow .</p>	<p>192. A procrastinated habitually. Her response to pressure was to always say that it could be dealt with tomorrow.</p>
<p>193. Hm. We have got away from ... after you'd had the meeting with your supervisor ... It was really upsetting, and you realised that you had to make the decision as to whether you were going to carry on, or if you were just going to give up.</p>	<p>193. Interviewer.</p>
<p>194. Yeah. I decided to carry on.</p>	<p>194. A decides to attempt to remedy the problems with her thesis.</p>
<p>195. Did you manage to get on with it straight away?</p>	<p>195. Interviewer.</p>
<p>196. No, no! (laughs) I took another, sort of, two</p>	<p>196. A did not recommence her</p>

<p>months, where I actually ... didn't do anything. I didn't even look at it. I left the comments and the thesis in the corner of my room. I didn't even touch it, - not once.</p> <p>197. Did you think about it?</p> <p>198. Erm ... I did, but very superficially, you could say. Kind of sort thought phwee (blows) well really should do that – and then just didn't think about it. I didn't make any plans, I didn't ... cos usually I would try, y'know, sort of, set out a schedule, even if it is month by month or week by week.</p> <p>199. Was it because you just didn't know <u>where</u> to start?</p> <p>200. The pointers that they gave were actually, pretty specific. And so I could have gone through each chapter bit by bit – so, I think, it's not because I felt I didn't have a starting point, erm, I think I felt it was more the ... I didn't have the ability to do what they wanted.</p> <p>201. And I also felt like, I don't ... I cater a lot for people – which I found out in counselling that I was very much a people pleaser, I wanted people to be ... satisfied with what I produced, on their own – not for me to be satisfied with it, but that <u>they</u> would like it. And ... they would be happy with it. And so, erm, I think what I was trying to do was – I got confused, because, how can I cater for an examiner I've never seen? – and I don't know what their name is, and any of that.</p>	<p>thesis immediately, and took a break for 2 months during which time she had no contact with it.</p> <p>197. Interviewer.</p> <p>198. A did think about the thesis but did not make plans to deal with it.</p> <p>199. Interviewer.</p> <p>200. A could have started because the corrections required were quite specific. However A was concerned she didn't have the ability required.</p> <p>201. A has difficulty recommencing the task as her main goal is to please others. In this instance the other was the examiner. But the examiner was unknown to her she doubted that she could satisfy that other.</p>
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<p>202. So I felt like I can't ... kind of use ... the tactics that I would usually use, and kind of, - if I know a lecturer loves ... you know, whatever it is, then, I'm going to put that in. Erm, and then I'll know that they'll be instantly be – like, OK, they'll like it. Whether that's true or not, whether they actually like the content or not, didn't matter, that was my kind of my tactic – and because I didn't know them, and what they liked and what they were on about, I felt like I couldn't quite cater to what they wanted.</p> <p>203. So that made me feel quite frustrated. Sort of, OK, I know you're not happy with the other version, but I don't quite know what'll make you ... happy.</p> <p>204. And that makes you anxious?</p> <p>205. Ja, I think it made me ... it made me feel confused, erm, because I didn't know how to get round that.</p> <p>206. How to sort of get past the ... well forget about, you know, then, just take the comments, that they've given you, rework them as best you can, and then give it back. I mean, you can only take what they've given you on these two sheets of paper, or whatever it is. But it made me refer to the thesis, because I was like, if only they'd just given me a little bit more ...</p> <p>207. Was their criticism not meaningful to you?</p> <p>208. ... it wasn't. I didn't amalgamate their criticisms into the thesis that I had produced. I kind of ... read</p>	<p>202. This is a difficulty normally solved by devising a tactic to curry favour with the other.</p> <p>203. But the other - the examiner - was unknown, and it was therefore not possible to make them happy.</p> <p>204. Interviewer.</p> <p>205. Not knowing how to deal with this difficulty makes A anxious.</p> <p>206. A can deal only with the comments on the thesis which are more difficult to interpret.</p> <p>207. Interviewer.</p> <p>208. A is concerned she doesn't understand the academic</p>
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<p>the one with the other, ended up with the feeling of, OK, this is what they were saying, this is what I need to do in order to make this a better piece of work. And everyone said to me, their criticisms are <u>so</u> specific, <u>so</u> specific, that it should be really easy to address them, - and I'd read them and I'd think, - but they're not specific, you know, they, kind of say, y'know, chapter 3, is y'know, written in too much of a formal style of literature, or whatever, - and I'd think, ... and how do I change that? It's the way I write, you know, and, er, that was my first sort of, feeling, was like, they <u>weren't</u> specific enough – I didn't know what they meant,</p> <p>209. I'd get frustrated because, in between, I'd feel that they were being, sort of, ... nasty to me, and kind of I'd have to try and get over the fact that you think they're being horrible,</p> <p>210. and now read it again, and now it would be still don't understand it, OK, try and read it again, try and fight my way through, what <u>I</u> was feeling and projecting onto what they were saying – and what they were <u>actually</u> saying.</p> <p>211. So ... - and I did feel that ... my thesis was like, a body of work that was, 'over there' and I don't quite know how to shove that into there. And everyone was saying how, no no, it will be fine, and it will be easy it'll be – y'know, - but I thought, well, I'm not sure if I can do what they're asking – maybe because I don't know what they're asking me to do. Erm ...</p> <p>212. So what did you do?</p>	<p>criticisms that have been made. Whereas others seemed to be able to understand easily the suggestions that had been made, A doesn't feel they are specific enough. There is room for un-sureness and therefore insecurity.</p> <p>209. A is offended by criticism.</p> <p>210. A has difficulty understanding what has been written by those who judged the work she had done.</p> <p>211. A is estranged from the work she has done and doesn't know how to act on suggestions to improve it.</p> <p>212. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>213. Erm ... I – like I say, I procrastinated for about 2 months, pretended it wasn't there. Eventually came to the conclusion that I need to do this, for myself, as well as,</p> <p>214. because I think other people will; be disappointed, or look at me in different view, or whatever it is, - and I really feel that way, even today, I feel like, because I've taken 5 years, people are like, ag, she's, basically failed anyway, or whatever it is – but I didn't want to actually fail, erm, sort of, or say, no, I don't want to finish.</p> <p>215. So, I went to go to counselling every week, and, at first, she'd ask me every week, how much have you done, how much have you done ...? And it was quite a relief because she was the only person I could say – I haven't done a stitch of work! – I've been sitting on my bum the whole week doing nothing! – without feeling, like, she was actually judging me and say, wha-ho, now you're in trouble. And so I felt, at least in that way, I felt relieved – that I could actually confess to somebody that I'd been doing all these hundreds of other things, y'know ... look, terribly busy, (laughs) but, y'know, actually, haven't been doing anything!</p> <p>216. My Mum would come into my room – because at that stage I started living with her, - and she'd say 'Ag, what a good girl, working' – and all the rest of it ... - and I was playing spider solitaire – she just couldn't see my computer screen!,</p>	<p>213. In the short term,. A pretends the thesis and the problems associated with it don't exist. After 2 months, A resigns herself to starting again.</p> <p>214. A thinks others will be disappointed and view her as a failure if she does not begin again.</p> <p>215. A experiences relief being able to tell the therapist non-critical other she has done nothing – without being judged.</p> <p>216. This in contrast to the others A was pretending to, that she was engaged and working on the thesis.</p>
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217. so .. it was also a great relief, because if you tell someone 'I haven't done anything' and they like, OK, well, what are you going to do next? – y'know, what is your plan, to sort of either fix this, or deal with it, or whatever it is ... ? – and then I could sort of ... feel less panicked about it and say, OK, it isn't that bad – because she'd say, y'know, stop, kind of, beating yourself up about it, because you're spending more time beating yourself up about it, rather than you are doing anything else.

218. So, erm, eventually I just procrastinated, procrastinated, procrastinated, - I felt like I was, overwhelmed, I couldn't do it, I wasn't sure what they were asking, - anyway eventually it was, like, I have to actually do this, if I want to finish, em, then I have to do it.

219. And, the counsellor that I went to kept on asking me as well, she said, - 'But do you really want to finish ...?' And I'd get so irritated, ! – yes of course I want to finish, - that's what I'm saying, that's what I'm telling you. And she'd say 'but, you didn't do any work, you, didn't do any work ... em ... so it's kind of telling me that maybe you don't want to finish ...?' And I'd get really mad, so mad at her for saying to me, that I wasn't – not not being truthful, but I wasn't actually, y'know, saying what I meant.

220. Em, I'd kind of say, I must prove her wrong, I must show her that I actually do want to finish. And it didn't - in the first week it didn't work, it was only 4 or 5 weeks in, even maybe two months in, that I actually start working. Though every week I had the

217. This gives A practice in not needing to make excuses about not working and increases her sense of self-belief.

218. A continues to feel overwhelmed and doesn't understand what is required of her. Eventually she concludes that in order to finish, she must start.

219. A is cross when the non-critical other does not understand her situation when she asks if A really wants to finish.

220. A wants to prove the non-critical other wrong. This doesn't move her to action for some weeks but eventually, she starts work on the task.

