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Staff conceptions of curricular and extracurricular activities in higher education

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Abstract This paper explores conceptions of curricular and extracurricular in UK higher education. Reporting on a case study of staff understandings of the extracurricular we argue that our data highlight the lack of debate about curricular matters. We found that there was considerable blurring of boundaries in conceptions of the curricular and extracurricular and argue that this is related to the lack of any stable or explicit conception of the curriculum in UK higher education. The paper highlights issues of recognition and non-recognition of the sorts of cultural capital which flow from traditional and other forms of extracurricular activities (ECA) and points to the continued gendering of caring and its valuing. Recognition of capital from within diverse communities and derived from activities which have not been traditionally conceptualised as ECA might contribute to graduate outcomes, but there are limitations to a politics of