<p>determination that every time she asked me the question, I was like, I <u>am</u> going to finish, I'm going to show her that I do want to. Erm. I started working on it in maybe July, - but only seriously started working on it in August.</p> <p>221. July I was still doing planning – I mean I had these complicated charts with, I mean, everything, from when I wake up to when I shower to when I do this, do that – to try and create order, and this, regimented sort of schedule. And I'd say 98% of the time, 99% of the time – I didn't stick to it at all – and then I'd sort of have to spend another day, creating this lovely, elaborate sheet all again, until eventually, didn't even look at the schedule, erm, and actually had to force myself to sit down, and work on it.</p> <p>222. Erm, and felt like, eventually I read the comments and thought OK, just read each comment, pull out what they actually mean, - you know, not, what the wording is or whatever, just, pull out what they actually mean – and then take that – what you've done, and work from there. Erm.</p> <p>223. And then still, my progress wasn't quite as fast as it should be and, a lot of people were like, whoa, it's a re-submission, you should get it in earlier.</p> <p>224. So still felt like I wasn't quite making the grade, but, eventually, managed to finish it, though it took me a while, to let go of it though, cos I finished ... the majority of it in ... late December,</p> <p>225. - but then started asking ... other lecturers, to</p>	<p>221. Early plans to recommence are of the usual kind – complicated charts which strictly organise A's day, which are not adhered to but required more organising time to be used to create a new schedule. Eventually A simply sits down and starts the task.</p> <p>222. A begins by interpreting exactly what is meant by the comments that have been made about her thesis.</p> <p>223. There is great pressure from others to submit in good time.</p> <p>224. A is unable to feel confident that the quality of work she is doing is good enough, but finishes at the last moment.</p> <p>225. A canvasses opinion from</p>
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<p>look at it. Cos I felt like that my supervisor had said it was OK before, so I couldn't quite (laughs) – trust her ... and so I gave it to a few other people, who, - unfortunately they gave me about 300 comments – so at first, I read all of them and thought, oh, I have to address <u>all</u> of these. I have to make sure that I do all of them, because if I don't do all of them, then maybe I'll have to have major corrections and maybe have to do this and maybe have to do that, erm,</p> <p>226. and then later, when I got more pushed for time, I actually got more to the phase that I was like, 'Is this actually relevant for you, do you think that this belongs here?' – and then I'd say ... no. So I just ripped the tag where I'd marked the place – and just throw it away. Just forget about it. Erm.</p> <p>227. And that also helped me as well, because then I felt I'd gained a little more confidence to say, OK, I <u>do</u> understand what they're asking, - maybe <u>you</u> don't understand what they're asking, maybe <u>you</u> don't understand what my thesis is about – but I understand what <u>my</u> thesis is about, and I understand what they're asking, and so now I can critically say, no, these don't apply, yes these do apply.</p> <p>228. In some cases I was er ... I might just be doing it to get out of work, (laughs) – so I don't actually have to deal with it, or do that reading, or, any of that, but ... I chose carefully!</p> <p>229. At the end when I was pushed for time, I think I was quicker to dismiss some of the things – but</p>	<p>others as to the adequacy of the work. Initially she is determined to address each of the comments they have made because without doing so, the job will not be complete.</p> <p>226. A becomes less rigorous in this regard as time passes.</p> <p>227. A's confidence increases to the stage where she can make decisions about the quality of the writing without necessarily referring to others for approval.</p> <p>228. A accepts that this might have been done in order to avoid work but believes she has made sensible choices.</p> <p>229. A becomes more confident of her own knowledge and her</p>
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<p>y'know, they weren't that relevant. And I felt like I'd addressed them before, - and I felt it had become a <u>major</u> improvement on the initial hand-in, so I was a little more relaxed, because I was OK, I think this is better. Plus I had a proof-reader, which I think also helped. In that I kind of felt that more people were reading this – and they're not coming back to me like, wow, I don't know where you're going to or, what you're carrying on about, y'know.</p> <p>230. Were the people who were reading it knowledgeable about the topic?</p> <p>231. No - but I felt that if it was readable, then at least that was something. You know, that was a good start. And so I kind of felt better about that, the more I got from my proof-reader, the more I got from my supervisor, the more I sort of worked on it, I managed to work through the criticisms, work through <u>their</u> criticisms as well, and also sort of have more, or a erm, more confidence in saying, OK, don't worry, I don't have time for that.</p> <p>232. Whereas before, because I procrastinated so much, I felt lazy. And I felt that if I said to people – no, I'm not going to read those three books, that it was because I was continuing to procrastinate, or to be lazy, or ... cos for me, procrastinating sometimes equals laziness, for me. Erm, and, even though I'm doing stuff, you know, 'things' or whatever, – I feel I'm not doing the important things and so I feel I'm still not ... you know, I'm still being lazy, - although I know lazy's not the right word ... ineffective.</p>	<p>ability to judge others' input.</p> <p>230. Interviewer.</p> <p>231. A is able to have her work judged by persons who were not familiar with the subject matter and their opinions help her to deal with more knowledgeable readers.</p> <p>232. A is able to distinguish between being lazy and being able to make informed choices about which material to use.</p>
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<p>233. You knew that there were things to do that were more important than those that you were currently dealing with – and you weren't just kidding yourself?</p> <p>234. Ja. And also that people are going to think – ja you know, she's just slacking, because she hasn't done that, that particular task – because that's the only thing that they see of me, of ... kind of, your world – like they don't see that your room is lovely and tidy - ! – or your car is spotless (laughs) and you know, all the rest of that is done ... erm, or the fact that your friend had a crisis the day before, or, y'know, whatever it is ... they don't see that,</p> <p>235. - they only see the end result, like, here's your 20 pages, you've done it or you haven't done it ... and if I hadn't done it there wasn't really any excuse that sounded valid –</p> <p>236. - even though at that point I used all sorts of rationales, saying, Oh no, you have to do this, and you have to finish that, - you have to and see so-and-so and you have to ... prioritise all these other things first – and once you've got those done, then you can start with all the difficult, or more intense stuff.</p> <p>237. So, you actually got it finished?</p> <p>238. Yes, actually got it finished.</p> <p>239. That was also a big ... what if I'm going to fail now ... what if they go the other way, where it's a re-</p>	<p>233. Interviewer.</p> <p>234. A is anxious that others think she is a slacker if they don't know all the background information why a decision has been made.</p> <p>235. Others might think A is lazy and ineffective if they don't know the effort it has taken to complete the work she has done.</p> <p>236. A prioritises less important work in front of difficult and intense work.</p> <p>237. Interviewer.</p> <p>238. A finishes the task and hands it in for assessment.</p> <p>239. This causes anxiety when A considers the possibility of the</p>
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<p>submission and they say 'You haven't done <u>any</u> of what we've asked you. ...</p> <p>240. And despite my supervisor saying, no, it's a hundred times better than it was, I was, ... I don't believe you – I actually said to that to her, I said I don't believe you because last time you told me it was going to be OK ... and she said no, that's true, she doesn't know why, she thinks they were particularly strict in terms of her experience with people, having theses marked, and all the rest of it.</p> <p>241. So, erm, but, even though she said that, it didn't make me feel any better, - I didn't feel, Oh well, it was unwarranted then, or if I'd got other external examiners I would have got another result. I still felt that it was warranted for me to re-submit ... and then I got the result and, I'd passed. I was a little bit disappointed that I didn't get a distinction, but at the same time I was, like, you have to be realistic!, you know, you took five years, it is a re-submission, all of these other factors,</p> <p>242. - but, I felt like, once I'd finished, all the sort of ... good stuff I was supposed to feel, all that sort of pay-off I was supposed to get, like, Oh! Well done, and you know ... it didn't even kick in. Y'know, I just, kind of, I think for the first 4 or even 5 weeks, people were like, Oh! congratulations! Well done! – and I felt none of the excitement and none of the yay! it's over – you, I still felt like, it's still there, you know, there might be something that's going to pop out of the woodwork, kind of jump up and say 'I need to be done' or, some criticism, or ...</p>	<p>work still being unacceptable.</p> <p>240. Despite reassurances, A is sceptical of the authority other's ability to know how good her work is.</p> <p>241. A passes but is disappointed when she doesn't get a distinction – though is able to be content about this.</p> <p>242. A is not overly pleased or satisfied that she has finished. Others congratulate her but she is not able to experience relief that the task is complete.</p>
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<p>243. Was that because you hadn't yet had the graduation ceremony?</p> <p>244. I think it's because, even now, I haven't handed my loose-leaf copies in. And I think my loose-leaf copies will be like the, very final – because that's when I actually get my parchment, and that's when it says my degree's obtained, when I've handed my loose-leafs in. – And even though I've had no corrections, it's taken me, Oh, - it's sitting in my office, now, which is like a big stick for me, but it's taken me since ... graduation ... 8 April ...</p> <p>245. The graduation ceremony was quite surreal, I was like, this must be a dream, or somebody's going to jump out and say wait, no, made a mistake. And then once I got through the graduation ceremony, it was like, that was a bit strange, because I didn't have that whole, like, Ooo!</p> <p>246. Did you feel that at your other degree ceremonies?</p> <p>247. Funnily enough, I didn't go to my honours one, you know, I didn't even attend - and my initial one I thought – why on earth are they giving me my degree?</p> <p>248. How do you mean, 'why on earth'?</p> <p>249. I thought that I was kind of ... you know em ... sort of fallen under the radar, somehow, and just managed to steal a place to ... - but I did feel a lot of</p>	<p>243. Interviewer.</p> <p>244. A has unfinished business with the task.</p> <p>245. A is not able to own the success of completion.</p> <p>246. Interviewer.</p> <p>247. A didn't attend her previous task reward ceremony and was unworthy of the receipt of it.</p> <p>248. Interviewer.</p> <p>249. A was unworthy of the honour of the task reward.</p>
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<p>excitement though, I was very happy to finish, and complete and, ... it was very different to what I felt with my Masters, with my masters I didn't feel ..</p> <p>250. but like my Dad said to me when he heard that I'd got my degree 'Oh they finally got sick of you and decided to give it to you' Nice, Dad! And I just felt that was so disappointing because I thought that sucked all of the ... sort of the great ... sort achievement ... out of it. It was like, no, you didn't really pass. It was just because they got tired of you.</p> <p>251. But he was just joking ... just a bit of an insensitive joke?</p> <p>252. Yes, ja. Bit of an insensitive joke. I think he knew he was being a bit insensitive because I kind of told him to bugger off (laughs).</p> <p>253. I still don't have a grasp on ... why I just don't get things done. Erm ...</p> <p>254. Don't you?</p> <p>255. Well, I think maybe it's because, well, I think I don't have a grasp on why I don't get things done that I know I have to do. The things that I don't really want to do, I understand. I don't do it because I have lack of interest or, it doesn't ... but erm ... I think in general, I don't really know – because I do it in other things as well.</p> <p>256. One of the things that you said was 'My style of doing things was to leave until the 11th hour'. Why</p>	<p>250. A is sensitive to a suggestion from her father that she was given her task reward rather than having earned it.</p> <p>251. Interviewer.</p> <p>252. A does not wish her father to make such insensitive remarks with impunity.</p> <p>253. A does not know why she doesn't get things done.</p> <p>254. Interviewer.</p> <p>255. A doesn't understand why she procrastinates over things she knows she must do. She only understands not doing things she has no interest in.</p> <p>256. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>did you do that? What were the benefits of doing things at the 11th hour?</p> <p>257. Erm. I think it's cos I, people could say that I mis-managed my time, but I'd say that I prioritised other things. And thought that I was capable enough to be able to do it at the last minute with it still being something that was still as pass, or, whatever it was – so it was kind of like ... the least amount of effort, to an extent, even though it would create a lot of anxiety and all the rest of it.</p> <p>258. Why did it create anxiety?</p> <p>259. Erm. Because, I kept, I knew that the deadline was coming, I knew that, kind of, looming all the time – to create that kind of anxiety, like, I know I should be doing it, I should be reading these things, I should be doing that.</p> <p>260. But at the same time the payoff was that I wasn't doing that, I didn't have to do it.</p> <p>261. The payoff was that you weren't doing it?</p> <p>262. Ja. That I could do other things with my time ... or</p> <p>263. But that suggests that not doing it gave you the freedom to spend time otherwise doing things and enjoying them – was that actually the case?</p> <p>264. No, well, I think it was always in the back of my mind. And it would obviously get worse as my day</p>	<p>257. A distinguishes between mis-management of time and alternative prioritisation. She is capable of knowing when something needs to be started in order for it to be finished on time – though it might cause anxiety doing it that way.</p> <p>258. Interviewer.</p> <p>259. Looming deadlines create anxiety when A knows she should be working.</p> <p>260. A payoff , paradoxically, is that she isn't working.</p> <p>261. Interviewer.</p> <p>262. Instead A could do other things.</p> <p>263. Interviewer.</p> <p>264. The freedom is spurious as the thought of the 'ought to be</p>
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<p>would progress, as I got towards the end of the day, OK, now I have to do something. And then if I hadn't done something, at, by the end of the day, erm, gone to bed and woken the next morning, and then I felt like I had to start the next morning – it was in the back of my mind all the time, but, I'd get, distracted, by other people, other demands, or, just basically other things.</p> <p>265. And then eventually it would get to the end of the day – until it got to the point where I knew that, OK, there are only 'x' amount of hours left, and, I'm seriously running out of time. That's when I would then, do the task, because I knew that, it actually, I couldn't, hold off any more. It actually had to be done.</p> <p>266. I think, erm, what I said now, I think that's my first response, but if I'd thought about it – once I've handed it in, that is the rationale, that is kind of, well, it's OK if I get 51 because, I actually only did it between 3 am and 5 am – or whatever it is, you know, rushed through it – so then it's a, excellent excuse for, maybe not having covered the material enough or, whatever the case may be.</p> <p>267. And were those thoughts that occurred to you at that time?</p> <p>268. Em, I think that the kind of 'Oh well, if I didn't do so well' only occurred after I'd handed it in. But beforehand, you know, all the 1-10 hours before the 11th hour, I wasn't thinking about that, I wasn't thinking – it was only after I've handed in, then it</p>	<p>done' is always in the back of A's mind. This increases as the day passes and if at the end of the day, nothing has been done, anxiety results.</p> <p>265. It is only when there is no time left to do otherwise that A commences the task.</p> <p>266. Doing things at the last minute and in a rush is an excellent excuse for not doing the work well.</p> <p>267. Interviewer.</p> <p>268. It is after A hands the task in to be assessed she thinks that she did her best within the time she gave herself.</p>
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<p>comes in where I have the kind of thought where, Oh well, you know, if it bombs out, or whatever, you know, I did my best, within the time I gave myself, not thinking, I did my best within the time they gave me.</p> <p>269. And so my expectation of myself, my own work, was there was less pressure.</p> <p>270. Somebody else's expectation might be that this should be a three-week duration, like, piece, of work. Whereas mine might be like, well, it's only a 3-hour. So then it's OK if I get 51, or 60, or whatever it might be.</p> <p>271. I feel that there would be too much pressure – this is also afterwards, I, I'd only think about the results. I think there'd be too much pressure if I did it consistently over 3 weeks; worked on it continuously over 3 weeks erm, because then I'd feel like I had to get ... you know ... 85 plus or 99 or, you know, whatever it was, the top score I can ...</p> <p>272. Because – you associate yourself with the work that you do, quite strongly? That how good the work is, is how good you are?</p> <p>273. Yes, ja.</p> <p>274. Another quick question: - you're given 3 weeks to do an essay – were you able to enjoy the 2 weeks and 3 days that you weren't doing anything on it, before you actually started work on it.</p>	<p>269. This results in less pressure to perform.</p> <p>270. A reduced time devoted to the work means A expects less achievement from herself.</p> <p>271. To work the whole duration on a task would mean too much pressure on A because she would feel there was an obligation to get 99 or the top score she can.</p> <p>272. Interviewer.</p> <p>273. How good the work is will be an indication of how good A is.</p> <p>274. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>275. Yee-es – because I think I deliberately distract myself, so I choose activities that, that are nice excuses. So if I sat at home, sort of near my work, and watched TV or whatever it was, well that's not quite good enough, because I can walk two steps and – work. It would rather be 'Oh a friend asked me to have coffee at her house, or, em, sort of, always socialising, outside of the work space. So that I was, Oh well, I had to go their house first, and then fetch them, and be very considerate, yes, I'll fetch you, and I'll take you there – if you need to run an errand tomorrow, then I'll help you with that.</p> <p>276. You know, anything that would consume time, that would to me make a logical excuse.</p> <p>277. So it wasn't necessarily that, erm, I'd forget about it completely, because if I sat down at home, and say, watched TV or, sat and thought, or whatever it was, then it would creep in, and I'd be like, I should be doing this, or, I should be doing that.</p> <p>278. So I think that's why I talk about in the mornings or the evenings about how I weigh up my work, and I think that because that's when I'm by myself. You know, before I go to bed I'm on my own and then I suddenly think, Oh, you know, what have I <i>done</i> for the day – and then in the mornings I'm by myself as well, and there's no input from other people telling me what they're doing today, and how I can help them.</p> <p>279. Cos, once you also allow people sort of ... rely</p>	<p>275. A is able to detach herself from the work she has to do but needs to be out and about to do that successfully.</p> <p>276. Anything which consumes time is a logical reason not to work on her task.</p> <p>277. A isn't able to forget about the work she is obligated to do as a reminder creeps into the back of her mind.</p> <p>278. When A is not occupied with others, thoughts of the work she should be doing and has not done appear.</p> <p>279. People get used to making</p>
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<p>on you for certain things, they come to you all the time, automatically, then you don't have to then prompt them to be distractions, they become that.</p> <p>280. So whilst you're distracted, you're not anxious – but as soon as you're on your own, you have the opportunity to be anxious, you do get anxious.</p> <p>281. Ja.</p> <p>282. OK. You talk about running errands for people, with people and helping out, and cleaning and the like ... I was going to ask you why – but you've told me why, it's to distract you from the anxiety that would exist if you were on your own next to the work.</p> <p>283. And in term of cleaning, and that, that's often, it's sort of, trying to become prepared to do the task. Erm, so it serves as a distraction – but it also serves as a kind of necessary part, in order for me to finish the ultimate task.</p> <p>284. How does that work?</p> <p>285. Em, well it's kind of, if I have all my readings in order, or if I have my desk in order, then it will be easier for me to actually do the task – so I'm contributing to efficiency – because, it feels like I am getting organised so then I am contributing to the ultimate result, or,</p> <p>286. I am trying to get something done.</p>	<p>use of A's time and eventually do not have to be prompted to be a distraction.</p> <p>280. Interviewer.</p> <p>281. While A is distracted she is not anxious – but when she is on her own she gets anxious.</p> <p>282. Interviewer.</p> <p>283. Cleaning is both a distraction and a preparation for work on the task.</p> <p>284. Interviewer.</p> <p>285. Getting materials in order will make it easier to complete the task by contributing to efficiency.</p> <p>286. A is able to feel that she is</p>
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<p>287. Erm, I mean, in truth, it's obviously, it's just a ploy to distract me, but in my mind I think I've rationalised it by saying 'Well, if I'm organised, if I get all my readings together, and make sure that all of these are done, - all the menial tasks first, then it'll be so much easier when I decide to start the essay or the assignment.</p> <p>288. And it does feel like real work, does it?</p> <p>289. Yes, it feels like I'm contributing in a small way, that I made a start, like that's my step one.</p> <p>290. Almost a bridge between cleaning and working?</p> <p>291. Yes.</p> <p>292. And does it work out that way?</p> <p>293. Em, 90% of the time no, and then a day or two lapses and then everything's in a mess again and so the cycle will just start again.</p> <p>294. And on the times when you know you <i>have</i> to start, do you clean up before you start then as well?</p> <p>295. Em, then I sort of – localise it. If I've got the three-week period, then I'll – well you laugh, but I'll vacuum my car, clean my car, do my washing, look in</p>	<p>doing something of the task.</p> <p>287. A realises that this is a ploy to distract herself and have the feeling of doing something constructive.</p> <p>288. Interviewer.</p> <p>289. It then feels to A she has made a small start.</p> <p>290. Interviewer.</p> <p>291. Cleaning is a bridge to working.</p> <p>292. Interviewer.</p> <p>293. The bridge does not get crossed. A day or two will pass and things will need tidying again – and the cycle re-starts.</p> <p>294. Interviewer.</p> <p>295. When A has a lot of time until her deadline, preparatory cleaning is extensive.</p>
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<p>my cupboard for extra washing, erm, you know, something that I hadn't worn for about 6 weeks or something, - oh no, must be washed, have all these things cooking all at once, sort of, washing on the line, washing my car outside, clean my room, taking everything out, you know, air my bedding, I mean the whole spring cleaning ...</p> <p>296. In order to do an essay?</p> <p>297. Ja! (laughs) – that's why if I have 3 weeks, or, in the case of my masters, it was 2 years, or whatever, erm, but as soon as it comes to the crunch, then it would be my desk, arranged, you know. My files, my notes, would then be sorted in order, or whatever it is, em, so the more time I have, the more grandiose is the cleaning ... and slowly it would be more localised to actually what I need in order to complete the task.</p> <p>298. Good. OK – you spoke about the feeling of not being as smart as you would wish. That sometimes you get this feeling. ... What would be the disadvantages of not being as smart as you would wish?</p> <p>299. Erm ... I think that ... well if, ... if I – I think it's because – say for example with my undergrad degree when I thought, ag, I don't know why they're giving me this, or, you know the thought in the back of my mind erm, I would feel that if I turn out not to be as smart as being able to get a BA or whatever it is, that – (laughs) it sounds bizarre, but, then I'd have to come clean and tell them that I'm not that smart, so</p>	<p>296. Interviewer.</p> <p>297. When a deadline is near, A will prepare in a more realistic way to commence the task.</p> <p>298. Interviewer.</p> <p>299. A thinks that not being as smart as she wishes would mean having to return her reward.</p>
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<p>maybe you'd better take it back.</p> <p>300. Or either, I think, well then, the person whose opinion I thought counted – that was a marker, that says OK, you're not ... you're not that bad, erm, would then be invalid. So my ... game with my BA, to me would be saying, OK, you're not that bad, you're not that stupid ... erm, and if I found out that I actually wasn't as smart as I thought I was, then I'd feel like, well they lied to me, or it's not real, or ...</p> <p>301. So did you believe the BA, or was it just part of the continuing charade?</p> <p>302. Em. I think that I did believe it, because, I got it and then I was allowed to do honours. But then once I got to honours I was like, now I have to see if I can actually do this. Erm, and then, once I got from honours ... –</p> <p>303. – And whilst you were doing that, did the BA matter any more?</p> <p>304. No. No, it became irrelevant. It was starting – reinvent the wheel again. So by the time I got to my masters, and then I had delays, you know, to complete the task that I wanted to, the other two are irrelevant, completely. (The BA and the honours). And people would say 'Oh but you did well, you got academic colours twice, you mustn't worry about – whatever it is'.</p> <p>305. For me it was like that's somebody else's life, and now I have to start again and this is where I have</p>	<p>300. It would make invalid the confirmation of her quality in others' eyes.</p> <p>301. Interviewer.</p> <p>302. At every new stage, A is not confident she will be able to succeed.</p> <p>303. Interviewer.</p> <p>304. Earlier achievements are meaningless in the face of new challenges.</p> <p>305. A ignores her previous success when a new challenge</p>
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<p>to prove myself as being smart or, whatever it is. Erm ... 306. So – if people think you're not smart, then -? 307. I just think that, it sounds as though, because I – it's not like I'm in – ag, it's going to sound <i>immensely</i> arrogant! – but, sometimes if I look at somebody who doesn't have a matric or BA or a BA honours or Masters or whatever it is; I don't look at them and think ag you know, shame, you really don't, you're a half-wit, or, whatever it is – I don't judge them in that fashion. But for myself, I judge myself harshly. 308. Erm, so for me the consequence of finding out that I'm not so smart would mean that I'm sort of a second-rate citizen or, I'm not socially acceptable, or ... whatever it is – you know, I don't deserve something, whatever it is. Whereas for other people, it's fine, you know, everyone has their own qualities, abilities and good points and all the rest of that, I see that in other people – but I don't have the same ... consideration for myself ... 309. OK. ... When you do stuff, there is quite a lot of expectation on the part of others. What does that feel like? 310. Em. In some ways it feels, I feel that it's unfair – because I feel like I don't, erm, make – it feels demanding. You know, I feel that it's not fair because I don't make demands on other people. 311. Erm, and I also feel ... quite controlled by that.</p>	<p>is presented. 306. Interviewer. 307. A judges herself harshly. Whereas she can appreciate the achievement of others getting a reward, she does not feel that way about herself. 308. For others not to have achieved is not a bad thing – but would mean for A that she is second rate. 309. Interviewer. 310. It is unfair that others have demands on her to succeed when she does not feel that way about them. 311. The demands by others</p>
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<p>312. Erm, I feel like I have to meet somebody else's requirement of me, rather than formulate my own, and then being happy that.</p> <p>313. Um, and also it feels quite frustrating because, people can change their, sort of, you know, barriers, of, how far you're supposed to get. Erm they can you know say it's a metre high and then change their minds and say it's 2 metres –</p> <p>314. – sometimes you don't even know what will, sort of, make people happier, which is why I think I want to meet their expectation, is to sort of, erm, make somebody happy, but it, it's very – very frustrating if you don't know exactly what that is, how to go about it ...</p> <p>315. Determining their requirements, is that sometimes a difficult thing?</p> <p>316. Yes. And ultimately then it doesn't matter whether their requirement is defined or, undefined, I still feel controlled by that, because the one is – the undefined is where I'm still searching, so busy – and I feel that I'm not actually getting on with my own life – I'm still trying to figure out that. And if they <i>do</i> have certain expectations, sometimes I feel I can't meet them, so then I worry about that, and how I'm going to get there and, what'll happen if I don't meet them, and all those ...</p> <p>317. You said in the first place you're searching</p>	<p>control her.</p> <p>312. A must meet others' requirements before her own.</p> <p>313. Others are able to change their requirements of her.</p> <p>314. When A is not sure what will make others happy with her, it is frustrating not to know exactly how to go about divining that.</p> <p>315. Interviewer.</p> <p>316. A is either controlled by searching for what she believes others want, or trying to fulfil those expectations and does not have confidence that this can be done properly.</p> <p>317. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>around for their requirements and not getting on with your own life. Do you have an own life?</p> <p>318. Erm. ! I think I have a small own life – if you could say. A small portion of my life I feel is my own.</p> <p>319. So there is a portion of you that isn't determined by other people?</p> <p>320. Yes. But I think that – it's growing, because I think over time I've realised that, sometimes I am a people pleaser, em, or I just try and look for other people's goals and how I can help them with that – even their goals for me</p> <p>321. – and I've just got so used to it that now it's a habit.</p> <p>322. But I feel that I'm slowly moving out of that – but I think, the majority of it belongs to someone else, as opposed to me.</p> <p>323. – although I also know that 90% of that is created, well, by myself, in terms of, I know that people – if I express that to them would say no, I'm not trying to – sort of control your whole life or determine you know, what you do on a daily basis.</p> <p>324. You know I kind of have the feeling that I'm being held hostage to an extent - and I think they would disagree and say, well you do have your own</p>	<p>318. Only a small part of A's life is her own and is not taken up by trying to determine or live up to others' requirements.</p> <p>319. Interviewer.</p> <p>320. The portion of her life that isn't determined by others is currently growing in size.</p> <p>321. Pleasing others is a habit for A.</p> <p>322. A does this less now, but the majority of her life does belong to others rather than herself.</p> <p>323. Others would disagree with A that they are trying to control her life.</p> <p>324. A is held hostage by others: they do not admit to the behaviour A experiences from</p>
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<p>interests and you do, sort of, express your own opinion of this or that and, you have enough confidence to do what you'd like.</p> <p>325. So others' view of your life would be quite different to your own view of it? Looking in is different to looking out?</p> <p>326. Ja. I feel that they think that if I had an issue or, didn't want to do something or didn't want to do that – that I would actually stand up and say 'I don't want to do that, - it's unacceptable' – or whatever it is</p> <p>327. . Erm, whereas I feel that I <i>don't</i> do that – that 99% of the time always like, OK, it's a good idea or let's do that, whatever it is.</p> <p>328. And you said that you felt overwhelmed when you didn't know what they required.</p> <p>329. Yes.</p> <p>330. Can you describe that feeling of being overwhelmed when you can't tell what someone or the examiner wants.</p> <p>331. Em ... er ... oh. In terms of being overwhelmed, it creates a lot of confusion, it creates a lot of anxiety, erm, the more I sort of turn it over in my mind, where I can't find what they want, or what exactly they are asking me or, am I making this more difficult, are they actually saying what they mean ...</p>	<p>them.</p> <p>325. Interviewer.</p> <p>326. Others would look on her as doing what she wanted to.</p> <p>327. A is not in control of the decisions she makes and mainly goes along with others' wishes.</p> <p>328. Interviewer.</p> <p>329. A is overwhelmed by not knowing what others require.</p> <p>330. Interviewer.</p> <p>331. This makes A confused and anxious.</p>
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<p>332. Then tell me <i>why</i> you feel overwhelmed that you can't determine what they want.</p> <p>333. Because I feel that if I can't determine what they want, then, I won't get, say, my masters, or, I won't, yes, get their approval, they won't be satisfied you know with what I've given them – if I can't figure out what exactly it is that they require of me.</p> <p>334. And especially with my re-submission, em, my supervisor says it's alright, it became, well your opinion – my supervisor's – you know, not obviously to be rude, but, theoretically her opinion became obsolete – it wasn't the one that was important, because it ultimately wasn't the one that ultimately determined whether I got the degree or not.</p> <p>335. Do you find that that is something that happens in other areas of your life, where if another person's opinion of you is <i>good</i>, then their opinion probably isn't worth as much?</p> <p>336. Ja. I take, I take to heart more the things that people have said that are negative, or that I've seen as negative, than what people say are positive.</p> <p>337. Those things are more true?</p> <p>338. Yes. Like the bad things I won't question, the bad things I'll be like, OK how can I fix that, or how can I ... - there will be, -</p> <p>339. - obviously, there is some, sort of, erm, sort of</p>	<p>332. Interviewer.</p> <p>333. If A can't work out what others want from her, she will not gain their approval or satisfaction.</p> <p>334. A is not interested in good opinions by minor assessors – only the ultimate assessor's opinion is important.</p> <p>335. Interviewer.</p> <p>336. A takes to heart opinions of her that are negative rather than those that are positive.</p> <p>337. Interviewer.</p> <p>338. Negative opinions are true and are not questioned. A wants to know how they can be remedied.</p> <p>339. A can reflect and discern</p>
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<p>self-reflection, like well, is that possibly true, and, like, things that are ludicrous, you know, then I'm like, OK, well that can't be true. It will still sit with me but, it, you know, it won't affect how I view myself ... completely.</p>	<p>the value of various negative opinions – but can not reject them completely.</p>
<p>340. And then in terms of the positive, I'm more likely to ... question it.</p>	<p>340. A questions the worth of any positive opinion of her.</p>
<p>341. Sort of, what is your motive; why are you telling me this?</p>	<p>341. A questions the motive of one who says positive things about her.</p>
<p>342. Do you discount it?</p>	<p>342. Interviewer.</p>
<p>343. Ja. If it's somebody who I know doesn't want something from me, or, is not trying – I don't know, to erm, sort of, get me to be on their side, whatever, whatever, ulterior motive – if they don't have one and I know that they're my genuine friend then I just think either they're – deluded (laughs) or ...</p>	<p>343. A does not believe a person can have a positive opinion of her without an ulterior motive.</p>
<p>344. Mistaken?</p>	<p>344. Interviewer.</p>
<p>345. Ja – or just being nice. You know, just trying to be – kind to me, because they feel sorry for me or, so it's all kind of –</p>	<p>345. Or alternatively, mistaken or being nice or kind because they feel sorry for her.</p>
<p>346. – although it seems good, it manages to sort of get twisted back to or you they, pity me, or, they don't really know what they're talking about, or ...</p>	<p>346. A interprets this response as pity for her.</p>
<p>347. You speak about the work you do, being the same as you – they're the same sort of thing. An</p>	<p>347. Interviewer.</p>

<p>essay is – a lump of you. So ... one requires intellect to do an essay –</p> <p>348. – yes –</p> <p>349. – and it seems that you are anxious of having your essay rejected, because that would mean that <i>you</i> are being rejected.</p> <p>350. Yep.</p> <p>351. Well, it is my understanding of intellect – I say that because my work, at say the student bureau for example, is not as important. If I write the wrong student number down, for somebody and give them a slip of paper, and they go and come back to me and say oh actually it was an 8 instead of a 0, then I'm not, you know, sit the whole day and think, Oh!, how could I have done that, how could I have put the wrong number – you know. Em, there are certain tasks, obviously, the bigger gravity of the situation of I do something wrong, then obviously the more I'll, sit an worry about it – but in terms of everyday sort of things, it's not that bad.</p> <p>352. Erm, obviously with bigger things, I think there's more pressure from other people to rely on me to do it well, specially in my direct boss is someone who – doesn't easily trust other people with tasks that she thinks are important. So when she gives me something that's – vital, erm, then I feel that</p>	<p>348. A requires intellect to do an essay.</p> <p>349. Interviewer.</p> <p>350. Having an essay rejected means the same to A as having herself rejected.</p> <p>351. A distinguishes between intellect and normal everyday 'intelligent' functioning. The latter does not cause her concern even though she accepts that there are mistakes that can be made.</p> <p>352. When important authority other persons rely on her to do things properly, pressure exists. A must do things thoroughly – and making a mistake can feel almost as bad as in an</p>
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<p>I have to make sure that I've done it thoroughly, and to the best of my ability and all the rest of it – and if they do find a mistake within it, then I do feel – almost as bad as say an essay.</p> <p>353. The chance that they might be found as whatever foolish. I think yes because, somebody said to me once – I was upset because I hadn't done another year in my masters or whatever it was, erm, and she said to me – which is a very common thing to say, but – 'It's not the end of the world' – and I thought – but it <i>is</i>. You know, the fact that I haven't finished it, it feels like it will be the end of the world, if I don't get it done or achieve it or, you know, complete it to, although, I was going to say, complete it to satisfaction, - that obviously changed over time because initially it was I want to get a first, now I want to finish it in 2 years or whatever, and then slowly, as I sort of had to adapt to my environment, kind of it became more basic, to the, must complete, must preferably pass, you know or whatever it was, erm, -</p> <p>354. - but it really did feel at that stage that – once I'd gone over my 2 year sort of period, that, it was, <i>almost</i> like it was the end of the world. Like I had failed so dismally that that was the end.</p> <p>355. – which sounds bizarre, but it's kind of like, that weighs so much on whether I'm sort of an acceptable person, or, you know, whether I am actually allowed certain rights, or what ever it is – that I'm counted as somebody.</p> <p>356. I think it's just because ... I have been studying</p>	<p>intellectual task.</p> <p>353. Not completing a task to an important other's satisfaction can be equivalent to being 'The end of the world'.</p> <p>354. The failure to pass her task was equivalent to 'the end'.</p> <p>355. A is surprised to consider that such achievement contributes so greatly to whether she is acceptable as a person and if she counts as a person.</p> <p>356. A imagines that if she had</p>
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<p>for so long, made, so much of my time, and all the rest of it, that it became sort of all-consuming. I think maybe if I'd had different environmental pressures, or different things then I would ... be content with, you know, a std 6 or, have other concerns or, other issues.</p> <p>357. A brief discussion about schooling ensues</p> <p>358. Did you like boarding school?</p> <p>359. Yes, I loved boarding school. I enjoyed it because, the one thing that funnily enough, that people get irritated by, is the fact that everything in your life is in fact determined by somebody else, controlled by somebody else, but my best part was the fact that, there was a bell, that woke you up in the morning, and there was a bell that rang, and then you had breakfast, and, people used to joke with me that, you would have been a perfect Pavlov's dog (laughs) you know, but, kind of, I like that kind of – routine.</p> <p>360. Now you must sit and do this, and now – the best part about it is that, when you have to wait for something, say, between supper and the prep bell rings, you've got say, 15 minutes, where you are allowed to do – absolutely nothing, you don't have to think about anything, because, when the <i>bell</i> rings, that's when you think about prep, or, you think about supper, or, whatever it is. The rest of the time you can actually be completely free for those 10 or 15 minutes.</p> <p>361. And so when you were not doing your thesis,</p>	<p>different environmental pressures, she might feel differently.</p> <p>357. Information</p> <p>358. Interviewer</p> <p>359. A loved boarding school because of the order. Everything was controlled by someone else.</p> <p>360. A enjoyed that between bells, there was no obligation to do anything. She had permission to be free.</p> <p>361. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>did you ever have these fantasies that caused you to think, you know, if I was some sort of school now, where I had these classes, that it would make this all much easier?</p> <p>362. Ja ... I think I sort of tried to create that, by creating a schedule, even to the extent of trying to implement an alarm, to go off every like, whatever hour, or, whatever it was, I mean it doesn't ever replicate that kind of ...</p> <p>363. A brief discussion why that didn't work concludes that there's no-one else ringing the bell.</p> <p>364. – and I think that's very difficult to recreate that because there <i>is</i> no other, there's not somebody saying 'you have to sit here for however long. And I find even now, if people tell me I have to do something, I get very annoyed, so even if I try to rope in a friend, and say you know, lock me in my room, for the next two hours, because I have to work, you know, I would kick up a humongous fuss, even though it's my own idea.</p> <p>365. Just because somebody else is now – it has to be someone that I see as not-negotiable. And I can't go and say, I just really want to just watch this, or, do that, or ...</p> <p>366. Did you ever used to get extensions on your essays?</p>	<p>362. A tried to emulate that environment to help her study – but couldn't replicate it.</p> <p>363. It didn't work because there was no authority other ringing the bell.</p> <p>364. The authority other situation was impossible to recreate in a believable way.</p> <p>365. It wasn't possible to re-create because the person pretending to be an authority other could not fill that role – A could not see them as non-negotiable.</p> <p>366. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>367. Yes! One was where I didn't make a plan B, you know the lie and the extension was a given ... there was no, 'what if they say no?' And then I felt worse – that I'd lied to somebody, so I'm guilt wracked, secondly I'm like, how can they have believed me.</p> <p>368. How do you feel when the people who gave you the extension give you good marks?</p> <p>369. I think for me, em, if they gave me 75, I'd be Oh, good, that's nice, I'm glad, - but then, they themselves would fall away, - not necessarily that their opinion didn't count any more, because I knew that in 3 weeks I was probably going to have to hand something else in, so ...</p> <p>370. And I feel the same about other things, er, like if people forgive me for something that I've done wrong, or that I think I've done wrong, all I want is that forgiveness, like I <i>want</i> them to forgive me, or, take me back, or, whatever it is, and as soon as they do, then I'm like, well, - now I don't like you, or (laughs) respect you at all.</p>	<p>367. A's habit is to get extensions on essays. A lies to get extensions – and assumes as part of her work plan that this will be possible. Guilt as well as lack of respect for the person who believed her lies results.</p> <p>368. Interviewer.</p> <p>369. When an authority figure gave A a good report, her opinion of them diminishes – but A will not dismiss them entirely in case they could have power again in the future.</p> <p>370. When important others accept A, her respect for them disappears and they cease to have value.</p>
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Protocol – Participant ‘B’

Natural Meaning Units	Transformed Meaning Units
<p>1. O.K. Well, currently I am procrastinating, so I'll just tell you about this. Em .. I have a project due (in less than 2 weeks) that I haven't even started yet ...</p>	<p>1. B will tell of a current project that she is procrastinating over.</p>
<p>2. Em... (laughs) I pretty well much spend my days cleaning the house, doing the dishes, – this only happens when I have something to do, like – I don't normally – if I have nothing to do I won't clean the house ... em .. I have loads of stuff in my computer to watch: cartoons, movies and I'll just go through those. There are some things I've watched 9, 10 times because there's nothing else to watch, so I'll just watch something over and over and over again almost to take up time so that I get to the end of the day and I've done so much, y'know cleaning the house, the dishes whatever, but I haven't actually done any work.</p>	<p>2. B involves herself in diversionary activities that under circumstances of there being no pressure to commit herself to a task, she would not. Such activities fill the time until B no longer ought to be working on her task.</p>
<p>3. I end up going to bed, getting a bit angry ...</p>	<p>3. B is aware of this strategy and is angry with herself as a result.</p>
<p>4. Y'know convince myself I'm going to wake up the next morning, start working –</p>	<p>4. B convinces herself that she will start anew next morning –</p>
<p>5. – and then I don't.</p>	<p>5.– but does not.</p>
<p>6. I sign up to do stuff, I'll do workshops, I'll do – well, like this interview, whatever – I'll do anything I can so that I don't have to start working.</p>	<p>6. B commits herself to other, non-task activities. She prefers to do anything rather than the task.</p>

<p>7. And it'll get to 3 or 4 days before the assignment's due – like I'll probably start working on this one next week Wednesday, because I'll have a full weekend and I'll sit down for 12 hours straight and just do it.</p> <p>8. And y'know, still be quite angry that I haven't put enough time in to it.</p> <p>9. We do 4 papers, and this is the project for paper 3. So I think it counts, like, I think, 4% to my year mark. So it's not that big.</p> <p>10. ... it's about 12 or 15 pages. But it's relatively, sort of, in depth. It's quite difficult to do something that's so in depth with so few pages, that you're doing a project on. So it is quite tricky to fill everything in that you need to get in to the project without leaving anything out, or going over the page limit.</p> <p>11. It's object relations theory. So we had to choose a character out of a book or a famous person and then apply 2 object relations theorists' theories to this person and find out – I suppose just analyse them according to ORT.</p>	<p>7. B imagines she will wait until time is limited before starting to work on the task and then by great effort, complete the work.</p> <p>8. Rather than being pleased that the work is completed, B will be angry she did not spend enough time to do it as well as she would have wished.</p> <p>Interviewer asks how much the task counts towards the end-of-year mark.</p> <p>9. In the scheme of things, the piece of work is not of major importance to her year-end result, so this of itself is not a reason for delaying.</p> <p>10. However B feels the work is quite complex and will be revealing of her ability.</p> <p>Interviewer asks for more task detail.</p> <p>11. The task will require B to analyse information.</p>
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<p>12. I understand completely how to do it. I have all the readings, I have the book ... I have everything I need. I just actually have to sit down and start working.</p> <p>13. But I find the starting to work is the problem. 'Cos once I start working, I'll get it done, in a day or two days. But I struggle to get started in the first place.</p> <p>14. I suppose I just convince myself that there are more fun things to do, or better things to do. I'll probably start working on my research project before I start working on this one! (Laughs). Just .. convince myself it's more important, so I need to start on that first.</p> <p>15. Erm ...The third one this year.</p> <p>16. Em, well ... we had 4 weeks, 5 weeks to do an interview project –</p>	<p>12. B is aware of what is required in the task and has all materials. She must merely begin.</p> <p>13. Despite that understanding – and the knowledge that once she gets started, within a brief time the task will be complete – she does not make a start.</p> <p>14. B. deceives herself that there are more worthwhile things she could be doing and will do anything other than the required task.</p> <p>Interviewer clarifies which of the 4 papers this one is</p> <p>15. B says this is the third essay this year.</p> <p>It is now apparent that B intends to speak of a current experience of procrastination <i>which is not yet resolved</i>. As B had similar difficulties with the preceding two essays, I invite her to tell me about one of the previous essays that she procrastinated over.</p> <p>16. The time span for the work in question was 4 or 5 weeks.</p>
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<p>17. – where we had to decide on a project, find someone to interview, interview them, you know, do the transcription, analyse it, reduce it, write it up, and we were given ... we had, like, 3 weeks of lectures and were given 2 weeks of those lectures off to do it as well, and then we had a further 2 weeks in the term, and then 2 weeks in the vac, as well – so it was quite a long time that we had to do it. And I remember it was due for the Wednesday – and I started working on it on the Saturday before the Wednesday ... (pause)</p> <p>18. I did the interview pretty much as soon as we got given the project, I did the interview and the transcription ... sort of trying not to procrastinate about it.</p> <p>19. I conducted the interview , transcribed it that night .. and then ... didn't touch it again for the next 5 weeks.</p> <p>20. I had to reduce it. And then do a literature review ... on the topic. And then er .. analyse it ... well, do a basic sort of 5-page analysis of the interview – and then put the analysis and the literature review together in a discussion. And hand that in.</p> <p>21. (I had made a) Good start! (laughs.) I felt that I'd achieved something and I deserved a break. So I took a <u>really</u> long break.</p>	<p>17. The task required a topic be chosen, a person be found to interview, conduct the interview, transcribe the interview, analyse it, reduce it and write a report. There was 6 weeks available for the task, but B started it 5 days before it was due.</p> <p>18. B starts and completes conducting the interview and transcribing it, without difficulty.</p> <p>19. After that success B left the rest of the project until the last moment, 5 weeks later.</p> <p>Interviewer asks what more there remained to do.</p> <p>20. The next phase of the task was of a different nature. Namely analysis – and a critical discussion of the results.</p> <p>21. B felt happy and fulfilled by the start she had made. She felt she had done enough to warrant putting</p>
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<p>22. Ja – I did. I hoped I'd have the whole project done within that week ... so that I could relax for the next couple of weeks and not worry about it 'cos it was done already.</p> <p>23. Em ... I suppose more – idealistically. I hoped I'd get it done – but realistically, I knew it wouldn't happen. Like as soon as I get a bit of motivation, I try and do as much as I can. 'Cos I know I'm going to sit on it – and I'd rather sit on something than sit on nothing. So I think that's why I did it so quickly. Cos I knew if I didn't I'd have to sit up for 48 hours doing all that just before it was due.</p> <p>24. It took 6 hours. It was hard to do, but it felt good. I can work when I want to. I just don't ...</p> <p>25. It felt like I was doing something properly for the first time. ... But ... I knew it wouldn't.</p> <p>26. I woke up every morning with the intention of doing at least a little bit of it – but not finishing the whole thing – and it just didn't happen.</p> <p>27. I had another assignment (a survey project) to do for the same (deadline) day – but that I only started on the Saturday before the Wednesday that</p>	<p>off the next phase of the work.</p> <p>Interviewer: enquires if B intended to return to the task sooner.</p> <p>22. B didn't intend a long break – she hoped the essay would be complete within a week, so she could relax thereafter.</p> <p>23. B knows her intention was hopeful, not realistic. B had a good enough concept of the task to complete the non-threatening drudge element of it, leaving the analytical part to complete.</p> <p>24. The drudge work took 6 hours and it was an achievement. B is capable of working, but simply doesn't.</p> <p>25. B started the work properly – but knew she wouldn't continue.</p> <p>26. B intended to make progress with the task, but didn't.</p> <p>27. B had a further piece of work due for the same day as the interview one. She didn't work on</p>
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<p>it was due. I didn't even look at it. Because I spent so much time and energy thinking about how I wasn't doing the interview project, that I didn't do – I didn't even think about the write-up for the survey project.</p>	<p>either of them.</p>
<p>28. Ja .. there was a lot of ... I mean, when you reach honours level, there's a lot of pressure from other people ... everyone's comparing marks, everyone's comparing how far they are in projects ... Ja. Very competitive.</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if B spoke to her peer-other classmates about the task.</p> <p>28. There was reference amongst classmates to the task which B interpreted as very competitive.</p>
<p>29. Ja. They're checking to see - or make sure that they're that one step ahead – and that you're still slacking behind. I think that's why so many people talk to me all the time about work – (laughs) because they know I haven't started so it makes them feel better.</p>	<p>29. Others' enquiries are not made out of concern for B, but to ensure they were one step ahead. B's lack of progress reassures others.</p> <p>Interviewer asks what B tells them</p>
<p>30. Nothing. Well ... I said that I'd done the interview – but I hadn't done anything else other than that.</p>	<p>30. B tells peer others she has done nothing of consequence.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B ever exaggerates her progress.</p>
<p>31. No. I never do. If anything I under ... state it ... how far I've got.</p>	<p>31. B does not exaggerate and is more likely to understate her progress.</p> <p>Interviewer asks why this is so.</p>
<p>32. Em ... I don't know ... maybe a part of me wants to make people feel better ... about where they are ... or</p>	<p>32. B is unsure why she diminishes herself in this way and wonders if it's so others feel better.</p>

<p>33. ... so's not to y'know exaggerate what I'm doing ... I'll say that I've done less, just in case I'm not too sure how far I've got. So I'd rather understate it than overstate it.</p> <p>34. Because if I understate it, people think they're a lot further from me than in fact they actually are ... and ... I suppose I quite enjoy the shock ... when people say 'Oh I can't believe you haven't started yet – how are you ever going to get it done in time?' And then hopefully – I suppose a part of me hopes that I do really well, so when people ask me when the report's back, y'know, how well did you do, I can say y'know, well, I got a first, or whatever, and they'll be like y'know, wow, you must be really clever, because you haven't done as much work on it as I have – you started so much later. (Silence, thinking.)</p> <p>35. It's almost like a scapegoat. Like ... if I don't do well on the project, it won't be 'Oh you must be stupid' it's 'Oh well, you didn't put enough work in'. And if I do well, then it's y'know 'Oh well, you didn't put much work in – so you must be really smart' - or know a lot about this topic, I suppose would be a better way of putting it.</p> <p>36. Yes – I definitely think it's - it's people that – I suppose how well I do or how much work I'm doing influences them – it would influence them in a way because, I mean, if you're sitting in a room full of people, where everyone's finished the project, you're more inclined to get it done – because you're being left behind.</p>	<p>33. B sets people up not expect too much from her as she would rather exceed their expectations than be less than them.</p> <p>34. B gets satisfaction from understating her progress to peer others as it causes them to not expect much from her, and if she exceeds the low expectations she has set up, the peer others will think she is clever.</p> <p>35. B protects herself from being thought inadequate by setting up low expectations, but also to look clever by exceeding the low expectations she has set up.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if peer others are concerned with her progress.</p> <p>36. B thinks that how much work she has done might affect the self-satisfaction of those she tells this information to.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if peers understand the import of this.</p>
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<p>37. Ja. Or they are at least aware of how much time it will take to do it. How much effort it will take.</p> <p>38. I start getting more and more stressed. More and more agitated. Because I haven't done any work. It's just from knowing that I can do it, knowing that I should do it – but I'm not doing it, that I get more and more frustrated - I get in bad moods – I get less motivated ... even.</p> <p>39. No, not really. Like the level that they're at or the work they've done doesn't really influence me at all. Even if they've all finished. No. I've never put myself up against other people. I've ... I know I have a deadline, and that's it. It doesn't matter if the whole class has finished 10 days before.</p> <p>40. I meant that more hypothetically ... that if 'one' was in a group em ...where everyone was finished, I would imagine that person would be more motivated to work. But I don't. Ja.</p> <p>41. For me, I suppose it would be adrenaline that</p>	<p>37. The persons B speaks to are worthwhile speaking to in this way as they understand the task and what is involved in completing it, so their capacity to be impressed has value.</p> <p>Interviewer asks how B feels at this stage of the task.</p> <p>38. Tension builds as B gets closer to her deadline. She becomes agitated and knows she can do it – but does not and becomes increasingly moody and inactive.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B is concerned by peers' progress.</p> <p>39. The progress that peer-others have made is not of consequence to B. B has a deadline and that's what she is working towards.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if this tallies with her statement in 36.</p> <p>40. B imagines that being a member if a group that was making good progress would be a motivator for others – but not for herself as it's the deadline that works for her.</p> <p>41. As the deadline approaches, B</p>
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<p>just comes to me and I get more ... I definitely get more frustrated and more ... irrational and really aggressive ... and as soon as something goes wrong, - I know with this interview project, I went to Kenton with my boyfriend and I'd decided I was going to start working on it that day. I think it was Thursday. The Thursday before it was due. I'd decided I was going to start it on the Thursday so I'd have about 5 days to work on it. And we got to Kenton – and I couldn't plug my computer in. There wasn't a space for me to plug my computer in.</p> <p>42. So all the blame was suddenly shifted on the fact that on this day, at this particular moment, I couldn't plug my computer in – and now I was f***ed. And now I couldn't do it and it was because of the computer not being able to be plugged in.</p> <p>43. And there wasn't any sort of thought of .. well, if I'd done it over the last 5 weeks, then I wouldn't have this problem. It's the same as if you go to print an assignment half an hour before it's due – and the printer's broken ... you blame the printer. You don't blame yourself for not printing it the day before. Until maybe after it's handed in – and then on reflection you look back and think that it's really stupid that I kicked the printer – when it was entirely my fault! (Laughs.)</p> <p>44. Em ... I suppose that sub-consciously I work out approximately how much time I'm going to need to do something adequately. And I'll wake up on that day and it'll be like Oh ... Oh my God, I have six days to do this, I've got two projects, I have to start</p>	<p>is affected by adrenaline and becomes irrational, aggressive and short tempered. B makes a plan to start – which is thwarted by circumstances beyond her control.</p> <p>42. B blames factors beyond her control for her inability to start.</p> <p>43. In retrospect B is capable of considering that the reason she is in this situation is due to her own poor planning.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B usually makes extensive plans to complete a task.</p> <p>44. Rather than plan, B works out 'subconsciously' how much time she needs to complete the work. When there is no latitude left to delay, she begins. This isn't a plan</p>
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<p>today, because if I don't start today it's not going to get done. So it's not like a planned thing, I just wake up one day and start freaking out that I have to start or it won't get finished. No, Thursday I woke up and realised ... I had to start that day. No ... I never plan that far ahead. (Laughs.)</p> <p>45. No. I knew for about 2 weeks before that we were going to go to Kenton on Thursday. Our house in Grahamstown was getting fumigated, we had to go.</p> <p>46. Yes! That happens a lot with Kenton. (Laughs.)</p> <p>47. No. I never do that. I type straight from what I'm thinking, I type it up and edit it afterwards. And check it. But I can't ... I haven't written things down for so long – that I type quicker than I write.</p> <p>48. Well – I did try. I did sit down for about an hour and tried to write some things down. But I was just so angry that I couldn't even focus on what I was doing.</p> <p>49. I knew that the deadline was coming closer and I had to sort something out the next day. Because if I didn't there would be no way that I would've finished the two projects in time.</p>	<p>made in advance, it's a realisation that emerges when the need to start the work is confronted.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if going to Kenton was a surprise trip.</p> <p>45. B had known that she would be away on the day she planned to start work on her task.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if Kenton is a place to 'escape' to.</p> <p>46. B agrees that Kenton is a good place to go to achieve simplicity.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B could have instead made notes on paper.</p> <p>47. B states that starting the work by hand-writing ideas was not considered as a solution to her difficulty..</p> <p>48. Though B states that she did try to write some notes, but was too angry to want to continue.</p> <p>49. The deadline was approaching, and B now knew she would have to start the following day, or the time would not be sufficient.</p>
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<p>50. It was due on the Wednesday and I started it on the Saturday. Which was the same time I started the other one. The Saturday before the Wednesday it was due.</p> <p>51. Em, well we did a group survey, so we had, like, conducted the survey and got the results. I just had to do the write-up for it. And I hadn't started the write-up at all.</p> <p>52. It was also 15 pages – but with a lot of graphs and a lot of things that take up a lot of space. So I wasn't as worried about it. Whereas the interview one was just 15 pages of writing.</p> <p>53. Ja –</p> <p>54. – Because it takes 2 seconds to get a graph off (a computer statistics package), copy page . It takes up a lot of space. But actually having to formulate an idea ... put it down properly ...y'know,</p> <p>55. We have to explain the graph – but it's not – y'know – a very difficult thing to do, it's y'know, this number ... that number ...</p>	<p>50. B starts both projects on the Saturday before they are due on the Wednesday.</p> <p>Interviewer enquires what the nature of the other work task is.</p> <p>51. The other piece of work was a piece of group work. The group had conducted the research, all B was required to do was the write-up.</p> <p>52. The other task was also 15 pages long but wasn't 15 pages of writing as space would be taken up by pictorial graphs and so wasn't as threatening a project.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if writing thoughts, ideas, conclusions down on paper is more intimidating than a graph.</p> <p>53. B agrees.</p> <p>54. Formulating an idea and displaying it is more threatening than displaying others' computations.</p> <p>55. Software that calculates statistics is not work that B must take much responsibility for.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if this is because</p>
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<p>56. Yes.</p> <p>57. Yes. I would definitely say so.</p> <p>58. I sat down and worked for about 8 hours. And Saturday, and Sunday. Em ... I did the interview project on the Friday, Saturday I did the survey project, and finished it, and then the interview one on the Sunday. Then on Monday I just went through it, edited it, fixed it up, printed it.</p> <p>59. Yes.</p> <p>60. Tuesday was great. It was the first time I'd ever finished something before it was actually due.</p> <p>61. So... Well, actually, it wasn't that great.</p> <p>62. I had a lot of anxiety on that Tuesday, which I found very strange. And I think it's from conditioning myself over the years, that the day before an assignment's due, I need to be anxious. Because I</p>	<p>the conclusions were drawn by the statistics programme rather than she.</p> <p>56. B agrees.</p> <p>Interviewer clarifies if there is a difference between reporting others' conclusions and coming up with her own?</p> <p>57. B implies the latter is more difficult.</p> <p>58. B starts work on Friday and works a full day as well as Saturday and Sunday.</p> <p>59. Interviewer asks if the work was finished a day early. B confirms.</p> <p>60. B enjoyed the fact that she had completed her work before time.</p> <p>61. B retracts that finishing early was good.</p> <p>62. B was not able to relax and enjoy the early completion, and is anxious because she is conditioned to be anxious.</p>
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<p>need to get it done. And I need to get it done properly, print it and hand it in. And this day, I didn't have anything to do, because it was finished. So there was a lot of anxiety that I kind of, laughed at, the whole day.</p> <p>63. (Smiles) No, I didn't do that.</p> <p>64. I felt like I should go through it again. Edit again. Em ... make sure that I had everything down ... y'know, in an understandable way. Em ... I felt like I'd rushed it, like I hadn't done it properly – because I wasn't staying up until four o'clock in the morning – I obviously hadn't done everything I needed to do. But I kind of fought the urge to go through it again, because I didn't want to start obsessing over it – y'know, where did I put that comma, where did I put that reference, y'know – so I just ignored it.</p> <p>65. I just couldn't bear to look at it again.</p> <p>66. It had caused so much like, anxiety over the weeks before, that, it was finished and the references were in and everything was done and – I just didn't care any more.</p> <p>67. I was quite reluctant ... not to hand it in, handing it in was fine ... but I was almost dreading the day of getting it back. Because I felt like I had done an inadequate project – but if I'd got it back and got, like, 60% for it – it would have killed me. Because it</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if, having finished the work early, B handed it in early.</p> <p>63. B did not hand the work in early.</p> <p>64. B felt she should spend all the time available the work to make it better, but did not do so.</p> <p>65. B wished to dissociate herself from the work now it was complete.</p> <p>66. The work had caused much anxiety but now it was finished, B did not care about it any more.</p> <p>67. B was reluctant to receive an assessment because she had done it properly. The work was a fair example of what she was capable of and it would kill her if she was not</p>
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<p>was one of the first things I've ever done properly, at university. Most stuff I just made up, or sort of breezed through, didn't do it properly. And this I felt like I had done it properly – although I should have spent more time on it.</p>	<p>assessed favourably.</p>
<p>68. Em ... well .. – if you read some of my undergrad stuff ... (laughs) ... you'd understand. (Laughs again.) I suppose just adequately answering a question in the allocated pages, or where it's given using enough references, referencing properly, using the right font, the right spacing, and ... all that kind of thing.</p>	<p>Interviewer asks what doing something properly means.</p> <p>68. Properly is adequately answering the question and presenting that answer in an easily available format which followed expected rules.</p>
<p>69. Yes.</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if this requires B make an effort.</p> <p>69. B agrees.</p>
<p>70. It was like the work wasn't being judged, - I was being judged. I always feel like that if I actually put effort in to something, I always feel that it's not the work that's being judged, it's me.</p>	<p>70. When B puts effort into something, it is herself not the finished work object that is assessed.</p>
<p>71. And then I always feel like I should have done more.</p>	<p>71. B should have made a greater effort.</p>
<p>72. But I didn't even think about it. I just kind of put it out of my mind.</p>	<p>72. B put the return of the marked work from her mind.</p> <p>Interviewer asks what mark B received for the completed task.</p>
<p>73. 92. (Smiles.) That's the first time I've ever got 92.</p>	<p>73. B got 92% for the work. She had never had such a high score previously.</p>

<p>74. Ja ... I was very impressed! ...</p> <p>75. Em ... I actually felt like I didn't deserve 92. Like maybe I should have got, y'know, 75. Y'know, 82 maybe – but I definitely didn't feel like I deserved 92. Because I hadn't prepared properly, y'know I hadn't spent weeks and weeks and weeks, y'know, going over it. I'd just done it in a day. Checked it once and handed it in. So I didn't feel like that amount of time that I'd put into it was worth the mark that I got.</p> <p>76. Em ... Well I know how much work needs to be done for this particular lecturer, to get that mark. But because you're dealing with different lecturers all the time, different people marking your assignments, - you almost have to get to know every one ... that you're working with. So you know what they expect, to get a really high mark.</p> <p>77. Yes. No, I think it's a bit of both. Because I think that maybe, if someone hadn't sat through those lectures with me in the room (when I was) explaining what I was doing, why I was doing it, how I was doing it – if another lecturer had just come in and marked it without having me explain those things, maybe I wouldn't have got as high a mark. Because the lecturer – as much as I need to know how the lecturer marks – the lecturer gets to know how I think. So maybe, putting my thoughts down on paper</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if she was happy with that.</p> <p>74. B was very pleased with the result.</p> <p>75. B did not however deserve such a high mark as she had not put sufficient time into the task</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B had drawn any conclusions from the assessment.</p> <p>76. B learned something about that marker – but others would require further knowledge of what they expect to get a high mark.</p> <p>Interviewer clarifies if B means getting to know the marker or them getting to know her.</p> <p>77. It is more important that she get to know the marker than they getting to know her. Words written on paper are an inadequate representation of her self and it is necessary the marker knows the background effort she puts in.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B thinks she deserved the mark she received.</p>
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<p>as I did, the lecturer only gave me that mark because they knew how I was thinking. But if someone else, who didn't know how I thought marked it, maybe they would have critted it a lot harder. Possibly.</p> <p>78. Well – I think the amount of anxiety I went through, I definitely earned it! ... But the amount of work I put in – I mean, it was a substantial amount of work, sure, but ... ja, I definitely could have done more work. I think.</p> <p>79. I think I would have felt better about it. Regardless of whether or not the mark had been higher – which I don't really think this department gives higher than 92 ... but, I would have got the mark back and felt, like, wow, I sweated over this and I did it properly and I deserve this, instead of feeling like oh ... I could have done more, should have done more ... (long pause)</p> <p>80. (laughs) ... Do I ever feel like an impostor ...? Well ... Yes! This year more than any other. Because I got in to an honours course on who I was, not what my marks were. So I ... I've definitely felt like an impostor this year.</p> <p>81. Well, ... doing something that other people think you can do but you don't really know how it works.</p>	<p>78. From the standpoint of the amount of anxiety she underwent, B deserved a good mark. However she could have done more to make herself more deserving.</p> <p>79. The mark was good to receive but B would have felt better if she had done more to deserve it.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B if she ever feels she is an 'impostor'.</p> <p>80. B is an impostor this year: she didn't gain entrance to her course in the first selection of admissions due to her inadequate marks.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B to explain what she means by impostor.</p> <p>81. An impostor to B is someone others think is competent but is not.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if this is the same as being a 'fraud'.</p>
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<p>82. Ja, ja. Definitely. Ja ... but I'm always constantly thinking about it. And then the fact that – I mean, if you think about it, there are like about 150 people who apply for honours here; and they only take 40. And then they reduce it down. They hand out acceptances to 40 people, then however many people accept those acceptances, and then they start going down the wait list – and I was wait-listed. So now everyone that's in here – they were all over-achievers in undergrad: they all had their work done properly, they all got good marks, y'know – they don't really strike me as people that would procrastinate. So I kind of feel like, the black sheep of the group, because I do procrastinate, I do leave things until the last minute – and I'm also the one who didn't have the marks to get in. So ... I'm almost y'know, waiting for things to fall out under my feet.</p>	<p>82. B feels she is a fraud this year and she has concern she will be found out to be such. This prospect is always with her. B feels unqualified to be in the group. She waits to be found out.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B believes peer others know she was accepted from the waiting list.</p>
<p>83. Em ... some of them do. Well, I'm sure actually that the whole class knows – because it's just one of those groups of people where you tell one person one thing and it spreads around ... very quickly. Em ... but at the beginning of the year, no-one – except for a friend of mine that's in the class as well – knew ... and then I think I slipped up and told someone – that I don't speak to any more! – which is ironic! (laughs)</p>	<p>83. B believes that people would have been sufficiently interested about this issue to have spread the news amongst themselves.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B perceives that much of such talk exists in her peer-group.</p>
<p>84. Ja. People sort of huddle around the marks board and .. 'What did you get?' 'I got ... x .. y'know' – 'I did better than you' ... (pause)</p>	<p>84. There is comparative assessment of achievement by members of the peer group.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B if she too participates in such discussion.</p>

<p>85. Ja ... the friend of mine that's also in honours at the moment. She also got 92. (Anyone get more than 92?) No. (So the two of you got top marks?) Ja. (Bottom mark?) Em ... I think it was 67. (pause) (And is the person who got 67 someone who you would expect that of them?) Ja. (So that was a bit of a surprise?) Ja.</p> <p>86. Em ... Well I think that a lot of people are unsure of me, because I'm so inconsistent with my marks. That sometimes I fail, and sometimes, y'know, I get a first. (pause.)</p> <p>87. I failed my first test this year. I got 31% or something – it was a stats test. (laughs) A stats theory test.</p> <p>88. Em ... because I left studying until 4 o'clock in the morning of the test. And I woke up at 4 o'clock and I couldn't find my notes.</p> <p>89. I just kind of milled around for 4 hours and went and wrote the test. Having done ... nothing.</p>	<p>85. B too is aware of others' level of success in the task. She knows she had the equal top mark and the lowest was 67. The person who got 67 was a surprise to her as she would have expected better of that person.</p> <p>Interviewer asks how B thinks others view her 92.</p> <p>86. Others are unable to predict how B will do as her marks are inconsistent.</p> <p>Interviewer asks the degree of inconsistency.</p> <p>87. B failed the first test of the year which was a statistics test.</p> <p>Interviewer asks why B failed.</p> <p>88. B's failure was because she procrastinated and couldn't find her notes.</p> <p>89. She was unable to engage with the work. She did the test unprepared.</p> <p>Interviewer asks if B will be re-tested on the work.</p>
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<p>90. No, they didn't make us repeat the test this year – but we are getting examined on it at the end of the year.</p>	<p>90. It wasn't necessary to repeat the test – though the work will be re-examined later.</p>
<p>91. Well, everyone kind of struggled with the course ... but only 8 people failed. So it was like kind of er, like people got a bit of a superiority complex over the people who failed. Almost like 'Oh, I'm going to get into Masters now and you're not'. Kind of attitude.</p>	<p>Interviewer asks how peer-others viewed those who failed the test.</p>
<p>91. Well, everyone kind of struggled with the course ... but only 8 people failed. So it was like kind of er, like people got a bit of a superiority complex over the people who failed. Almost like 'Oh, I'm going to get into Masters now and you're not'. Kind of attitude.</p>	<p>91. Others had difficulty and B believes some used others' failure as a reason to feel superior to them.</p>
<p>92. And it was very weird – it was almost like they'd won the war already .. y'know, because 8 people failed, it was obviously those 8 people who were going to do badly throughout the year.</p>	<p>92. Others view the competition as a war. And the war was won as the die was cast for the whole year.</p>
<p>92. And it was very weird – it was almost like they'd won the war already .. y'know, because 8 people failed, it was obviously those 8 people who were going to do badly throughout the year.</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if B compares her results with others'.</p>
<p>93. I don't .. (laughs) compare my marks with people, even if I do really well. I'll enquire, y'know, did they get a good enough mark: ja they did, did you – ja. Ja, but ... but ... I don't even notice if I surprise people ... let me put it like that ... 'cos I don't really care.</p>	<p>93. B doesn't enquire about or notice others' response to her marks.</p>
<p>93. I don't .. (laughs) compare my marks with people, even if I do really well. I'll enquire, y'know, did they get a good enough mark: ja they did, did you – ja. Ja, but ... but ... I don't even notice if I surprise people ... let me put it like that ... 'cos I don't really care.</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if B would prefer to get 92 for the interview task or statistics test.</p>
<p>94. I think the interview. Because I know I can do stats ... I know I'm good with numbers ... so it was more of an achievement for me to get 92 for something that I don't know if I'm good at. Because I've never done it before. But with stats, every undergrad stats test I did, I got over 80 for. And the</p>	<p>94. B would prefer to get 92 for the interview task. She viewed qualitative work as more revealing of one's self as it was one's own thought and ideas. B does not care about statistics test results.</p>

<p>exams. So I know I can do it. So I would definitely rather have 92 for the interview. I don't really care that I failed that stats test. I think the interview. I think any qualitative research you're investing more of yourself in to it, because it's more of your own interpretation, it's your own thoughts, it's your own ideas.</p> <p>95. You reveal what you're capable of. Because there isn't a set answer. It's not something you're learning a formula and how to do it, and regurgitating that onto a piece of paper. It's actually thinking, using your own, er, capabilities ... to get something done. As opposed to your own memory or understanding of numbers.</p> <p>96. No. ... No ... I didn't really care.</p> <p>97. I found it quite amusing that people were judging me on that, when they thought that would be my sort of level of work would be this year, because I know that was one test and I didn't study ... and I could have done well – I know that. (Long silence).</p> <p>98. My world would be a better place ... Well, if I did things as soon as I got them – and I did them properly – I would have a lot ... like if you think about that interview project, there was 5 weeks full of</p>	<p>95. A written answer shows capabilities other than memory as there is not a set answer or formula, nor a rote regurgitation,</p> <p>Interviewer asks if failing the first test of the year made B anxious.</p> <p>96. B's failure in the first of the year didn't make her anxious.</p> <p>97. B found it entertaining that she had left what she considered to be a false trail by her poor performance in a subject that she was confident she could ultimately master.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B how her world would be different if she did not procrastinate.</p> <p>98. B's world would be better if she did not procrastinate. She is aware of the time she spends being anxious and the effect this has on</p>
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<p>anxiety, getting increasingly worse, affecting my friendships, my relationships, whatever, ... whereas if I'd just done it and got it over with, I'd have had 5 weeks of carefree ... living. It would have been great.</p> <p>99. I don't think it would be a particular percentage. ... - As long as it's over 75, I suppose I'm happy. Anything above 75 is just a bonus.</p> <p>100. Well, I think the discussing it afterward I'd still like that to take place, because there's nothing that I think I could do at this level that I think would be perfect. So there would always be something that I think that I could improve on. I suppose it would be ideal if I started with 75 and every project after that was just higher and higher and higher and higher. So that I felt that I was learning in the process and I was, y'know, doing better each time.</p> <p>101. (Long pause) Well, I don't think that perfection is a logical thing to strive for. I think that perfection in yourself is something you feel you've done absolutely to ... y'know ... the best you can do ... that is perfect. But, I mean, perfection in the true sense of the word, doesn't, it doesn't exist. There can't be something that's perfect, that a human</p>	<p>the emotional and belonging elements of her life, and would rather experience the 'carefree' feeling of not having to contend with that.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B what is a satisfactory percentage to achieve.</p> <p>99. B considers that anything above 75% - a first - would be sufficient to allow her to let it stand as an example of herself.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B how she feels about her work being criticised.</p> <p>100. Discussion of the work is of benefit as it helps B improve.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B if perfection is possible in her work.</p> <p>101. Perfection is not attainable and the best that B can do should be looked on as perfect. Perfection doesn't exist and is therefore unattainable.</p>
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<p>being is doing. Because there is always going to be room for growth.</p> <p>102. I'd say that good enough is good enough. And perfect is something almost metaphysical that you just can't achieve.</p> <p>103. I think that perfect is always something you'll never reach.</p> <p>104. No. I never strive for perfection. ... Ja. Striving for perfection is almost a compulsion.</p> <p>105. You say you've been thinking about something?</p> <p>106. Mmm. I used to think I was very bad about time management. And then I realised that I'm, like, impeccable – with time management. Because I know the exact – that last second, that I can start working to get something done. Because I <u>always</u> get it done. ... Maybe not always that well, but I always get it done by the deadline.</p> <p>107. The quantitative survey was easier to start, because it was a group thing. So, if I fell behind I'd</p>	<p>Interviewer asks if 'good enough' is perfect</p> <p>102. 'Good enough' is good enough, perfection is unattainable.</p> <p>103. Perfection is unattainable.</p> <p>Interviewer asks B if she nevertheless strives for perfection.</p> <p>104. B never strives for perfection. To strive for perfection would be a neurotic striving.</p> <p>This was the end of the first interview. B returned at a later date and was keen to talk about our previous meeting.</p> <p>105. Interviewer.</p> <p>106. B has been considering her ability to manage time. She concludes that her time-management skills are good because she can always make sure that she leaves sufficient time to complete a task</p> <p>107. B cites as part of her reason for getting on with the quantitative</p>
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<p>let the whole group down, so that was something I couldn't do. I suppose, ... things that I find more difficult, will be things that I procrastinate on, for longer. And things that I find easier like, conducting an interview, and transcribing it, I find that easier than the actual analysis process, of the interview.</p> <p>108. Why is that?</p> <p>109. Because I have to use my brain. Like with the interview I do, I find it very easy to talk. So, that wasn't very difficult for me. Like, conducting an interview, sort of, and em, and, structuring the interview – where I could just discuss something with someone – I found that quite easy. Same as transcribing. There's not thinking that needs to be done, cos, you're typing something out ... exactly as you're hearing it.</p> <p>110. So ... it's not just plain laziness, then?</p> <p>111. We-ll ... I don't know. (laughs) ... I, I don't actually ... I don't really know if I'm lazy or not. I've always just kind of thought that I am – because I've never really been into exercise, or ... working hard, or anything like that. But, I can sit down and read a book the whole day and finish it. So, I guess, some things I'm lazy, and some things I'm not.</p> <p>112. What I'd like you to investigate for me is if there is something about the nature of the thinking things or about the nature of the doing things – that</p>	<p>study, the fact that she was part of a group that she didn't want to let down. Some things B finds easier not to procrastinate on than others. Specifically she finds it easier to conduct an interview and transcribe it, than to analyse the text she has typed up.</p> <p>108. Interviewer.</p> <p>109. B distinguishes between activities that are merely rote or that she finds simple – and that which 'has to use her brain'. It seems that this is a metaphor for 'can be judged by'.</p> <p>110. Interviewer.</p> <p>111. In some things B is lazy, in others not. Laziness was not an automatic and unavoidable response to situations.</p> <p>112. Interviewer</p>
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<p>the one is easier to get on with than the other?</p> <p>113. ... Em ... It's things that require my own interpretation, my own ideas, my own knowledge, kind of thing, that I find more difficult to start with.</p> <p>114. Why is that?</p> <p>115. I don't think I have much ... I don't think I can do it. I don't have much confidence in myself. When it comes to that kind of thing. Where there isn't a set formula, or anything like that ... I get judged on my ... interpretation of the assignment, and how I, y'know ... put it together. As opposed to, having a memo and like, y'know, ticking the right answers. 'Cos that kind of thing I'm fine with. And maths and, y'know, those kind of things.</p> <p>116. Yes, we did discuss last time that you didn't have so much difficulty with numbers?</p> <p>117. Yes, that there's generally an answer, when you're dealing with maths. ... There's a right or a wrong answer.</p> <p>118. So you <u>know</u> when you've got the right or wrong answer?</p> <p>119. Ja.</p> <p>120. So does that mean that the other stuff – you don't know if the answer you have given is correct?</p> <p>121. Ja. (long pause) – so it's almost like being</p>	<p>113. B finds most difficult to begin tasks that will reveal her intellectual ability.</p> <p>114. Interviewer.</p> <p>115. B is reluctant to start tasks she considers to be intellectual, such as interpretation, is because she does not have confidence that what she says will be judged as good enough.</p> <p>116. Interviewer.</p> <p>117. Numbers hold no such ambivalence for B.</p> <p>118. Interviewer.</p> <p>119. Yes.</p> <p>120. Interviewer.</p> <p>121. There is a difference between</p>
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<p>judged, as opposed to being assessed - or marked. Y'know.</p>	<p>giving a correct answer about which there is no debate and one which there will be opinion about its correctness.</p>
<p>122. One of the things that you said last time we met was, (paraphrasing) 'it's not like you're learning a formula, and how to use it, and regurgitating it onto a piece of paper – it's actually thinking, using your own capabilities to get something done'.</p>	<p>122. Interviewer.</p>
<p>123. Ja.</p>	<p>123. B confirms without elaboration.</p>
<p>124. So the anxiety is about the conclusions that you have drawn, being correct?</p>	<p>124. Interviewer.</p>
<p>125. Or adequate. Because it can't be 'correct' or 'incorrect' – because there's no answer to it. You'll just be 'quality of work'. As opposed to a 'correct' answer.</p>	<p>125. B is anxious that if she is thought to be wrong in her opinion, this will mean that she is general an inadequate being.</p>
<p>126. This question of being assessed and judged, by others – can you tell me more about the role of assessment and judging and the importance of it in your life, by other people.</p>	<p>126. Interviewer.</p>
<p>127. ... No ... I've never really ... bothered that much with things that people think about me. What they think about what I'm doing, how I dress, whatever.</p>	<p>127. B is not generally concerned what others think about her.</p>
<p>128. Judgement has never really been issue with me, except, when it come to things to do with my intellect. Then it's – it's a big thing. But, who I am as</p>	<p>128. This is not the case in relation to others' judgement of her intellectual ability which is of</p>

<p>a person, what I do, that's not something I've ever really worried about. So I don't think my fear of judgement does carry on into other areas of my life.</p>	<p>considerable consequence.</p>
<p>129. I think it stays with things to do with my intellect. I think it's always been a worry of mine, that I'm not really as clever as I think I am. Which, kind of, spins off with the lack of confidence in what I'm producing.</p>	<p>129. The concern about others' judgement of her intellectual ability causes lack of confidence and has always been a concern.</p>
<p>130. ... So you say that you don't worry about what people think of you – but isn't your intellect a fairly fundamental part of yourself, of who you are?</p>	<p>130. Interviewer.</p>
<p>131. Ja ... I think it is. But ... that's the only part of me that I worry about getting judged. There's nothing else, not my personality, not my ethics, not my clothes, not my habits – nothing like that I care about – except, how people view my intellect.</p>	<p>131. B's intellect is the only part of her that she is concerned about being judged to be inadequate.</p>
<p>132. So if you were to make a list of those things, and say which is the most important of all of those things ... intellect is number one?</p>	<p>132. Interviewer.</p>
<p>133. Ja. Definitely.</p>	<p>133. B confirms her intellect is the most important part about her that she does not want to be criticised.</p>
<p>134. So it's a substantially important thing. ... So ... if a person were to think of you intellectually, – you would want to be thought of as 'good' or 'adequate'?</p>	<p>134. Interviewer.</p>
<p>135. – Good.</p>	<p>135. B confirms that it is insufficient to be merely adequate, she wants</p>

<p>136. Why good?</p> <p>137. Because I really don't like stupid people. And I really don't want people to think I'm stupid. Because of my own view of ... I know it sounds really bad, but, like, sort of, below average intelligence people ... just drive me crazy. And I wouldn't want someone to think that I'm in that category.</p> <p>138. How can you tell if someone is a stupid person?</p> <p>139. Erm ... Somebody that I try and explain something to – and they don't get it. And then I have to ... break it down into smaller pieces, and almost teach them this thing that I'm trying to tell them about. I suppose ... someone who is ... slow with grasping information and ideas or understanding information and ideas. Like if I understand something, and someone else doesn't – it just annoys me. I know it's really bad, but ... (laughs)</p> <p>140. So the inability to grasp things is the most important thing for people not to think of you?</p> <p>141. Well, ja, I suppose so.</p> <p>142. We were talking about the role of assessment,</p>	<p>to be thought of, intellectually, as 'good'.</p> <p>136. Interviewer.</p> <p>137. B dislikes stupidity and would not wish to be thought stupid by another.</p> <p>138. Interviewer.</p> <p>139. B describes stupidity as not being available or receptive to information that is being given.</p> <p>140. Interviewer.</p> <p>141. B confirms that an inability to understand – to be available to information – is the thing she would least like to be thought of by others.</p> <p>142. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>by others, in your life. Have we dealt with that fully – the question of whether it's important for you to get a good assessment from others?</p> <p>143. Well, again, I think it's only really ... either in university work or things to do with ... like, sort of ... intellect. Ja. ... I mean, outside of university work I don't really find it that important. Because I don't have a conversation, and they say 'Oh! 80% for that conversation – you know – whereas, it's very much judged according to percentage at university.</p> <p>144. So ... thinking of it in those sort of terms ... a substantial part of your life in fact revolves around university and intellect and things.</p> <p>145. Ja.</p> <p>146. Is it ...what you are?</p> <p>147. Ja.</p> <p>148. And you're saying that it's quite important that the 'what you are' is assessed as being 'good' because – there's something here (refers to previous meeting transcription sheet, and reads) 'It's almost like a scapegoat. Like ... if I don't do well on the project, it won't be 'Oh you must be stupid' it's 'Oh well, you didn't put enough work in'. And if I do well, then it's y'know 'Oh well, you didn't put much work in – so you must be really smart' ... So ... are you</p>	<p>143. B is very aware of her intellect being assessed in the university environment and would not wish hers to be valued low.</p> <p>144. Interviewer.</p> <p>145. B agrees that her intellect is a substantial part of her being.</p> <p>146. Interviewer.</p> <p>147. B states that her intellect and her person are effectively the same thing.</p> <p>148. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>protecting yourself from the possibility of people thinking of you as not being sufficiently clever ... because if they thought of you as not being sufficiently clever, they wouldn't be thinking of you as being sufficiently ... a person?</p> <p>149. No, I wouldn't say, I have to be OK, well I want to distinguish between being 'clever' and being 'intellectual' – because, I don't really care if I'm clever or not. That's not something ... because being clever to me is, being able to go and study something and regurgitate it and to ... you know, something that gets high marks. – That I don't care about. That ... a monkey can do. But, being intellectual, you know, is having a vast knowledge on a variety of different things - it's being able to contribute to any conversation you have, being able to interpret things adequately, to write up a good enough project, or, y'know, that kind of thing. Erm, more the sort of, philosophical side of being clever.</p> <p>150. So the clever monkey that you speak of wouldn't be able to write a good essay?</p> <p>151. No, I'm talking about (that would be) a parrot monkey.</p> <p>152. Is that what 'clever' is?</p> <p>153. That's the way I view it. Y'know. That's how I view people who get good marks, but can't hold a conversation. Can't contribute to a conversation on a number of topics or, you know, interpret something or, understand something abstract or philosophical.</p>	<p>149. B defines 'clever' as being able to efficiently regurgitate facts and 'intellectual' as having a vast knowledge on a variety of different things. 'Intellectual' is the ability to interpret and write up a good project – the 'philosophical side of being clever'.</p> <p>150. Interviewer.</p> <p>151. B refers to regurgitation rather than understanding.</p> <p>152. Interviewer.</p> <p>153. B sees the ability to interpret, understand something abstract, as being of greater value than mere regurgitating cleverness.</p>
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<p>Clever people can't generally do that, they just ... y'know. (silence)</p> <p>154. ... is there any sort of sense for you that, <u>without</u> your intellect, or your ability to be intellectual, that you wouldn't exist solidly, in the same way as do <u>with</u> it?</p> <p>155. (responds immediately) I do not exist at all. ... without my intellect. If something happened where I had a severe head injury or, severe trauma that caused y'know, whatever – where I couldn't function on an intellectual level any more, I don't really think that I would consider myself to be existing.</p> <p>156. But then in the same way, I'm not saying that somebody else in that same situation doesn't exist. But for myself, I wouldn't exist any more.</p> <p>157. So is there any – if we extrapolate that – any sense that others that you submit work to for example, are a 'sounding board' and a continuing proof of your existence, because the more that you get good results from them, and good assessments from them and good judgements from them, the more substantial you are?</p> <p>158. Ja ... I think ... I've never really thought about it like that ... but, that does make sense.</p> <p>159. And were it not for their assessments, you would not have the same confidence – that you substantially existed?</p>	<p>154. Interviewer.</p> <p>155. B believes that she would effectively not consider herself to be existing at all if she were to lose her ability to be intellectual.</p> <p>156. B does not claim that would be the case for all people – but for herself it would be so.</p> <p>157. Interviewer.</p> <p>158. B understands the concept of receiving marks as being evidence of her existence.</p> <p>159. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>160. Ja.</p> <p>161. So the only way that a person who thinks like this – knows they exist, is if they've been told they exist, - and even how well they exist. Without that confirmation from another, they don't have confidence of that existence, themselves.</p> <p>162. Ja. That makes sense. It makes sense, because, the idea of leaving school or leaving university has always terrified me. Because I've never known what kind of existence I'll have. Not whether or not I know I'm a good person or not, but ... I guess I kind of live for that judgement ... of that project, or that assignment or ... because otherwise I don't know how well I'm doing in life.</p> <p>163. So the assessment or the judgement by another, of you, is quite a fundamentally important thing, in your existence?</p> <p>164. Yes. Even though I've never really done well, but it's always been important that I get that judgement anyway.</p> <p>165. But like I said, like there's always a safety net, where, 'well I didn't work, so obviously I failed', or whatever. That kind of thing. It's not like I live for high marks – you know, I definitely don't.</p> <p>166. What do you live for?</p> <p>167. (pause) ... I don't ... I don't know ... (laughs)</p>	<p>160. B agrees.</p> <p>161. Interviewer.</p> <p>162. B states that she has a fear of leaving school or university because only in the judgements of her that are given in those places does she know 'how well' she is doing in life. She lives for that judgement because otherwise she would not know this.</p> <p>163. Interviewer.</p> <p>164. The judgement by others of how well she is doing has always been very important.</p> <p>165. But B considers that the safety net is that she is able to say that if she does not do very well, it will be because she has not worked hard enough.</p> <p>166. Interviewer.</p> <p>167. B doesn't know what she lives</p>
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<p>... I live to learn I suppose. And then, y'know, that it turn means, spewing what you've learned onto a page and, ... and having someone judge it ...</p> <p>168. And getting a ... ratification of your existence from them?</p> <p>169. Yeah. But it's, it's quite weird to explain, because ... I've never really been focussed on the 'OK, I get high marks, so then I am a success as well and I am an intellectual person', because of the safety net that I've always had for myself, where, if I get a bad mark, it's, 'oh well, doesn't matter, - it doesn't mean I'm stupid as well, because, y'know, I'm still intellectual, but I just didn't work hard enough.'</p> <p>170. Could that make it scary ... to try hard? Because if you were to say 'OK fine, this is really me, I've tried very hard, this is the best I can do,' –</p> <p>171. – and you get a bad mark, it destroys you.</p> <p>172. And yet you did say something last time, which was about 'if you could get to know the lecturer better, if they could get to know you', you would know better how to satisfy them?</p> <p>173. But I think if you don't do that at university, then it's really silly. Because you – especially at a university like Rhodes, where you can get to know</p>	<p>for – other than to learn, give evidence of that learning on the page – and then have that learning assessed by another.</p> <p>168. Interviewer.</p> <p>169. B has never been able to own her success fully because of the simultaneous existence of the safety net which states that because she does things at the last minute, she is not making a statement about her intellectual ability, rather her ability to work hard enough.</p> <p>170. Interviewer.</p> <p>171. B concedes that it would be destroying to do the best she could and get a bad mark.</p> <p>172. Interviewer.</p> <p>173. B however says that prior to handing the work in, it is possible to get to know the person who will do</p>
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<p>your lecturers, you can get to know what they want ... all you have to do is listen to them, they'll tell you, exactly what they want from you.</p> <p>174. A word has popped into my mind ... rejection. Is there a fear of rejection in your concern of what you've done not being adequate?</p> <p>175. (ponders) ... It could be ... that would make a lot of sense. Because that's, - rejection's always something I've grappled with. I think, because of getting adopted, and always knowing about it, y'know. I've read a lot of journal articles and books and things about people being adopted, and, it's apparently quite a normal thing, yeah, the, fear of rejection. ... Because, you know, the first thing you experience in life is, rejection. Well, not necessarily, but ...</p> <p>176. My philosophy tutor, philosophy I, called me in after a tut the one day, and said 'Why are you so scared of doing well?'</p> <p>177. And that's when I kind of started thinking about it, like, OK, well, I don't have a fear of failure, I have a fear of success ... because, if that success isn't as good as I want it to be, then it means that I'm a failure.</p>	<p>the marking and they will tell you what they want from you.</p> <p>174. Interviewer.</p> <p>175. B feels that the prospect of rejection is a thing she has always had to deal with. She has read up on the subject of adoption and thinks that this is understandable as the first thing that an adopted child has to deal with in life is rejection.</p> <p>176. B re-states her view that the explanation has sense for her by citing an example of a person asking her why she was 'so scared of doing well'.</p> <p>177. B says that this question caused her to consider that she didn't have a fear of failing, but of succeeding. This is because if success is only limited, it will be as bad as failing. B will be damned by faint praise.</p>
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Protocol – Participant ‘D’

Natural Meaning Units	Transformed Meaning Units
<p>1. Well ... the first term of the year, the course that we were doing was research. And, we had, 2 courses running concurrently, which had to do with research. One was, quite a bit of (quantitative) analysis ... and, qualitative analysis. And for part of the (quantitative) analysis, we designed a survey. And we were supposed to write individual reports, giving out survey results. For the qualitative, part of that course, we had to do erm a discourse analysis.</p> <p>2. And when I first started that I was very sure of myself, at the time, I mean, given, ... like, I knew what we had to do, when it was due, - both sections were due for the same day – that’s why I’m talking about them both. So ... when we first got the assignments, I was pretty sure of myself,</p> <p>3. I mean I ... had a ... sort of idea what to do ... I just had to do ... a bit more reading, erm, get into it before I had a big understanding, before I could start ... writing.</p> <p>4. And so, at that time – ya, at that time I was feeling very in control,</p> <p>5. - and the way I plan ... planned to do the essay is– or any work is, that I look at the due date, and</p>	<p>1. D has two assignment tasks due. One is quantitative, the other qualitative.</p> <p>2. At the outset D is confident.</p> <p>3. D has a good idea of what is required, even though he still has readings to do before he will feel able to commit his thoughts to paper.</p> <p>4. D feels ‘in control’.</p> <p>5. The way D plans tasks is to write them on the calendar to see when</p>

<p>I'll put it on my calendar, the different dates when assignments are due – and then I'll be able to plan ... how to do things, like, what do I need to do by the end of this day. Now ... these two assignments were due the day we came back after vac, the first day – of the second term.</p> <p>6. So, the course ended ... and then I had a few days ... a few days before ... university officially ended its first term. And what I decided to do was to take all the work I had, all my notes – and I was going to go to E. L. And I was going to work on my assignments during the day – and then at night I would have enough time to, you know, just to relax.</p> <p>7. E. L.? – did that mean you were going home?</p> <p>8. Ah – yes – I was going home. Yes. ... Erm ... a few days early, before the end of the term. And, I brought all my papers along so that I wouldn't get lost.</p> <p>9. Erm. The way ... er ... the way procrastination occurs with me is like, it seems to go day by day, so I'll, put things off for this day, and say, OK well, I'll just do a little more tomorrow – and then it starts to add up.</p> <p>10. So, I got there ... sort of the evening, of my first, first day that I was back in E L – and I'd already decided that I wasn't going to do work – which I was fine with, because I'd, I'd thought OK well, - I'll just do this stuff in the day.</p>	<p>they were due. These two assignments were due on the same day, on the first day of the next term.</p> <p>6. D commenced with his plan to work on assignments during the daytime and relax during the evenings without delay.</p> <p>7. Interviewer</p> <p>8. D went home, taking the papers that were necessary.</p> <p>9. Procrastination begins when D puts things off for one day at a time and the amount of time D spends not working starts to add up.</p> <p>10. D decided without difficulty not to work on his first evening back at home. D had decided to work during the day time therefore it wasn't required that he start that evening.</p>
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<p>11. And then I woke up in the morning and I thought OK, well, this is my first day, - I don't actually have to do much work ... I'll just put it off for a little while.</p> <p>12. So that would be, like, the first morning. And then the afternoon, it would be like, sort of gnawing in my consciousness, like, you're supposed to do this. But then I would – then I would think, well, it's so late in the day, anyway, so I might as well just push it to tomorrow.</p> <p>13. (pause) ... And then this process ... seemed to repeat itself. Like, over the next few days.</p> <p>14. But what happened, well, one thing that happened during those 3 days – of me continuing to push these things, was, like, ... I'd put my papers in order. So, I'd make sure I knew ... this file was in order ... and this file was in order. And then that would give me a sort of sense of accomplishment, then I'd, then I'd feel much better about not doing my work.</p> <p>15. So it feels like I've done a little ... now I can actually start! ... But I wouldn't.</p> <p>16. And then ... and then ... the Thursday was er, the Friday, so ... ah ja, really I'm on sort of a weekend, so I don't really actually feel it's, feel as though it's ... time to work. I mean – I set aside weekdays to work ... not that I do particularly work in a weekday ... but, there's already this</p>	<p>11. D wakes the next morning, and considers his plan to work during the day. D thinks that this was his first day and it isn't necessary to begin immediately.</p> <p>12. D feels OK in the morning but during the afternoon begins to experience anxiety that he had not started. D thinks it is so late he might as well start tomorrow.</p> <p>13. This cycle repeats itself over the next few days.</p> <p>14. D gives himself the feeling of being involved with the work by tidying his papers. D then feels a sense of accomplishment and release from worry about not having started.</p> <p>15. D feels that he has prepared sufficiently to start – but does not.</p> <p>16. Time passes with no meaningful progress until the weekend – when D tells himself he does not have to work as weekdays are for work and weekends for relaxation.</p>
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<p>idea in my mind, OK, well it's a weekend ... don't have to do <u>that</u> much work.</p> <p>17. So ... (pause) ... by the end of ... by the end of Saturday, afternoon, I decided, well, this just isn't working. Y'know maybe I should go back ... to university,</p> <p>18. because, maybe it will be a better working environment for me. Maybe it's because I'm in East London and it feels like it's a sort of vacation or a holiday – I'm here with my family, and I'm seeing my friends who I haven't seen in quite a while. And so, I thought, well, maybe if I go to ... Grahamstown, there's no-one, there'll be hardly anyone here. – Cos all the students are ... all the students and all my friends would be away, and I don't expect anyone to be here.</p> <p>19. Erm. ... So I got here, on Monday, and, I got here around 4 in the afternoon. And the library closes at 5 ... so I couldn't actually do work.</p> <p>20. So, I did what I always do, - I arranged my files! And, made sure that everything was in order. Erm. (pause) ...</p> <p>21. On Tuesday, ... I woke up rather late. ... As is normally the case, unless I have a seminar. And, ... I went, ... I started a schedule for myself, I split ... I had 2 assignments due, so what I decided to do, was split the number of days, so that I could do a little each day, for each assignment. And,</p>	<p>17. At the end of Saturday D decides that being at home wasn't allowing him to make proper progress and thought he should instead return to university.</p> <p>18. D considers that a return to university will be a better environment to encourage work. Home felt more like being on holiday and when D changes his environment to the university one, he will be more likely to work.</p> <p>19. D arrived back at 4 on the Monday. The library closes at 5 so D feels he does not have to work.</p> <p>20. D did what he always does and arranged his files.</p> <p>21. The next morning D woke late. He wrote a schedule and allotted days to each of the two assignments that needed to be done.</p>
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<p>finish in time, with enough time to ... to be comfortable. To finish the work at a comfortable level, and not be too stressed out.</p> <p>22. And so ... I went to the library, on Tuesday ... and ... just, really ... distracted myself with the library, I would like read – books that I would just see on the shelf – which I would ordinarily <u>not</u> read.</p> <p>23. Or I'd log on at the computer and then I would ... check my e-mails ... for a long, long, time. Or I'd get distracted by something else on the internet, something that would be interesting to read.</p> <p>24. Erm. And then on that, well on that day, I, I actually did manage to ... to get the books I needed. So I got those books, went home, ... erm ...</p> <p>25. - and I think a thing that added to this particular incident of procrastination was that the library sort of closed at 5:00. So, ... for me, the day ended at 5:00. And so I wouldn't do work after that. ... This would go on till about Friday where I'd just do a little work, and not, not actually do ... what I was meant to do.</p> <p>26. Like I'd do something, ... I'd do something very ... minute and, possibly ... I could have done with, with other things that I had to do, like, for example I'd – like I'd mentioned arranging files – I could arrange files and then do work. But instead I would arrange files and say, well, that's it for the</p>	<p>22. D went to the library and read non task-connected matter that he would ordinarily not read.</p> <p>23. Or use the computer in a distracted way which had no bearing on the work which needed to be done.</p> <p>24. D eventually manages to get some books from the library and take them home.</p> <p>25. D thinks that as the library closes at 5:00, this means the working day finished at 5:00 too. D will therefore not be required to do any further work after that time.</p> <p>26. D tidies files which gives him respite from having to engage with the task proper. Having achieved respite, D stops any further involved with the task.</p>
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<p>day. Or take a break, and then the break would last ... for the rest of the day. Erm ... (long pause) ...</p> <p>27. When ... when I'd have to do some things, like, for example, ... I'd, I'd set aside Friday afternoon – or, the entire Friday and say OK well, now I'll just make notes on all these readings.</p> <p>28. And then I'd just have a sense, like, well – I actually don't feel like doing this ... and then that would be enough, like, for me. I'd say well I don't need to do this – and I just wouldn't do that. And I'd say OK, well, I'll just do it, do a bit more, tomorrow. And this happened on ... Saturday - too.</p> <p>29. On Saturday I did quite a ... lot of work ... considering, I mean – I really sat down and, said, this thing is, ... the assignment is due ... and I got really worried – the sort of whole of Saturday morning I worked hard – and I did enough work so that I would ... I actually worked hard enough that I would still have enough time to do both essays comfortably.</p> <p>30. Well, I decided, well, I have to stop for lunch ... stopped for lunch ... and I said well, look, I've done a lot of work now, so, - I think I can take Saturday afternoon and Saturday night ... off.</p> <p>31. And Saturday afternoon, having decided not to do any more, - are you free of that stuff, or are you still thinking about it?</p>	<p>27. D sets himself an objective to fulfil on a certain day.</p> <p>28. A sense of not wanting to be engaged with the work occurs – and work ceases. D tells himself that he doesn't need to do it now and that there is sufficient time to do more tomorrow and still finish in time.</p> <p>29. The next day D assesses that the deadline is approaching and becomes anxious. D then works enough to have confidence that he can complete both assignments in time.</p> <p>30. D is sufficiently reassured and by his progress to allow himself to take the afternoon and evening off.</p> <p>31. Interviewer</p>
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<p>32. Mm. Well, what happens is that initially, like, after lunch, I sat down and I said, well, I have done enough work, erm, - just not going to think about it, and ... for that afternoon, I did not think about it.</p> <p>33. But it seemed to be, it would like return. Saturday night, because, I've actually got a lot of work, and I'd have like a ... sinking feeling.</p> <p>34. And I'd be like, OK, OK, ... this is really terrible, and, so I'd say, OK, ... wake up on Sunday – and do your work. And so I tried to do something to distract me from the fact that I had work. On that night. So I was watching TV. And, trying to get my mind off the fact that I had so much work.</p> <p>35. Then I woke up on Sunday ... Sorry I made a mistake – the work was due on Wednesday ... (pause) ... So, on Sunday I did work quite well. And, I mean, I worked, sort of from, - I woke up late again and I worked very well from 11 in the morning, right to 11 at night. I mean – I obviously did take breaks, and, for supper, for showering, things like that ... but, generally it was quite good.</p> <p>36. I mean, if I took a break, it was, like a proper break, - with a beginning and an end. And then I would start working again.</p> <p>37. And was the work that you did, quite good?</p> <p>38. Ahm ... (pause) ... well, ... that day I did, I was working on the quantitative assignment. So I was,</p>	<p>32. After the morning's engagement with the work, D is able to get release from anxiety about doing more during the afternoon.</p> <p>33. In the evening, the anxiety returns.</p> <p>34. D is anxious about not working and decides he will get up on Sunday and make good progress. D has to distract himself from anxiety at not working.</p> <p>35. The next morning D wakes late but works well from 11am until about 11pm.</p> <p>36. D's time is spent in a disciplined way, and begins work again after taking breaks.</p> <p>37. Interviewer.</p> <p>38. The work done is on the quantitative assignment and D is</p>
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<p>I was happy with my result. Of what I had done. And ... sort of ... Monday I didn't work as hard – I think I worked from 11 to 5, and then I took the Monday night off.</p> <p>39. What were you working on, on the Monday?</p> <p>40. The same, the quantitative. I found that I hadn't really touched on the qualitative assignment yet. And er, so, ... I mean I hadn't even – by the time Monday ... I'd stopped working on Monday, it was Monday ... night. ... Ja ... - cos I stopped working at 5:00 ... and ... I hadn't completed that assignment. I mean, I'd done most of it ... I just had to kind of write it up Which for me doesn't take long because I've done all the preliminary work. But I hadn't started on the qualitative assignment.</p> <p>41. ... Now, now it was Tuesday, now this was absolute, the absolute deadline. Ja, I had to work. So ... I worked on the quantitative assignment, till, - from, for 2 hours, from 11 ... to 2. I had lunch and then I started on the qualitative assignment at 3.</p> <p>42. You'd finished the quantitative one?</p> <p>43. I'd finished the quantitative assignment. I can't say that ... well, this was something I hadn't done before, so I wasn't very sure of myself in what I had done. I mean ... because I'd left it so late I, I didn't actually have enough time to take my first draft to the lecturer concerned ... (pause)</p>	<p>content with that. The next day, less work is done.</p> <p>39. Interviewer.</p> <p>40. The work done on Monday is also for the quantitative assignment. When D stops for the day the quantitative task is not complete and the qualitative one has not yet been commenced.</p> <p>41. The deadline is tomorrow. The quantitative assignment is worked on and completed between 11 and 2. The final task is commenced after a break at 3.</p> <p>42. Interviewer</p> <p>43. D is not sure of the quality of the work that had been completed. He has not allowed enough time to take a draft to an authority other for approval.</p>
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<p>44. ... and then 3 o'clock I started on the qualitative assignment.</p> <p>45. So the quantitative one – you'd finished it – and whether you were satisfied with it or not, you weren't doing any more on it?</p> <p>46. Because I'd written all that was required of me.</p> <p>47. Could you have done it better?</p> <p>48. I think I could have erm, could have done it better. Erm. I did not do it better, because I left it too late to actually show ... what I had done to a lecturer to ... to, maybe another, a different lecturer, who wasn't going to mark it – maybe to a friend - ... I'd actually left it too late to ... to complete.</p> <p>49. In that sense. I mean, that was another thing, - once I had finished it, I wasn't going to be well, able to add anything more to it – because it was too late now. And well, in my mind it was like OK well this is as far as, as much as I can do, I've got to do the next thing now.</p> <p>50. So ... now it starts with the qualitative assignment ... and ... this ...assignment ... was ... a bit ... more difficult ... than the quantitative assignment, because it required more of me.</p> <p>51. There was more writing and more reading to</p>	<p>44. Attention is now devoted to the qualitative assignment.</p> <p>45. Interviewer.</p> <p>46. D has fulfilled his requirement regarding the quantitative assignment.</p> <p>47. Interviewer.</p> <p>48. D is capable of having done the quantitative assignment better but does not because he did not start it early enough to get an opinion from an knowledgeable other.</p> <p>49. D was no longer responsible for making the quantitative assignment better. It was out of his hands as he has done all he can.</p> <p>50. D believes the qualitative assignment will be more difficult for him to complete and required more of him.</p> <p>51. More reading and writing will be</p>
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<p>actually do for that particular assignment.</p> <p>52. Erm ... What I actually ended up doing was, which is something that I often do ... I'll just drink a lot of coffee, so that I can stay awake, throughout the night and finish this. So I, eventually finished that qualitative assignment at ... 5 in the morning. (long pause)</p> <p>53. Erm ... And I did not do it to the best of my ability. There were 3 sections ... two of the sections I did to the best of my ability ... one section I actually shortened it, cos I said I don't have time to actually do this, sufficiently, or to do it in, in, totality. And I left things out.</p> <p>54. So the first 2 sections you said you did to the best of your ability – which 2 sections were they?</p> <p>55. OK it was, er, the fist section was ... your theory and your methodology ... which is fairly straightforward, I mean ... it is ... just, regurgitation of the reading. ... The third section, was on your experience, of the course. Those were the two I did well.</p> <p>56. What order did you do the sections in?</p> <p>57. I did them in the order that they came in. The reason I think I didn't do as well with the second part was, it was getting pretty late in the morning, and I was worried that I wasn't going to finish, so I decided well, I'm going to actually cut this short because, I'm not going to have enough time to</p>	<p>required.</p> <p>52. D's response to this demand is to drink lots of coffee and stay awake all night. D finishes the qualitative assignment at 5 am.</p> <p>53. D did not do the assignment to the best of his ability. Time limitation means it is shortened and parts left out.</p> <p>54. Interviewer.</p> <p>55. D completes two sections to his satisfaction and finds them to be quite straightforward.</p> <p>56. Interviewer.</p> <p>57. D wasn't satisfied with the second section, decided he would not have time to complete it and so cut it short.</p>
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<p>finish that section and, I still have to go to the computer labs and to print them out. – I have a computer at home and I can type them out, but then I have to go to the labs to print them.</p> <p>58. So I just ... and the second part takes considerably longer because it was an analysis, so it was, kind of, - your own ideas – like you spend some time thinking and looking and what, - at the material and deciding what arguments you're going to put forth, what you think about, what you're going to analyse. ...</p> <p>59. (pause) ... When I was doing that section I, actually didn't feel like I had much to say anyway, so I just did something and it was like OK, this isn't long enough but I'll do some more and OK this looks long enough, and, I'm not prepared to spend any more time on this.</p> <p>60. The ... third section ... only had to be 2 pages long, and it was ... your experience of the course. So .. it wasn't ... anything that I thought was difficult so it was, quite an easy section – I just wrote what I thought about the whole experience and what I thought about it. Erm ...</p> <p>61. And you finished the whole lot at 5 o'clock in the morning of the Wednesday?</p> <p>62. Ja – technically Wednesday morning, yes. And I slept for like, an hour, ... then ... for that day I also had readings.</p>	<p>58. This second part is analysis. It requires D to put forward his own ideas and requires that arguments be put forward to be debated, assessed and analysed.</p> <p>59. D didn't write much and merely wrote until he felt he had written enough to give the appearance of satisfying a quantity requirement, if not a quality one.</p> <p>60. D has no difficulty completing the third section which is writing about his experience of the research process.</p> <p>61. Interviewer.</p> <p>62. D completes the task on Wednesday morning and then sleeps for an hour. D also has some other work to complete that he viewed as</p>
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<p>63. Print them. And there was a seminar that day. And I had readings to do for that seminar – at 9 o'clock. – But it was in the same corridor, so I handed in to the secretary and then I'd go down the corridor and, have my seminar. ...</p> <p>64. So I had the reading to do for the seminar, but I didn't really do it, I just skimmed through it. - Sort of reading the first line of each paragraph, not really understanding what was going on in the reading.</p> <p>65. Well, actually, at that stage I was, I couldn't have been bothered, because, I just thought to myself, well, the assignments are something that someone can ... evaluate ... - No-one's going to be able to evaluate ... how I read this – the material for the seminar – I mean, the, the – that wasn't even high on my list of things to do, it was just like, OK, if I get time, I'll just skim through this.</p> <p>66. So ... what did you get for the work?</p> <p>67. I actually got the work back today – for the quantitative assignment, I got 77% ... the qualitative assignment, I got 88%.</p> <p>68. And were you ... satisfied with those marks?</p> <p>69. Not with the quantitative assignment mark.</p>	<p>less important.</p> <p>63. D has other matters to attend to at the same time as completing the assignments and handing them in.</p> <p>64. One of these is to read for a seminar. This work is not undertaken thoroughly or adequately.</p> <p>65. This lack of application does not concern D: the assignments will be critically evaluated by another and it is not be possible to evaluate his seminar readings in the same way.</p> <p>66. Interviewer.</p> <p>67. D receives 77% for the quantitative and 88% for the qualitative assignment.</p> <p>68. Interviewer.</p> <p>69. D is not satisfied with the mark for the quantitative assignment.</p>
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<p>70. Why not?</p> <p>71. Because I don't think it was ... done to the best of my ability. I think ... I could have got more, or I could have – I mean I could have actually done the work - I had enough time to do the work – and go to the lecturer concerned before I handed in the work and ask him, to mark the draft ... which he probably ... even if he didn't mark the draft he, he would be more than willing to discuss, the assignment with me. I could have done that.</p> <p>72. So ... you weren't happy with how many marks you got – because you felt you hadn't put enough work in. But under the circumstances, were you satisfied?</p> <p>73. Under the circumstances I'm quite satisfied.</p> <p>74. With the qualitative assignment it's discourse analysis, which I've been – I'm fairly familiar with, so ... and, so I've always been able to rely on the fact that I understand the theory, to do well, and, sort of, if there's an exam and it comes to that.</p> <p>75. And, in a way, that probably adds – whenever I have something that's related to that field, it actually adds to my procrastination, because I'll go, well, this is not difficult, I can do it – and I'll push myself each time, I'll say, well, I'll like ... I'll give myself less and less time, each time, there's something that has to do with discourse analysis</p>	<p>70. Interviewer.</p> <p>71. D could have done more work and got a better mark. With more time and greater contact made with the lecturer this would have occurred,</p> <p>72. Interviewer.</p> <p>73. On balance, D is content with his performance.</p> <p>74. With regard to the qualitative work, D has sufficient familiarity with the work to do well..</p> <p>75. For D, familiarity breeds procrastination. He knows the work and because it is quite easy, he allows himself less time on each occasion he does it.</p>
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<p>arises, I'll think – well, last time I ... er, I mean, I did pretty OK ... last time ... it's probably easy, I can also do it.</p>	
<p>76. Did you feel differently about the quantitative assignment and the qualitative one?</p>	<p>76. Interviewer.</p>
<p>77. On a personal sort of level perhaps, the qualitative assignment, erm, had more meaning for me, but, I think I was, at the time that I knew that they would be equally weighted.</p>	<p>77. The qualitative was more meaningful to D as a test of ability.</p>
<p>78. Equal weighting – but you found the qualitative one more difficult to get started with?</p>	<p>78. Interviewer.</p>
<p>79. Yes.</p>	<p>79. The qualitative work is difficult to commence for D.</p>
<p>80. It actually ... the qualitative assignment ... ended up being the one that was more difficult for me to do. That was difficult for me, because it took so much time. Writing down, or explaining a theory and then explaining my experience, was easy, because ... it was very straightforward ... actually, analysing it, takes so much time and so much thought, and that's why it was difficult for me, because it was so much time ... to do.</p>	<p>80. The most difficult part of the qualitative assignment for D was that it took time for thought and analysis.</p>
<p>81. I mean there were feelings of like, that I was afraid of what sort of result I would get, once it had been marked.</p>	<p>81. D is afraid of the result he will get when the assignment is marked.</p>
<p>82. What were you afraid about, regarding the results you were going to get?</p>	<p>82. Interviewer.</p>

<p>83. Well, after I'd finished the assignment, I just thought to myself, well, I left this for the last minute, ... the amount of ... the amount of effort could have been greater, and I just thought, well this, when people see this, they're, this is going to reflect, and they're going to know this is, this is not a very good effort, and that's ... <u>before</u> I got the mark.</p> <p>84. So they were going to reflect on this and it was going to reflect on you that it wasn't a very good mark, that it wasn't a very good piece of work – and they might think that this was all you were capable of?</p> <p>85. (more animatedly) Yes, yes. But at the time of writing, those weren't, that wasn't ... what I was thinking. After I'd finished writing, then I started thinking, well now, people are going to see this ... and they're going to think, this my capability, this is as much as I can do. And it's not a very good effort.</p> <p>86. So I do actually see – but I mean these results I get are really important to me, if I do bad, it affects me a lot. I'll feel quite anxious after I've been given a poor result, I'll feel anxious after that.</p> <p>87. Tell me about that anxiety – what are you anxious about?</p> <p>88. Well I feel as though I'm not very good at many things. And I feel as though I want to do this, I</p>	<p>83.D thinks others will think he has done a poor effort without realising he had left it to the last minute.</p> <p>84. Interviewer.</p> <p>85. D is concerned that others would think that was all he was capable of.</p> <p>86. Good results are important to D. When given a poor assessment, D feels anxious.</p> <p>87. Interviewer.</p> <p>88. D is anxious that he is not good enough.</p>
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<p>want to do that, I want to go into psychology, and that, in order to do that, I need to do the best I can. And, what if, the best I can do – is not good enough?</p> <p>89. So that's quite an anxiety-provoking thought?</p> <p>90. Ja. And also, I keep on mentioning this but, I didn't actually say it that, before I begin my work, always, I'm quite anxious to start.</p> <p>91. I mean, like, once I've started and I start get going, these feeling go away ... to an extent ... but before I actually sit down and ... and, like ... put that first, like, thought down, before I write that first thought down, before I read that first book, or whatever may be the case, I will feel quite anxious to start.</p> <p>92. Because ? Is it slightly unknown territory? And you don't know how well you're going to perform within this unknown territory?</p> <p>93. Well its, it's a case of I don't, ja, that – but maybe, maybe I'm afraid that, or I'm anxious about, like, what's going to happen ... will I be doing this correctly, will I finish this in time, will it just like turn out to be a complete mess.</p> <p>94. Once I've actually started, once, once I've finished. So, sort of like, ... I begin to see the end as like, the end result of, of what, like, the work, like, if I can put it in stages, see it like, maybe</p>	<p>89. Interviewer.</p> <p>90. D is anxious before he starts any academic task.</p> <p>91. This anxiety goes away to an extent once D has started – but prior to starting, D will be anxious.</p> <p>92. Interviewer.</p> <p>93. D is anxious if he will do it correctly and in time, or that it will be of poor quality.</p> <p>94. D is anxious throughout all stages of the process of creating a piece of work that will be assessed.</p>
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<p>thinking about what I have to do, getting the materials, starting to write, and when it's finally able to present,</p> <p>95. - that stage of being able to present that final work, is quite, I feel, quite nervous about that. That some way, like, maybe I've done something wrong, while I'm writing it. And then I won't actually know, that I've done something wrong ... and the final idea of...the final product always seems, much more perfect, ... than what it is.</p> <p>96. So, like, I'll think well, the final product's going to be absolutely wonderful, I'm going to be very happy with it ... and while I'm writing, or before I start writing, I think ... wah ... there's still so much to do, - before I get there. When I'm writing it, it sort of comes together, and then when I've finally got a final product – it doesn't actually seem ... as good as what I'd imagined it to be in the first place.</p> <p>97. And when you've put your thoughts down on paper, are you concerned that the marker might find your knowledge to be lacking?</p> <p>98. Yes, I always worry that what I'm writing isn't, ... isn't what's required, or ... maybe there's conceptual errors in what I'm saying – maybe I don't actually understand ... understand the material that I've covered.</p> <p>99. And if that is true, how will people who are</p>	<p>95. When the work is ready to be delivered to the assessor, D is nervous. He is anxious that he has made a mistake that the assessing other will see but he has not. His hopes for the final quality of the work before it is started is not matched by his view of the end product.</p> <p>96. D's hopes and confidence are high at the outset of the task, but as he commits his thoughts to paper, that hope and confidence wane.</p> <p>97. Interviewer.</p> <p>98. D worries that his revealed thoughts are not of an adequate quality.</p> <p>99. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>marking that stuff feel about you.</p> <p>100. Well I feel that, when I hand something in, the person who is marking it doesn't look at the process, they look at the end result.</p> <p>101. And I've ... it's only, ... the process is very important ... as is the end result, and if that end result ... is not good enough, I mean, I feel bad, I think OK, well, ... this <u>is</u> me – like, like, if I get a poor result, I think well, this, this is me, I can't do better. And I'll feel bad.</p> <p>102. So it's quite frustrating that you have the feeling that markers are only interested in end results – because there is more to the work you've done - and there is more to you – than merely this end result?</p> <p>103. Ja ... ja – but it also relates to how I think. Everyone judges you on the end result, whatever it may be. Maybe, if you're a marathon runner, they can only judge you on that 30-second dash, and they can't ... they don't really judge you on the training and before that ... erm ... and when I think I've handed in something I think, well, they've, they're marking me on the idea that they've given me two weeks to do this and I did it in a few days ... or even less.</p> <p>104. So, I mean ... well, when they mark this, they're not thinking, this is, this is good for someone who is, only been given, 2 or 3 days,</p>	<p>100. D feels that if the marker knew of the process that went into writing his task, they would think it better than merely looking at the end result.</p> <p>101. D believes that the end result is the only thing which matters to the assessor and that he will be forced to think that if the marker thinks he is bad, then that must be true.</p> <p>102. Interviewer.</p> <p>103. D is concerned that he will be assessed solely on the end result of the work done. They will think that this is the best he is capable of and will not know it was done in only a fraction of the time available.</p> <p>104. The assessor will think of the work in terms of the time that was available rather than the effort that</p>
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<p>they're thinking, this is OK for someone who has been given 2 weeks.</p> <p>105. ... you know when you said about tagging files, - this is an activity that you will do in preparation for starting some work? What's that about?</p> <p>106. Erm ... You see, I think it really started, when I was at high school, and I'd have a lot more files. And I'd have to tidy them up and make sure everything was in order before I could start. Now I don't have as much ... as much stuff to get in order, but I, I, do have to have the stuff in order to actually do the work.</p> <p>107. But ... I think I have started to use it now as a technique of delay. Because in high school, it might have taken – 'cos I was so, I was much more unorganised, it would have taken me an hour to get everything in order – now it will take me 10 maybe 15 minutes.</p> <p>108. But the same feeling that I got in high school, of, OK, everything's set in order, - I can begin, that feeling that I have actually have, have started work, I carried over, now.</p> <p>109. And do you have a better feeling about that work once it's tidied?</p> <p>110. Yes. Em. I do. Erm ... It seems more manageable if it's all in order, and where I can find it. I ... hope I make sense. If it's all in order I can</p>	<p>was made in the shorter time used.</p> <p>105. Interviewer.</p> <p>106. D feels it necessary to have things in order before starting to work.</p> <p>107. D suspects that he uses it as a delaying tactic.</p> <p>108. D feel that he has started work on the task when he puts his files in order.</p> <p>109. Interviewer.</p> <p>110. Work seems more manageable to D when it is in order. Work that is not organised is more</p>
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<p>access what I want. Seems like a neat sort of filing system where I can do what I want, put it away neatly, tidily, and if it's just disorganised it seems as though – it seems more difficult, because I still have to find it and find the necessary papers, and readings that I need to do.</p>	<p>difficult.</p>
<p>111. So would it be too much to say that it's probably almost easier to understand the bits if it's well ordered and it's all filed properly?</p>	<p>111. Interviewer.</p>
<p>112. Yes! (definite agreement)</p>	<p>112. Work is easier to understand when it's properly ordered.</p>
<p>113. Are there certain types of work that you find easier to start than others?</p>	<p>113. Interviewer.</p>
<p>114. Erm ... If I have a lot of things to do, for the same day or the same week, I put a hierarchy and – I'd say that assignments would be most time-consuming, then, readings – because I'd have to understand it. Then if I have to mark tutorials, that's at the bottom of my ...</p>	<p>114. D's hierarchy of importance for work is assignments, readings and marking tutorials.</p>
<p>115. Amongst those assignments, are there any assignments that you find easier than others? If you cast your mind back over the year ... stuff that you had less difficulty starting than others?</p>	<p>115. Interviewer.</p>
<p>116. Hmm. I've always found psychology assignments the easiest. But they haven't ... in undergrad they ... they're not very taxing – they're only reporting what other people have said. And making it appear in essays. I found – I used to do</p>	<p>116. D finds essays where he is expected to generate his own ideas most difficult.</p>

<p>English – and I found English essays to be much more hard, much more difficult. Because from first year they expect you to generate your own ideas.</p> <p>117. And that's a slightly anxiety-provoking thing, is it?</p> <p>118. Erm. At the beginning it always is, because I think that I will have nothing to say.</p> <p>119. But then, in the end, you find that you do have something to say?</p> <p>120. Yes.</p> <p>121. Others have said that when they actually get started, they enjoy the work – but whilst they are enjoying the work they stop and take a break – and then they have the whole anxiety of starting again.</p> <p>122. I hadn't thought of that but ... but that is how it is.</p> <p>123. If I split the assignment up into sections, -</p>	<p>117. Interviewer.</p> <p>118. These essays generate anxiety because D is concerned he will have nothing to say.</p> <p>119. Interviewer.</p> <p>120. D eventually finds he has something to say.</p> <p>121. Interviewer.</p> <p>122. D recognises others' experience of procrastination when they actually get started, they enjoy the work – but whilst they are enjoying the work they stop and take a break – and then they have the whole anxiety of starting again and although he had not thought in those terms previously, recognises it in himself.</p> <p>123. Each section that D divides the</p>
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<p>each section becomes a mountain by itself. If I finish one section I say OK I'll take a break, - a fairly long break, maybe 2 hours or whatever the case may be. And then it's ... starting again.</p> <p>124. And in those moments is where procrastination lies, is it not? It's in those moments of anxiety of having to get started ...</p> <p>125. Yes ...</p> <p>126. Two things you said – one of which was: 'People do judge the end result'. – And of course they do – people mark the end result. And you also said 'I do equate myself with my work'. So .. when your work is marked ... does that feel like a bit of a judgement of <i>you</i>? A personal judgement?</p> <p>127. Ja, it does. Because if I get a good mark, I feel satisfied with myself. Erm. Someone is telling me that 'you gave good ability in this'. And I think it does add a bit – but for me it relates to self-esteem. If I get a poor result, you know, someone has told me 'you can't do this'.</p> <p>128. Is it taking it too far to say – if you get a good mark, you <i>can</i> do this, you are good. But if you get a bad mark, you can't do this – you are bad.</p> <p>129. Yes. Ja. Well, for me it is. That's how I feel.</p>	<p>work he must do into becomes a task on its own. Starting again is always difficult.</p> <p>124. Interviewer.</p> <p>125. D agrees that procrastination lies in the moments of anxiety before one is able to start a piece of work.</p> <p>126. Interviewer.</p> <p>127. D sets store in others' opinion of his ability as revealed by the marks they give him and D's self-esteem is adversely affected by poor marks.</p> <p>128. Interviewer.</p> <p>129. D agrees that marks signify his goodness or badness.</p>
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<p>130. So a bad mark for an assignment, makes you feel bad throughout yourself.</p>	<p>130. Interviewer.</p>
<p>131. Yes.</p>	<p>131. This badness is not related only to the assignment.</p>
<p>132. It's a criticism not only of your essay, but of <i>yourself</i>?</p>	<p>132. Interviewer.</p>
<p>133. Yes.</p>	<p>133. takes criticism of his written work to be not only of the essay but his person.</p>
<p>134. Ja. Any sort of situation where I have to rely on my intellect, - I feel I'm in danger of coming ... - I mean, before I even applied to do Honours, - looking back I can see I was looking for the easy option, I thought, I do have a BA, I could teach, and get teaching – there would be less assessment of <i>me</i>.</p>	<p>134. Situations where D has to rely on his intellect are anxiety provoking. Opting to study honours was such a case as D had initially thought that he would go and teach which he thought would be an easier option as there would be less assessment of him.</p>
<p>135. ... I'm basically done with that stuff ... but is there anything that has occurred to you?</p>	<p>135. Interviewer</p>
<p>136. Yes. Erm ... Third year I went to counselling, for low self-esteem issues. And I was wondering perhaps if these are linked. I've just been pondering that, by myself.</p>	<p>136. In 3rd year D went to counselling for low self-esteem issues and wonders if there was any connection between that and procrastination.</p>
<p>137. ... And what conclusion did you come to?</p>	<p>137. Interviewer.</p>
<p>138. I'm still sort of thinking about it.</p>	<p>138. D does not want to commit himself to a statement.</p>

<p>139. ... What sort of conclusion have you come to ... so far?</p> <p>140. So far, erm, (long pause) I think that getting a bad mark for me, affects my self-esteem in a negative way.</p> <p>141. And getting a good mark is more of a relief, than anything else. So it doesn't affect me in a <i>positive</i> way.</p>	<p>139. Interviewer.</p> <p>140. Getting a bad mark affects D adversely.</p> <p>141. Getting a good mark is only a relief – and so doesn't affect him positively.</p>
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Protocol – Participant 'E'

Natural Meaning Units	Transformed Meaning Units
<p>1. We had to do this essay on how you relate to people in group situations, specifically, for a psychology 2 essay. And we had to do a series of practicals in which we did a couple of exercises exploring this idea. And you'd write things down in a little practical book and you'd be able to use some of this in your essay, as well as your readings for the things. And the idea was, also, get two readings a week – so that you don't have 6 readings to do the day before! Em. I at least got as far as doing some of the readings .. went to the library and got a couple beforehand ... books ... that I just sort of squizzed here and there at a few pages.</p> <p>2. In the end I didn't use any of them because I didn't really have time – I just grabbed a couple of quotes here and there, but couldn't read through pages that I'd photocopied that I'd thought were relevant.</p> <p>3. You'd photocopied parts of books to peruse at your leisure, later?</p> <p>4. Yes. And I kept thinking, you know, this is so great because it's about yourself, a lot, so it shouldn't be that hard to write, it's not a strict academic essay ... it was an 'I' kind of essay.</p> <p>5. Em. And I just remember that day, putting things off like, em. (pause)</p>	<p>1. E has an essay to do. She has done some but not all preparation.</p> <p>2. The limited preparation comes to nought as T left it too late to use the material she had prepared.</p> <p>3. Interviewer.</p> <p>4. E assumes it will be an easy essay to write as it is about herself.</p> <p>5. E put off working on the essay.</p>

<p>6. How long were you given to do the essay?</p> <p>7. It was quite a while that we knew about it ... I think about 3 weeks, perhaps.</p> <p>8. And having been given the topic and having understood what was required of you, how did you feel about it?</p> <p>9. Well, we'd done an essay last year about what sub-cultures we feel we belong to and I found then it's quite a mission sitting at a computer, trying to write about yourself, because it's ... I think, it's quite an involved thing, really, looking at who you are.</p> <p>10. And it can be a bit of a pain, because you don't always like what you're discovering as you're writing this out. (Pause) ...</p> <p>11. But I still found it very interesting. So I was kind of looking forward to it.</p> <p>12. And I think part of my reasoning for maybe delaying it was sort of 'Oh but, I first need to do all the practicals before I can really start writing. Even though I could have used some of the stuff from the practicals to write a paragraph here or there.</p> <p>13. I wasn't too concerned ... - and there are other essays and things to worry about ... em, and,</p> <p>14. - but there's still that kind of nagging feeling of, you</p>	<p>6. Interviewer.</p> <p>7. E has quite a long time to do the essay – about 3 weeks.</p> <p>8. Interviewer.</p> <p>9. E has some experience of finding it difficult to write about herself. She feels it is not easy, looking at who she is.</p> <p>10. Especially if the things she discovers are not always things she likes.</p> <p>11. E looked forward to the exercise.</p> <p>12. E delays starting, telling herself she first needs to do the practical work – though she knew this is not strictly true.</p> <p>13. At this stage E is not overly concerned – she has other things to worry about.</p> <p>14. There is however a</p>
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<p>know, I, I could start doing this now, you know, and,</p>	<p>nagging feeling she could start this work.</p>
<p>15. OK – I'll go and watch a movie. (laughs)</p>	<p>15. Instead E decides to go to a movie.</p>
<p>16. What sort of stuff did you do instead of getting on with the essay?</p>	<p>16. Interviewer.</p>
<p>17. Em, probably, a lot of time, just ... hanging out with friends.</p>	<p>17. Instead of working on the essay, E spends time socialising with friends.</p>
<p>18. Um, and it always feels somehow like that was justification because you're having human interaction, you're ... I don't know, just developing friendships, developing relationships. So, it's not, just sitting twiddling your thumbs.</p>	<p>18. E reassures herself that this is justifiable and not a waste of time.</p>
<p>19. Not a waste of time?</p>	<p>19. Interviewer.</p>
<p>20. Yeah. Well, not a complete waste of time, anyway!</p>	<p>20. E is aware that this view was somewhat self-delusional.</p>
<p>21. Erm, and one of the things, there is this programme ... and a friend and I always make sure, y'know ... we used to go and hang out and watch this programme – it's just half an hour ...</p>	<p>21. E has a standing arrangement for a social meeting with a friend to watch TV.</p>
<p>22. – and, I knew that I'd want to watch that programme, so thought OK, I'll work earlier on in the evening ...</p>	<p>22. E knows she will not miss that meeting, so plans to work earlier in the evening.</p>

<p>23. and erm, there's the foreign Film Fest is also on on a Tuesday night ... em, I think I skipped that movie because y'know I thought I'd be dedicated! - and work because I wanted to see this other programme ...</p> <p>24. – and, don't know what I did but, wasted time ... I didn't go to the movie, and, I didn't do the work – probably napped, for an hour or something.</p> <p>25. Urm, Watched the programme with this girl, um, that would have brought us to about 11 o'clock erm, and then continued to sit there – we call it wabbing ... work avoidance behaviour! ... em ... and there was some very arbitrary programme on that we were busy critiquing,</p> <p>26. - and eventually at about 12 o'clock, she said 'No, you have to go and do this essay now, go and work'</p> <p>27. - and I went to my room and had – it's the first time I've ever actually had this ... where I ... I actually didn't want to start ... until I was really under pressure.</p> <p>28. Purposefully putting myself under pressure, which I haven't done before and, I haven't consciously thought of before, anyway.</p> <p>29. It was a kind of, well, if I start it at half past 2 it will be a lot more pressurised than it is now,</p>	<p>23. There is another potential distraction which E decides to avoid, thinking she will work.</p> <p>24. E doesn't work. She naps.</p> <p>25. E watches TV with her friend as arranged, then stays with her – avoiding work.</p> <p>26. At 12 midnight E's friend tells her to go and do the essay.</p> <p>27. E returns to her room and for the first time has a feeling that she does not want to start work until she is really under pressure to do so.</p> <p>28. E deliberately puts herself under pressure.</p> <p>29. E feels that the longer she leaves starting the work, the greater the necessity to commence will be.</p>
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<p>30. – and erm, one of my other friends who was up – she'd been working on things – she just came to pop in, you know, she was taking a break, and, erm, remarked that I was feeling quite jittery ... and it's almost like I was getting an adrenaline rush from, from this idea of ... I'm going to put it off and I'm going to put it off.</p> <p>31. And I had my – I have a laptop in my room, so, you know, my computer was there and set up and it said, you know 'Psych Essay' – with nothing underneath it! Em ...</p> <p>32. – and I think I eventually started scribbling some notes at about half past 2 ... just an idea of the layout, sort of headings that I wanted.</p> <p>33. But until half past 2? ... Were friends still calling in?</p> <p>34. Well, I sat chatting with her until about 2 o'clock, erm, and I did something like – I remember writing a thing on the side that I am procrastinating and why am I doing this, kind of thing. It was just a fiddling around thing on the computer.</p> <p>35. And have to start the essay now, y'know, it's half past 2.</p> <p>36. Had you set yourself a time limit that when 2:30 arrives, that's when I'll start?</p> <p>37. It was, but it was a sort of a ... that's as far as I can push it with, feeling OK em. If it goes after half past 2, you have to say 20 to 3 – and that was just too late to start an essay ... em, so, it was sort of, y'know I should start now, I should start now, but in the back of my mind,</p>	<p>30. A friend who was still up comments that E seems quite jittery – as if E is getting an adrenaline rush from not starting the work.</p> <p>31. E has everything prepared to begin.</p> <p>32. E writes down some layout suggestions and headings at about 2:30 am.</p> <p>33. Interviewer.</p> <p>34. E talks to her friend until 2 am. She is aware she is procrastinating but doesn't know why.</p> <p>35. It is 2-30 am and E knows she has to start.</p> <p>36. Interviewer.</p> <p>37. E feels that 2:30 is as late as she can leave starting on the essay.</p>
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<p>half past 2 is OK.</p> <p>38. Also the thing is that at that point I was thinking OK I'm going to do an all-nighter, I was going to work on this thing, I'm going to work from half-two until the thing is finished. Um ... which I didn't do! (Laughs) em ... - I worked on it for an hour!</p> <p>39. And reasonably, how long would you have expected to take to complete something like that. ... How long was the essay?</p> <p>40. Um it was supposed to be about 2000 words. Em. Word count is something I don't really concern myself about, terribly. Um. I generally write something until I feel I've more or less said what I have to say. Which usually means that I'm <u>way</u> under the count! ... I think I've only ever made word count about once!</p> <p>41. Em ... em ... for this one I wrote 1500. Which, was quite good for me. Em. My essays have generally been very short.</p> <p>42. The problem is perhaps that I don't cover enough ... points. Em ... but the points that I do make are fairly solid.</p> <p>43. So, in all I don't get outstanding marks because it's not y'know, if I have a 1200 word essay – I once wrote about 700 words, which, isn't really ideal, em, but I get, I get average marks for it, I think.</p> <p>44. When you say 'average marks' – what did you get for that?</p>	<p>38. E plans to work all night until the essay is finished but only works for an hour.</p> <p>39. Interviewer.</p> <p>40. The essay is supposed to be 2,000 words long. E doesn't concern herself with word count. She writes until she has said enough – and is usually short on word count.</p> <p>41. E wrote 1500 words – which was more than usual.</p> <p>42. E covers points quite adequately – but does not cover enough points.</p> <p>43. E gets average marks even though the quantity of work she does is not as requested.</p> <p>44. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>45. For that one I got ... 68. So ... it's OK.</p> <p>46. Sorry, I interrupted you! We were at 2:30 and you said that you actually did start? And how successful was the hour's worth of work?</p> <p>47. Em ... it was fairly successful. Well, in terms of well, I knew where I was going with the essay. Em. I also generally don't plan essays. Y'know, this was a bit different. Em. Actually having sat down and planned it: said, right, these are my headings, these are what I'm going to be saying under my headings. Em. This is where I could use a quote, em, or a quote would be necessary – just to substantiate the statement ... but not having found the quote, (laughs) just saying, this is where it would go.</p> <p>48. So at 2:30 you start and make the plan. And then you started to ... fulfil the plan?</p> <p>49. Ja. Well. The plan ... my idea of planning is, em, these are my headings, and, this is what I'm going to say under my headings. If I'm going to say this, it's probably a good idea to have a quote because this is just my opinion so I will need some substantiation em... but that, that was basically it.</p> <p>50. At half past 3 I decided no, I'm tired – I'm going to sleep for an hour – I'll get up at half past 4. em.</p> <p>51. And set my cell phone and my like, alarm clock, em,</p>	<p>45. The mark E receives is 68 which is average and OK.</p> <p>46. Interviewer</p> <p>47. E doesn't normally plan essays, but this one does. She plans to insert quotes to substantiate her viewpoint, but has not yet found them.</p> <p>48. Interviewer.</p> <p>49. E makes the plan of her essay.</p> <p>50. After 1 hour, E is tired and will postpone working on the essay for 1 hour and sleep.</p> <p>51. E sets her alarm but then</p>
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<p>in order to do this. And I have a snooze button on my cell phone. Kept putting it on snooze ... was, eventually OK, the latest I can leave it is 5 – have to get up at 5 o'clock. Em ... and then fell asleep until ... 6.</p> <p>52. Woke up at six in an absolute panic, because, I was just like, how in the world am I ... 'cos I hadn't typed anything at this stage ...</p> <p>53. And when was it due?</p> <p>54. 9 o'clock.</p> <p>55. Yea ... very very panicked. I did not at all mean to leave it until 6. Em. 5 o'clock I could still have lived with ... but, but not 6. Em. Started typing in a frenzy, em, had my friend come in who had been chatting with me the night before em .. it was like 'Dear God, I only woke up at 6! (laughs) Aaargh!</p> <p>56. – so ... carried on typing like a mad thing ... em ... tried to incorporate quotes and do my referencing while I'm doing this ... had ... then decided I needed to sit and do my bibliography properly and completely. Ended up having things in my bibliography which I didn't have in my essay – and then trying to delete them – and there was a thing that there were problems with the layout but it was ... 20 to 9 and it was like, I have to get to the labs now, because I need to print this thing out. Em. Threw on clothes, ... half! (laughs) em ... ran part of the way to (printing) labs. Walked in a panic for the rest of the way ... these people were looking at me strangely! (laughs) Em ... got to the labs, em, tried to fix up the layouts,</p>	<p>postpones starting again by pressing the snooze button.</p> <p>52. E wakes at 6 in a panic. She doesn't know how she is going to finish in time.</p> <p>53. Interviewer.</p> <p>54. The essay is due at 9:00 am.</p> <p>55. T is now very anxious and starts work immediately.</p> <p>56. E continues to work quickly but not thoroughly on the essay. Eventually it is finished to a stage that E is satisfied with it – though she knows it is not as good a job as she could have done.</p>
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<p>saved – but saved it in such a way that the changes ... didn't get changed ... em ... printers weren't working! Erm ... met up with another guy in my practical who was also trying to print and it wasn't working, so we went down to Guthrie labs – which is quite a bit away, so</p> <p>57. Probably, by now, about 5 to 9.</p> <p>58. And how strict is the 9 o'clock deadline?</p> <p>59. The department says it's quite strict. Like ... there's a thing that says – and we've been told it – if it's 5 minutes late ... tough luck. And I had handed in an essay in late, last year ... em .. it was due the Friday, I handed it in the Monday and had a 10% deduction. So I thought OK I'm going to get a 5% deduction That's what it is a day ... I can deal with that ... but, y'know, I didn't want that at all. Erm, and (laughs) yeah, consequently discovered that it was a 20% deduction – but this was only a few days later ...</p> <p>60. erm, so, at Guthrie we had trouble logging in because, erm, what I do is, I don't use flash stick, I e-mail the thing to myself. So I have to first go into my e-mail account, then get it, and then print it out and this process was taking quite a while. This guy was kind of waiting with me – he was very chilled about the whole situation – I was freaking out about the 9 o'clock thing.</p> <p>61. Was his essay the same as yours, due at the same time?</p> <p>62. Yes – we're in the same tutorial. But I was quite</p>	<p>57. The deadline is now very close.</p> <p>58. Interviewer.</p> <p>59. E believes the deadline for handing work in is strict. E assesses the penalty for handing the work in late.</p> <p>60. There are practical difficulties associated with completing the work which need to be overcome. E becomes very anxious.</p> <p>61. Interviewer.</p> <p>62. E hands the work in.</p>
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<p>panicked. Just printed it out with the things that were wrong ... missioned down to hand the thing in.</p> <p>63. Eventually handed it in at 10 past 9. Em ... and (frustrated sigh) ... was just very unimpressed that, y'know, this had now happened and thinking OK I'm going to get a deduction</p> <p>64. And I didn't want a deduction – like, I wanted to do well in this essay ... em ... and then also realising that I'd only written 1500 words and would be told, look, it needs to be 2000 by our tutor.</p> <p>65. She wants it to be a certain length, she wants certain references, and ... ja ... just ... I wasn't very happy with the quality.</p> <p>66. Like, I felt I could have done much better than what I had. Erm. Ja .. and then ... a day or two later found that it said that if you hand it in between just after 9 and half past 3 it's a 20% deduction. And after half past 3 you get zero.</p> <p>67. Em .. so I was freaking out! Very much about this essay, thinking what mark I need to get to pass ... thinking I wasn't going to cut it because it wasn't the quality of work I wanted it to be.</p> <p>68. Erm. And then when they did give us the essays back I was – not expecting! – the greatest thing on earth,</p>	<p>63. The deadline is not met and E is cross that last-minute difficulties outside of her control have conspired to make it that she will not get as good a mark as she should.</p> <p>64. E wanted to do this work well but is concerned she has not.</p> <p>65. E is not happy she will not have met her tutor authority-other's requirements for the task.</p> <p>66. E feels she could have done better.</p> <p>67. E was very concerned and didn't think the essay was of sufficient quality.</p> <p>68. When the work is returned, she has not been</p>
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<p>and erm, fortunately they hadn't taken off a deduction. Erm ... it seems they gave us 10 minutes grace in that regard.</p>	<p>penalised for not meeting the deadline.</p>
<p>69. So you were a bit lucky there?</p>	<p>69. Interviewer.</p>
<p>70. Very! And incredibly relieved!. (laughs)</p>	<p>70. E feels very lucky about that.</p>
<p>71. What did you get for it?</p>	<p>71. Interviewer.</p>
<p>72. 72 ... which ... which I was happy with, considering ... well, just generally OK.</p>	<p>72. E got 72% for the work.</p>
<p>73. Quite a good mark?</p>	<p>73. Interviewer.</p>
<p>74. Mm. But. Still felt ... I could have done better ... em ... had I taken the extra time. There was a lot more that I could have written, I could have incorporated better, um, evidence from other authors to substantiate what I was saying. Um. And my layout could have just been nicer!</p>	<p>74. E could have done better if she had taken more time.</p>
<p>75. It bothered me that things were a bit haphazard. I like things to be quite ... ordered.</p>	<p>75. E likes things to be well ordered.</p>
<p>76. Ordered?</p>	<p>76. Interviewer.</p>
<p>77. Mmm. (silence)</p>	<p>77. Yes.</p>
<p>78. Is there a particular kind of thing that you find particularly difficult to do?</p>	<p>78. Interviewer.</p>
<p>79. Erm ... (pause) ... perhaps ... perhaps my linguistics essays. Erm. But that's I think marginally because I</p>	<p>79. E does not complete linguistics essays on time</p>

<p>haven't done ... I tend not to do readings for things. And, with, a couple of things I can wing it, having not done the readings. Erm. But with something like linguistics you really can't. You need to have read the stuff. Um. Need to have gone to lectures. So, you know, in order to start stuff like that it's quite a mission - it's this idea of ...</p> <p>80. – dear Lord, all these readings I need to do and, just, even before I can vaguely attempt or have an idea of what this essay is actually about, em, so those are quite daunting.</p> <p>81. ... Why ... is it important for you to do things well?</p> <p>82. ... (pause) ... em ... I suppose because there's a certain standard that I feel I require of myself, like, you know, need to live up to that standard. And erm, although ... ja ... (laughs) the interesting thing is, like I was talking to (laughs) ja ... I chat a lot friends (laughs) em – but another friend of mine who, who really also leaves things to the last minute, but she's very bright and gets away with it. You know, constantly. One of my favourite stories about her is how she came in one day, so upset because she'd done a politics essay and had rushed it off and how she knew she could have done better if she'd just had more time ... and got 96% for it! (laughs). She was saying she's always put things off em –</p> <p>83. – and I know that there was a time when I – granted it was when I was 10! (laughs) – but when I didn't even think of something ... 'Oh I have to do work now, - I just did it. You do it, and then ... you play ... or whatever else. It wasn't a conscious thing. Erm. ...</p>	<p>because she does not do the readings necessary.</p> <p>80. E finds the prospect of doing linguistics readings daunting.</p> <p>81. Interviewer.</p> <p>82. E has a standard for herself that she needs to live up to.</p> <p>83. E has not always procrastinated. She remembers when she was 10 she used to work and then play.</p>
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<p>84. So is what you're saying that when you were 10 years old, you didn't have a problem with procrastination?</p>	<p>84. Interviewer.</p>
<p>85. No. Em. I think it really started when I was ... 12?</p>	<p>85. E's trouble with procrastination started when she was 12.</p>
<p>86. I don't really – this sounds so corny! ... but I did really well in academics when I was 10, ... top of the grade ... just generally well, good marks, and when I was 11 I spent a year in the states and then came back to South Africa when I was 12. And I just ... really hated the school system here ... I didn't like it at all and it would just ... (pause) ...</p>	<p>86. E did well academically when she was 10. At 11 she went to the US for a year. She returned to South Africa when she was 12 and did not like the school system.</p>
<p>87. Why not?</p>	<p>87. Interviewer.</p>
<p>88. It felt so ... suppressive. Erm .. y'know, things were different in the states. It felt like there was a lot more ... freedom and I felt a lot more ... almost ... like an ... adult ... almost, I suppose you could say. Whereas, coming back here we would do things like colouring in – I did so much colouring in in primary school, it was insane. And this to me was just the greatest waste of time ... I couldn't understand why are we wasting time on this. Um. Mathematics, I was about two and a half years behind in maths (in the States) ... really had to work at em, getting up to scratch.</p>	<p>88. The SA school system is quite restrictive. E felt more adult than the educational system was treating her. E felt she was wasting time.</p>
<p>89. And did you find that easy to do?</p>	<p>89. Interviewer.</p>
<p>90. It took me quite a while ... but I did get there ... and then I was, y'know, up to the standard that the other</p>	<p>90. In the US E had to work hard to reach the standard</p>

<p>children were at.</p> <p>91. Was it difficult for you to put that effort in or did you procrastinate about that?</p> <p>92. No.</p> <p>93. So at that age, you're still not a procrastinator?</p> <p>94. Ja. And then from 12 - I do my work, but sometimes I have to rush it in the morning. But it would get done before class. Erm, you know, I wouldn't have to say to the teacher 'My dog ate my homework' – it was always there. Um. Ja. Standard 5 – y'know 13 – I would occasionally not do something, or do it late but ... I had a reputation for being very studious – so the teachers would kind of turn a blind eye – erm – for the occasions where I wasn't, quite so studious. Erm.</p> <p>95. And then it just got progressively worse and worse and worse erm like, standard 6 and 7 – you can still study things the day before, and, do well erm</p> <p>96. – and then from 8 onwards it gets much harder to do that erm ... and I don't know, I became more and more academically apathetic – just didn't care that much.</p> <p>97. Did you find there were greater pressures on you – a greater requirement for you to do well?</p>	<p>the US children were already at.</p> <p>91. Interviewer.</p> <p>92. E did not procrastinate about that effort.</p> <p>93. Interviewer.</p> <p>94. From 12 years old onwards, E noticed a reluctance to begin work – but in the main she would manage. Her reputation as being studious carried her through and she would 'get away with' this behaviour.</p> <p>95. But things got worse. E found that this way of working was not as effective as school became more difficult.</p> <p>96. From Std 8 onwards E became more apathetic and didn't care much about her school work.</p> <p>97. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>98. Em ... I'm not sure ... I think that the 2 things that really come to mind of why I do procrastinate ... erm ... one is sheer laziness – um – I sometimes just don't feel like doing it – and so, just don't want to and put it off.</p> <p>99. And the other is ... kind of ... um ... if I leave something to the last minute ... there is always this thing of if I've botched it up – it's because I've left it to the last minute. I don't have to face this idea that I've done something really full time – and if I do badly, it's because I suck –</p> <p>100. erm at the same time it's also not a case of, if I do really well, em, I then kind of have to maintain this level . em ... I ... I'd feel like I need to maintain those marks, to maintain that standard. Em ... so it's kind of a fear of both. (laughs)</p> <p>101. ... So you're saying that if you do something at the last minute, and it's not very good, then ... you don't have to take full responsibility for it?</p> <p>102. Yes.</p> <p>103. Who is it that you are 'not having to take responsibility for it' - for their benefit?</p> <p>104. Myself, I suppose.</p> <p>105. Because ... I don't really have too much pressure</p>	<p>98. There are 2 reasons E puts work off. The first is that she is lazy.</p> <p>99. The second is that if she leaves something to the last minute she will not have to face the fact that it will be a proper reflection of her ability if it is done poorly</p> <p>100. E also feels that if she were to do very well, she would have to maintain that high standard – so procrastination saves her from both of those fears.</p> <p>101. Interviewer.</p> <p>102. Work done at the last minute does not have to have full responsibility taken for it.</p> <p>103. Interviewer.</p> <p>104. E benefits from this way of behaving.</p> <p>105. E does not have</p>
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<p>from my parents in that regard ... - because they don't know what marks I'm getting! (laughs) ... Until ... my exam marks come through.</p>	<p>pressure from her parents – but they will not know how well she is doing until her exam results come through.</p>
<p>106. And if they did know?</p>	<p>106. Interviewer.</p>
<p>107. Em ... I don't ... not terribly much. Erm, providing I pass, they're ... they're quite relieved (laughs) ... they want me to do well, but I think they, at this point, just want me to pass. Like, this is my greatest vice ...</p>	<p>107. E's parents would like her to do well but will be relieved if she passes.</p>
<p>108. So they know that procrastination is your greatest vice?</p>	<p>108. Interviewer.</p>
<p>109. Yeah. Um.</p>	<p>109. E's parents know that procrastination is a problem for her.</p>
<p>110. So ... they think it's a success if you manage to overcome procrastination sufficiently to get through?</p>	<p>110. Interviewer.</p>
<p>111. Yes. Erm, – I think they, they'd almost, they'd be fine if I put a lot of effort in to something and like had genuinely, genuinely worked on it. Erm ... and ... if I'd failed, they'd be OK with that, because I had put in the effort.</p>	<p>111. E's parents will be OK with the idea of E trying her best, but failing.</p>
<p>112. They ... really don't like the fact that I leave things like this ... they find it incredibly frustrating.</p>	<p>112. E's parents are frustrated that E leaves things.</p>
<p>113. And I think it's possibly part of the reason I came to Rhodes ... because I live in Cape Town ... so, they can't</p>	<p>113. One of the reasons E came away from her local</p>

<p>see what I'm doing up here! Erm ... ja ...</p> <p>114. ... So ... you are aware of some 'requirement' from your parents – and the requirement is – that they understand if you don't pass when you've put the time in – but what they wouldn't like is if you didn't put the time in and you didn't pass?</p> <p>115. Ja .. it's not even 'don't pass' – they just ... they want me to do things earlier ... it, it puts a lot of stress on ... on everyone, if I don't. ... like ... I had an Afrikaans essay due and I was struggling tremendously with something, and couldn't figure out, with something, and then ended up phoning my Mom at about 2 in the morning! Like Aaargh! (laughs) Help me! kind of thing!</p> <p>116. Why would she have been the person to talk to about that?</p> <p>117. Em ... because she is Afrikaans – well both my parents are, erm so, y'know, I could ask her ... quick fix – whereas if I'd had longer I could have figured it out, but because it was em getting, y'know, to crunch time, I was feeling panicked, and, and wanted a very quick fix ... em ... yeah.</p> <p>118. Let's talk more about doing stuff and what people think of you if you don't do it well. You say that you're not so much worried about other people, it's more what you think of yourself?</p> <p>119. Yea ... people don't really know my marks ... em</p>	<p>university is so her parents are not able to keep check on what she was doing.</p> <p>114. Interviewer.</p> <p>115. E's parents have a requirement that she perform better in that she begin work earlier.</p> <p>116. Interviewer.</p> <p>117. E is able to find a quick fix when she needs it.</p> <p>118. Interviewer.</p> <p>119. E is scared of having</p>
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<p>... so they can't really judge me marks-wise. Em ... so that's ... that's really something about myself, like, I ... think I'm scared of having to face the idea that I'm, I don't know, just really, academically inept at something.</p>	<p>to face the idea that she might be academically inept.</p>
<p>120. Em ... but again, at the same time, I'm also scared of doing ... really ... well – because that would be a lot of pressure, then – there'd be pressure to continue at that level, because ... I don't know, it's like you've set a new standard for yourself, and now – this is the standard – if, if you're below that, you're letting yourself down. And see, you know, ... you need to maintain.</p>	<p>120. Success is a double-edged sword because if E does well, she will feel pressure to maintain that high level. If she does not, she will be letting herself down.</p>
<p>121. So ... it must be a little bit difficult to maintain the medium between those two: to not just pass, yet not to do brilliantly – to do sufficiently well, to a level that doesn't draw undue attention to yourself?</p>	<p>121. Interviewer.</p>
<p>122. Not so much that it's not drawing attention to yourself ... but ... kind of like, that's OK – it's OK if I'm, ... providing I'm passing, it's OK, like, I can deal with that ... erm .. it's if I fail it's an issue! (laughs) That's not cool!</p>	<p>122. It is not that E wishes to keep attention away from herself, it is simply that it is bad to fail.</p>
<p>123. Tell me what the issue is ... if you fail?</p>	<p>123. Interviewer.</p>
<p>124. If I fail, then really like, it's ... I don't know, then, kind of, it's, ... wow, you've really left yourself in a real down, because, you've put it off, and the reason you've failed is, is not because you can't necessarily do it, it's ... I'm thinking of a test I wrote now ... erm ... it's because I haven't put in the work in order to try and pass.</p>	<p>124. If E fails it means letting herself down because she hasn't tried.</p>
<p>125. But what I'm hearing you say is that ... you say that it's for your own standards that you're doing stuff –</p>	<p>125. Interviewer.</p>

<p>but that as soon as there is any danger of failure – or any danger of complete success – all of a sudden you are more worried about other people ... than yourself? - How other people are going to react if you fail, and what they're going to think of you - and how you're going to have to continue to make those people happy by continuing to do well, if you do well in the first place?</p> <p>126. With failing – it's my parents. Erm ... I'm at university – it costs a lot to come here. If I fail ... that's a big issue. It's their money down the drain. Because I've just been loafing around. So ... that is definitely, from my parents' side of things. Failing is not cool! (laughs) Erm ... again, I don't know.</p> <p>127. The ... doing well thing ... (pause) I ... I'd say that's a personal thing. Because again, like, only I know what my marks are - and my lecturer, and – my lecturer doesn't exactly know who I am. That ... that is a personal thing. Like, erm, it's a standard I need to live up to, that I'm setting for myself. It's a new bar ... yeah. Erm. The way if you're doing anything, if you're doing a sport and you're a runner, ... if you're running at a certain time and you hit a personal best ... there is always that personal best – and you want to try and now be around that personal best ... or to try and better that personal best, ... to improve.</p> <p>128. Erm... it's the same kind of value with academics. Erm ... if you attain a certain mark there is this idea – you've done this, now, it would be good if you had to try and get the same or improve on that, or ... just be around that general mark. You're setting a new bar.</p>	<p>126. For various reasons it is important to E, for her parents' sake, not to fail.</p> <p>127. E becomes anxious about doing well because she will have to continue to live up to that standard.</p> <p>128. E feels this way about her academic work.</p>
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<p>129. And ... is this about what's involved in whether you can continue to achieve at that same level? About the amount of work you might have to put into it?</p>	<p>129. Interviewer.</p>
<p>130. I think it's ... that! (laughs) I think it's that ... you're going to have to put in a lot of work to continue doing that There I think the lazy aspect comes in ... quite a bit of ... (pretend-groans) I don't want to!!</p>	<p>130. E is concerned at the amount of work it would take to maintain a high standard.</p>
<p>131. I understand what you mean about the laziness aspect – but what is that laziness? Is it just about having to do more work ... or is there an element that you are 'risking' yourself, by putting yourself in a ... more vulnerable position? That by doing a certain amount of work which allows you to keep between 'fail' and 'do well' ... there is a fairly wide safety margin in which you are not vulnerable? But as soon as you move to the one side or the other, (gesticulates with hands) your vulnerability increases, your anxiety increases – and you don't like that?</p>	<p>131. Interviewer.</p>
<p>132. (Nods) ... yeah ... I guess. Maybe that is a bit of the case. I think generally when you do well in anything, there ...(pause) ... I suppose there is that kind of societal pressure to maintain the same role ...</p>	<p>132. E thinks there is pressure from society to continue to do well.</p>
<p>133. And you attract inspection? You attract attention?</p>	<p>133. Interviewer.</p>
<p>134. Yeah, I suppose ...</p>	<p>134. E attracts attention to them self that requires they continue to do well.</p>
<p>135. So ... are you organising your academic life so as not to attract attention?</p>	<p>135. Interviewer.</p>

<p>136. I don't know. Erm. I think it's ... I think it's ... perhapsum, academically, both ... well, I think there is always that balance of, of , being afraid to do well, and ... being afraid to find out I can't. In some things I think I have an aptitude, well, ... and in others ... I'm not sure – and I'm scared of finding out ... - that I can't. (apologetic small laugh). (regains composure) So there's also that.</p> <p>137. And if you find out you can't ... who will be bothered? (silence) Are you saying it's purely yourself that will be bothered?</p> <p>138. Yeah ... erm ... no, ... I suppose it would be more than myself ... but ... also ... er ... like I think I've mainly felt ... just ... that, like, ... my Dad has 2 PhDs ... and there's always – it's just been like ... I want a PhD ... and I do want one ... but because he has 2, it's just like, since I've been little it's just been this idea that that's what I want to do ... and then ... I don't know ... if I really work hard and then find that I can't do it ... I don't know ...I still want to be up at that kind of level, but I don't know ...</p> <p>139. How do you think your parents would feel if you ... and they ... discover that you're not up at that level?</p> <p>140. (silence) ... I really ... I think that providing they know I've worked hard, erm, they'll be OK ... with ... whatever happens. Like, they, ... I don't know ... I think there is this thing of – so long as you've done the work, you've tried your best, that's all that can be expected of you ...</p> <p>141. And ... are you doing your best?</p>	<p>136. E fears doing well and fears discovering that she is not capable of doing well.</p> <p>137. Interviewer.</p> <p>138. E has anxiety that she may not be capable of living up to the expectation that exists in her family for her academically.</p> <p>139. Interviewer.</p> <p>140. E thinks that providing she has worked hard her parents would accept that she would not achieve at a high level.</p> <p>141. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>142. No! (laughs)</p> <p>143. Yeah, perhaps. And I think perhaps something I'm also inclined to do is, sort of, prod the boundary of where I think I could be at and, once I have an idea, to kind of retreat again.</p> <p>144. Which boundary do you mean ... the doing well boundary, or the failing boundary?</p> <p>145. The doing well boundary ... but then again, I've also, ... I've kind of seen how ... little one can actually do and get away with (laughs) and still pass.</p> <p>146. Erm ... but, doing something like, erm, ... I used to play chess a lot. Erm ... did well at it ... and was told if I really work at it I could go really far with it. Very nice idea but, you know, the moment I started doing really well, I kind of stopped playing ... didn't want that pressure any more.</p> <p>147. Where was that pressure from?</p> <p>148. ... In that case ... I suppose ... myself – and people's expectations and ...</p> <p>149. Which people?</p> <p>150. Em ... people in the chess-playing community.</p>	<p>142. E is however not working hard.</p> <p>143. E occasionally tests the boundaries of her ability to achieve and then retreats again.</p> <p>144. Interviewer.</p> <p>145. E occasionally tests the 'doing well' boundary – but has also tested the fact that she can do little and still pass.</p> <p>146. E finds that in other areas of her life that she may perform well – but as soon as this is recognised and there is an expectation of her to do even better, she will retreat as she doesn't want pressure.</p> <p>147. Interviewer.</p> <p>148. There was pressure from herself and others.</p> <p>149. Interviewer.</p> <p>150. The pressure comes</p>
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<p>151. ... Did you do much studying ... memorisation of openings, things like that?</p> <p>152. Em ... I had coaching, which was once a week. He'd give me homework and I'd like, do it half an hour before he came! Or I'd just not do it! I kind of played from tournament to tournament, because ... like, I worked a little bit from the initial point, ... but then discovered that I could ... get away with not doing it – and do well!</p> <p>153. How well was 'well'.</p> <p>154. Well, there were so few women and the women would be with the men and then separated and I'd usually be ... top woman, or second – and do well with the men as well, like, y'know, be in the top 20 in tournaments I was playing in.</p> <p>155. Why is it that men are better at this than women?</p> <p>156. I don't know. There's a lot of speculation about that. Erm. The one idea is that women are supposed to be better at language and men are better at maths, and chess falls under the, sort of, chess category. Em. The other thing I'm inclined to think is that ... guys are a lot more aggressive in their stance ... y'know a guy will come along and he will say 'I'm going to beat you now, I'm going to kick your ass' kind of thing! Whereas the female approach is more modest, more demure. They</p>	<p>from those who were knowledgeable authority figures in the environment.</p> <p>151. Interviewer.</p> <p>152. T has the opportunity to make more of her talent but does not take that opportunity up. Instead she discovers she can do well without trying, and this is less threatening.</p> <p>153. Interviewer.</p> <p>154. E maintains a high standard with out trying.</p> <p>155. Interviewer.</p> <p>156. T tells the difference as she sees it between male and female attitudes to chess playing. She feels men are more aggressive and intimidatory.</p>
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<p>just come and go and play the game.</p> <p>157. And does it intimidate you when somebody says 'I'm going to kick your ass'?</p> <p>158. No! (laughs) Not really. Because, I've had to deal with it a lot, so, a lot of the time, the people that are actually saying that ... can't! (laughs) So, em, I just kind of laugh it off!</p> <p>159. (laughs along) ... what I was wondering if you were going to say was that men are more likely have a 'kick your ass' kind of attitude – and that chess is quite an ass-kicking kind of game ... the whole idea of the game is to kick somebody's ass. If they're in that kind of frame of mind already, then, does that assist them to do better?</p> <p>160. I think ... y'know ... I think it's a confidence thing. I think they feel they can do it – they're going to go in there, they're going to win ... women are more ... realistic about things, perhaps. They know ... their capabilities, within the game. They like, know this person's worse than me, y'know, chances are likely that I'm going to beat them but I'm still going to assess my position carefully. Or they know, this person really is stronger than I am, so ... yeah. (silence)</p> <p>161. ... Do you think there is – the possibility – that confidence can sometimes bridge the gap between the reality of the standard that you normally play at, and the standard that you <u>can</u> play at, on certain occasions?</p> <p>162. Yes. I think confidence really can take you from ... well, up to a point. But I think it does improve, specifically</p>	<p>157. Interviewer.</p> <p>158. Male players do not intimidate her.</p> <p>159. Interviewer.</p> <p>160. E feels that men's success is down to confidence.</p> <p>161. Interviewer.</p> <p>162. E thinks that confidence in a situation can</p>
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<p>in chess, it really does improve... em ... like if you're feeling worried about things, it affects the way that you're strategising ... you'll be less likely to take a chance on something that is likely to pan out, because, there is this slight possibility that maybe it isn't ... you play a lot more defensively. Whereas if you feel confident, in your ability to ... carry this through – to go for it ... - you know, you're likely to be successful. ...</p>	<p>maximise play potential.</p>
<p>163. ... Do you still practise? ... Do you still study?</p>	<p>163. Interviewer.</p>
<p>164. No. Erm.</p>	<p>164. E does not practice in order to play her best.</p>
<p>165. So you're kind of busking on the stuff you know from the past?</p>	<p>165. Interviewer.</p>
<p>166. So ... That confidence ... that you have an understanding of, in chess – if you could apply that to your academic life – would you be less likely to procrastinate?</p>	<p>166. Interviewer.</p>
<p>167. (smiles) ... probably!</p>	<p>167. Similar confidence applied in her academic life would make E less likely to procrastinate.</p>
<p>168. So ... is procrastination for you ... a question of confidence?</p>	<p>168. Interviewer.</p>
<p>169. (smiles widely) ... I guess so! Ja .. ja ... it ... it prob- ... actually, now you put it that way! (laughs) Erm. I suppose it is. Just in terms of y'know, being confident in myself, one way or the other ... whether you're</p>	<p>169. Procrastination for E is a question of self-confidence.</p>

<p>necessarily good academically, or ... bad academically – you should still feel OK with yourself either way, but, like, this idea that if I don't maybe, ... I don't know.</p>	
<p>170. You have said in the past about not being concerned about other people, I still get the feeling that maybe ... you are .. and that confidence is something that one has in the face of others, in the face of competition.</p>	<p>170. Interviewer.</p>
<p>171. It's also a thing with yourself though. I really think you can't separate the two. I think they come hand in hand.</p>	<p>171. That confidence is in relation to herself as well as others.</p>
<p>172. When you're handing work in to others to mark – do others judge you by the work you do?</p>	<p>172. Interviewer.</p>
<p>173. Yes, I suppose so.</p>	<p>173. E is judged by the work she hands in to be marked.</p>
<p>174. And is there anxiety about what their judgement of you will be? Of the work that you've handed in?</p>	<p>174. Interviewer.</p>
<p>175. (long pause) I guess – in the regard ... I don't know, I haven't thought of it like that. Em</p>	<p>175. E has not considered the judgement of others of the work she has handed in to be marked.</p>
<p>176. Is the work that you do and the person that you are, the same thing?</p>	<p>176. Interviewer.</p>
<p>177. I suppose one ... kind of uses ... well, perhaps ... the work you're handing in to kind of ... make an</p>	<p>177. For E, the work she hands in is an assessment of</p>

<p>assessment of yourself. Erm. You know, whether it's good work or bad work or, what you're OK with doing ... erm. Like if you're OK with handing in bad work, that's saying something about yourself, that says you don't have particularly high standards – erm ... if you feel you need to hand in particularly good work, you're going to do your best, that says you have very high standards for yourself, that's a good thing ... erm ... if you do things at the last minute, - you don't have to make that distinction one way or the other ... so ... ja.</p> <p>178. Does that mean not being able to be held accountable in the same way, if something is done at the last minute?</p> <p>179. Yes.</p> <p>180. Accountable to whom and for what?</p> <p>181. It's yourself and others. It's yourself setting standards for yourself, and it's society in that they're reinforcing it, - that idea of those standards. You do really well at something, people expect you to maintain that. At the same time you expect that, I think you expect that standard from yourself, but, ja, it's being reinforced by other people as well. So maybe you'd want to slack off a bit but, now you can't, because you have this sort of ... aspect ... why are ... I suppose if you're doing really well, and this idea of 'why are you slipping' if you do start slipping. That's wrong.</p> <p>182. You say that you have standards and that society</p>	<p>how she feels about herself – the extent to which she is able to be satisfied with the standard she operates at.</p> <p>178. Interviewer.</p> <p>179. E is not accountable for work she does at the last minute.</p> <p>180. Interviewer.</p> <p>181. Accountable is to one's self and to others. One sets standards for one's self but they are reinforced by society.</p> <p>182. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>reinforces them. Is there any chance that it's the other way round and that society has the standards and you then try and live up to them?</p>	
<p>183. (long pause) I hope not. I hope not, personally. I'm inclined to think that it's something you do set for yourself ... it can be something like ... sexually – erm – society says, you know, this is what we expect – but whether you go above it or below that, you're making that decision. Erm.</p>	<p>183. E has set standards for herself that she is trying to live up to, rather than society having set them.</p>
<p>184. Is that like standards of truthfulness, ... integrity?</p>	<p>184. Interviewer.</p>
<p>185. Yes, things like that.</p>	<p>185. Society sets standards of truthfulness and integrity.</p>
<p>186. So do you think that those standards are set personally, or do you think that society sets them and then you decide where you're going to position yourself in relation to that?</p>	<p>186. Interviewer.</p>
<p>187. ... Perhaps a bit of both? (laughs) (long pause) ja ... perhaps a bit of both.</p>	<p>187. E thinks that the standards that society sets are achieved dialectically.</p>
<p>188. It seems that there are some things you are more likely to procrastinate on, than others.</p>	<p>188. Interviewer.</p>
<p>189. Erm ... yeah, like, the things – I mentioned earlier – that is less of a struggle to do, would be something that doesn't really require too much interaction with the work – like rote learning, like for the Dutch. Erm .. or, erm something like transcription again. Just like listening to a tape. It's an effort and it's schleppy and it's work but you</p>	<p>189. E finds it less of a struggle to commence with tasks that don't require too much understanding such as rote learning, or transcriptions. They require</p>

<p>just, you kind of just going through the motions of doing it. You're not consciously giving too much intellectual thought into what you're doing. Em.</p>	<p>effort but not intellectual thought.</p>
<p>190. That's generally much easier ... to do than something where you sitting and you thinking about an essay and you now have to sit and write this essay and come up with some new thoughts on something or an interesting way of presenting work erm ... that's always, quite a bit ... (laughs)</p>	<p>190. This is easier than writing an essay where she has to come up with thoughts of her own.</p>
<p>191. So, doing a linguistics essay is more difficult than doing Dutch ... but you said that linguistics is more difficult because there's readings to do?</p>	<p>191. Interviewer.</p>
<p>192. Yes.</p>	<p>192. Linguistics is more difficult because there are readings which must be understood.</p>
<p>193. Are you suggesting that might be a question of laziness because of having to do the readings before you do the linguistics essay? Is the linguistics essay a creative essay, or a 'reporting what you've read' essay?</p>	<p>193. Interviewer.</p>
<p>194. Erm ... it depends on what aspect of linguistics you're covering. Some times it is more ... kind of, based on readings that you're busy doing, erm, but sometimes it will sometimes it will be something like, the readings that you're doing will give you the method of how to go about something.</p>	<p>194. This is more than mere laziness.</p>
<p>195. Erm ... we did an essay on conversation analysis erm, you had to a whole host of readings in order to</p>	<p>195. When there is understanding to be done,</p>

<p>transcribe the things accurately - you have things, that you have to say, this is where it's 'overlapping conversation' (T goes into some detail on how conversational analysis is performed.) But you can't do that unless you've done the readings, so ... (laughs) ... Ja ...</p> <p>196. So that involves work?</p> <p>197. Yes.</p> <p>198. Do you read other stuff? Do you read magazines?</p> <p>199. Ja. I read books a lot. Erm. There was a very vivid occasion during exam times last year, a friend of mine actually tried to confiscate my books. Because I'm inclined to sit and read books, rather than do the readings I need to be doing.</p> <p>200. So, what sort of books are they that you do read? Novels?</p> <p>201. Em ... ja. Erm ... all over the show, erm, I like ... I like, like, detective novel type things, erm, because I enjoy something where I can kind of try and figure out what's going on. Like, I like things where there's a bit of strategy going on, or like plot, or something ... and other times I'll read something because I love the way that a certain author writes; their language is just very gripping.</p> <p>202. So what is it about ... those books, that makes them more readable than the stuff you're supposed to be doing?</p>	<p>this makes work difficult to commence.</p> <p>196. Interviewer.</p> <p>197. Readings involve doing work.</p> <p>198. Interviewer.</p> <p>199. E reads light-reading books instead of university books.</p> <p>200. Interviewer.</p> <p>201. E reads a variety of light reading.</p> <p>202. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>203. Erm ... I don't <i>have</i> to be doing them! (laughs). I'm doing them because I want to!</p>	<p>203. The reason E prefers those kinds of books is because she doesn't have to read them.</p>
<p>204. But why do you want to? (no response) ... Why don't you <i>want</i> to read the other stuff?</p>	<p>204. Interviewer.</p>
<p>205. Well ... with some of the things, like we have set-work books for Afrikaans that we need to have read and ... I haven't read them. And part of my reluctance is because it's ... it's not that enjoyable: I have to sit and be very conscious of everything that's going on ... erm ... make notes, or, or just be like Oh, that's a reference to this or that, and this is an allusion to whatever, and erm,</p>	<p>205. There is a different relationship with academic books which have to be read more carefully and analytically than light reading books.</p>
<p>206. – with academic reading like that, the heavy academic readings that we get, erm, I actually ... my eyes tend to start reading things, so erm, I'm going across the page, but I'm not taking in anything that I've read and I have to go back and re-read it and try and understand what, OK, this means that, but ... it's an effort, it's a schlep. (laughs)</p>	<p>206. With academic reading E finds she becomes detached from the content.</p>
<p>207. I guess also again what type of readings you're doing, erm ... I ... no, no – it's, and it's also, it's a case of once I actually sit down and start reading it, it might be OK for a while, or, I'll enjoy it, I'll find it interesting – be like: Oh, that's what the lecturer was on about! (laughs) ... erm ... and you feel good once you've done something ... but, just the idea of it, is so horrible – if I look at my bookshelf and I look at all the readings that I have, and I look at my desk and all my nice books that are sitting there waiting to be read, I'd much rather jump</p>	<p>207. When E sits down and tries to read academic readings, she might enjoy them for a while and feel good about having done something with them. But the prospect is still unattractive.</p>

<p>into bed and read a book from the desk. Erm. There's just something very off-putting about the idea.</p> <p>208. em. I think perhaps part of it ... I ... feel kind of like some of the academic reading is written in such a ... kind of ... (pause) ... dry manner, and it's kind of like they could say something so simply – but they're trying to prep it up and make it sound intellectual and it's ... it's just, it's stupid, it's frustrating – I don't like it – like, erm, some of the stuff I'm either, OK, erm, there's a certain psychology author, erm, you know, I'll, I'll actually read that because I know he writes in a certain manner, erm, he sounds kind of jovial.</p> <p>209. Does it provoke anxiety in you that you that you might not be able to understand it?</p> <p>210. Erm ... yeah, sure. Erm you know sometimes, ... I don't know ...</p> <p>211. Well – the other thing I was just thinking now is with academic reading, erm, I generally only do it if ... if I have to. If, if, erm, you know, there's an essay and I need to have done this reading for the essay, erm, or if it's a test and I can't put it off any more, I – you - ideally you're supposed to do readings before your class or just after your class, or, you know, do at least 2 a week, or do it before your tut(orial) ... I don't do that ...</p> <p>212. Because you want to! (Meaning that it is hoped or assumed that students will want to do the readings.)</p>	<p>208. Academic writing is often dry and pretentious. E did find a writer who was not dry.</p> <p>209. Interviewer.</p> <p>210. E may be anxious that she will not understand the text.</p> <p>211. E does academic readings only if she has to and when they can't be put off any longer.</p> <p>212. It is hoped or assumed that E will want to do readings.</p>
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<p>213. (laughs) You see ... that doesn't even feature! (laughs)</p>	<p>213. But E does not.</p>
<p>214. And ... isn't it interesting that it doesn't? This feeling of wanting to engage with the stuff is not there? I'm trying to find out what there is between you and that work that you don't have this feeling of wanting to engage it? You may wish that you <i>had</i> engaged with it – and you wish that you <i>had</i> done it – but wanting to <i>do</i> it – you don't have that sort of ... positive feeling towards it?</p>	<p>214. Interviewer.</p>
<p>215. Maybe ... erm ... with my subjects ... the only one that maybe comes close is psychology. Erm ... the other 3 I'm just ag, I have these readings that need to be done, and, ag, I have to sit and do this, but I have this essay and, dammitt, I wish I'd done it earlier!</p>	<p>215. E only reads academic prescribed material because she must.</p>
<p>216. There seems to be category of things that you don't get on with. And they seem to be the sort of essays where you are required to reveal your own conclusions. Essays that require you to give your <i>own</i> side of things, to give your <i>own</i> academic viewpoint of things. Does that ... ? Are those ... the worst?</p>	<p>216. Interviewer.</p>
<p>217. Yeah, I think they probably are ... though again interestingly enough, not, not too much with psychology. Erm. But like – my, my Afrikaans essay; erm, and my ling(uistics) essays and my classics essays, it's, it's kind of like, there is, – there is this idea of pressure of having to be able to come up with something new, or, or, just like a fresh approach to something – erm, and, if you don't do it then, what's the point? because you're just saying what everyone else has always said ... So it's slightly wasting your time or, if you're just incapable of</p>	<p>217. E does not enjoy writing essays because of the demand to come up with new ideas. The possibility of not being able to do this provokes anxiety.</p>

<p>doing that – and that... that I find quite, - like, erm, it evokes quite a lot of anxiety ... erm, ... ja. I don't know ... there is something about that not being able to do that that bothers me.</p>	
<p>218. Not being able to ... ?</p>	<p>218. Interviewer.</p>
<p>219. – Come up ... Do something properly, like, come up with something new, or fresh, or different ...</p>	<p>219. Not being able to do something properly or new or fresh or different is to be avoided.</p>
<p>220. That when the person who marks it will be caused to think ... ?</p>	<p>220. Interviewer.</p>
<p>221. ... Well, I don't know. It's just this idea of being ... mediocre. Erm, I know it's, what most of the people will probably do, just .. regurgitate facts, regurgitate whatever you've heard in the lecture. Erm ... It feels like there should be something more ...</p>	<p>221. The idea of being mediocre is to be avoided.</p>
<p>222. So you think that other people are more likely to be able to be satisfied with mediocrity than you? In the main? There are a lot of people who are able to do that?</p>	<p>222. Interviewer.</p>
<p>223. Erm ... I guess. I don't know ... (pause) ... Erm ... kind of like that. I mean ... there's ... there is a reason, you know, kind of, 60% is average ... it's, it's – that's, that's the kind of the mark you generally get when you've – you've done something fairly OK ... you've sort of said what needed to be said. – There's nothing great about it, erm, and, you know, your language has been OK, and, you know, put in the relevant facts but, that's been pretty much it. Like, ... I don't know, ... erm ... but there, there</p>	<p>223. Presenting herself as mediocre is not something E wishes to do.</p>

<p>is, there is a certain ... what I'd call want to be able to do better than that ... a want to have ... this thing that's, better.</p> <p>224. But, again, if you leave something to the last minute, then – you don't have to take responsibility for it. – “I left it to the last minute – if I'd had more time to think about it, I'm sure it would have been really good ... ‘</p> <p>225. So ... this business of procrastinating so you don't have to be accountable for the work ... What's that about?</p> <p>226. Erm. I don't know. But it really is such an easy thing to be able to say .. y'know ... it, it could have been good, or, I could have done better, but ... I don't have to take responsibility for this. It's – it's a real cop-out mechanism ...</p> <p>227. Say? ... to whom?</p> <p>228. I think it's just ... it's like this idea that comes, and floats around. You ... it's not necessarily <i>said</i> – but it's everywhere. Erm. You know, even, if, if you go to something like, physical characteristics, erm, you know, you're not necessarily tall, you should be this weight, this height, and this colour hair – but you kind of, it's around you all the time – in, in media, in movies, everywhere, like, you're bombarded with stimuli of, of – what is ideal. And, it, it kind of, it creeps in to your mind – you measuring yourself against this ... thing. Erm. (pause) But, but it's ... with something like intellect, it's, it's</p>	<p>224. But leaving something until the last moment means you don't have to take responsibility for it.</p> <p>225. Interviewer.</p> <p>226. It is possible to say that it could have been good or better. Because E procrastinates, E doesn't have to take responsibility for the work. E knows this is an excuse.</p> <p>227. Interviewer.</p> <p>228. E is not sure of the source of ideal types but perceives them nevertheless and thinks that she measures herself against them.</p>
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<p>interesting because, there is – on the one hand there is this thing of – you should be really good and you should be really smart and – and that's great ... but, erm, ah, at the same time there's also perhaps this kind of a ... that meets ... I don't know, like, on the one hand it's great because it kind of, it sets you above and it's this ...</p> <p>229. Intellect does?</p> <p>230. Ja – well, something like intellect, erm – well just being <i>really</i> good at something – it sets you apart which is good because – I don't know ... that's cool ... like, it's desirable but, but at the same time it's – it kind of – it isolates you in a sense ... erm ... which ... erm – is not so cool! (laughs)</p> <p>231. ... erm ... I guess so ... Like ... I don't know ... erm. There was a point when I was ... like I say, I, I did really well at everything that I did, and erm, you know, up until standard 7, made Western Province swimming, South African chess team, erm, had never had an academic aggregate under 90%, and, there was always, I don't know, it was kind of nice in that, you know, people will kind of be like, ja, you know, she's good at what she does ... with some things – but, it was also like, ja, - but we just expect this of you now.</p> <p>232. Erm. It's not that impressive if you make Western Province because we just expect this of you. And. Erm. I don't know ... that bothered me for a while and then I just ... I don't know ... I ... ja ...</p> <p>233. The thing is that, while all those things all look very good on paper, erm, you know, various accomplishments</p>	<p>229. Interviewer.</p> <p>230. Being very good at something sets E apart from the rest, which is to be avoided.</p> <p>231. E enjoys people thinking that she is good at what she does – but is concerned that they might expect that to continue.</p> <p>232. It was ever more difficult for E to enjoy impressing others as they expected more.</p> <p>233. E wants others to know that she would have done</p>
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<p>and whatnot, erm, I always thought you know, well, erm, yes, you know, I have got certain marks, but, I know if I'd spent two days in advance rather than one, I would have done better, in the subject. Erm. Ja, OK, well, you know, I might have played well in this tournament and, and gotten certain recognition for it – I know if I'd been practising, I'd be at a different level, now – erm again with swimming, you know, ja, it's great, but, not where I should be either.</p>	<p>better if she had tried harder.</p>
<p>234. It was always a case of, these things look good on paper, and people are going, waah, looks good on paper, but, knowing that, you know, my standards for where I know I should be or in comparison, you know, bigger things, it, it wasn't up to scratch, like ...</p>	<p>234. E is trapped in a limbo between her on-paper results and how she feels she ought to be – which is much better.</p>
<p>235. You were never satisfied?</p>	<p>235. Interviewer.</p>
<p>236. Ja – but it – it wasn't even a case – it's because I wasn't, I wasn't really, doing my best – again. Erm. Knowing that I could improve, or, should be better, because, I know ... I think you often get something where it looks really grand on paper, but it's ... (pause)</p>	<p>236. People think E is good because of her on-paper marks, but E knows she could be better.</p>
<p>237. Are you saying that other people might think it's good, but that you actually know the truth?</p>	<p>237. Interviewer.</p>
<p>238. Ja. Exactly. (long pause)</p>	<p>238. People do not know the truth about E's true ability.</p>
<p>239. And does that mean that because <i>you</i> know the truth, and they don't ...</p>	<p>239. Interviewer.</p>
<p>240. It's a bit like you feel a bit like a ... fraud.</p>	<p>240. E is therefore a fraud.</p>

<p>241. I'm not particularly happy with, with how I've done some things, and how I ... I do them. Erm.</p> <p>242. This is now specifically with regard to leaving everything and, and not putting in effort. I - don't like this idea of being such a <i>flake</i> ... erm – not ... not doing them – erm – but ... (pause)</p> <p>243. erm ... I, I don't know if I base, say I base my entire self on it. Erm. I don't want to go that far. Erm. ... I don't know. Maybe it's again a case, kind of, ... not judging oneself too harshly because you know there's this potential self that you could be.</p> <p>244. This ... this is very contradictory, actually! (laughs) Erm. It's like, you can be ... fed up with yourself because you know that, that there is a certain potential, erm, and, and not necessarily to reach it, but just to explore it – and you're not even exploring it. Erm. But. But also, kind of, again, erm, like a kind of a relief, or, assurance because there <i>is</i> this potential (laughs) and I could be exploring it but, you know, erm, so, don't worry even if you are flaking out, because it <i>is</i> there! (laughs)</p> <p>245. Well that's a question I would ask you – 'Why is it important what people think?'</p> <p>246. erm ... Perhaps it's again this societal kind of idea of this is what I need to be ... Erm, you know, and if, if you, if ... it's like – maybe it's a case of, erm, you know, they, they – 'cos no-one can – like if you – if you're meeting someone initially, you're not going to know, erm, necessarily about, the fact that they're kind to puppies! – (laughs) – erm – you get to know the surface stuff first,</p>	<p>241. E is dissatisfied with the way she does things.</p> <p>242. E is unhappy that she does not put effort in at the correct time.</p> <p>243. E thinks that she should not judge herself too harshly as there is potentially a better self.</p> <p>244. E draws comfort from realising that she is not making the most of her talent – because at least she does at least have that talent. And her assumption that she has talent does not have to be challenged if she does not try too hard.</p> <p>245. Interviewer.</p> <p>246. Societal expectations are put into shorthand by formal qualifications so that people know what to expect from E in the short term.</p>
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<p>like, Oh, you know, if you graduated cum laude from Harvard, or something. - But that's interesting, erm, society says that's a good thing, make me chat to you more, let me get to know you better, rather than, you know –'Is that right!' – OK, great I'm just going to move on right along. Maybe you know it's the idea that you need that kind of acceptance before you can get the other, like, the deeper affections. Does that make sense?</p> <p>247. Yes. Something that I was chatting to a friend about – that, she kind of pointed out to me ... (laughs) em – is that you know, something like this is, you know, important to me and, I don't know, while I require this of myself, I don't think that I necessarily require it of the people around me. Like, erm, yea, I often take, kind of, you know, you can't judge someone's intellect – in an academic sense – like just because they're getting 80 doesn't mean they're actually smart ... it means they're book smart! – erm – or could mean, they're ... erm – and while I hold that true for other people, I don't call it true for myself. (laughs)</p> <p>248. So the standards you hold for yourself are not necessarily applicable to other people? Procrastinators seem to answer to a higher set of rules than they in fact apply to other people ...</p> <p>249. Mmm!</p> <p>250. Have you ever been satisfied with work you've done?</p>	<p>247. E distinguishes between intellectual and 'book smart'. E requires herself to be intellectual – but not others, who can be book smart.</p> <p>248. Interviewer.</p> <p>249. Procrastinators have different standards for themselves than for others.</p> <p>250. Interviewer.</p>
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<p>251. Oh yes – but with rote learning! (laughs)</p> <p>252. Do you imagine that it must be easier in certain regards to do a B.Sc?</p> <p>253. Oh yes! Erm, I've actually been saying to friends in jest in the last while, 'Wish I could change from a B.A. to a B.Sc, because, you get the work, you learn it, you learn the method of the calculation, then you practise the calculation, until you can actually do them, or find help, so that someone can help you – but it's clean, it's, it's ... this is right or this is wrong.</p> <p>254. It's correct – and there's no opinion about it? You can find the answer.</p> <p>255. It's so clean-cut. (sighs) The idea of it is so wonderful. (laughs)</p> <p>256. The thing about maths – or learning a language from scratch – you know if you miss a day you're going to be behind – and you can see it immediately. But, with the BA courses, you can kind of let it slide and you know it's having an effect, but, you're not going to see it until it's kind of ... <i>there</i> ... the essay or exam's there – and you realise you really should have been working all this time. Where with the B.Sc. degrees it's more obvious – you miss a (BA) day of lectures and you go back and, you've lost that grounding.</p>	<p>251. E has only been able to be satisfied with rote learning – because she would know all there was to know and be flawless.</p> <p>252. Interviewer.</p> <p>253. B.Sc. study leaves no area of doubt as to how good you are: it is clean because it is right or it is wrong.</p> <p>254. Interviewer.</p> <p>255. The idea of there being no opinion about the answers in science is wonderful.</p> <p>256. With maths and similar subjects, E knows exactly where she is. It is obvious when some knowledge is missing. That is reassuring. In BA courses E is left wondering, which makes her insecure.</p>
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If you have any questions about the research, any suggestions – or would just like to share an experience – I'll be delighted to hear from you

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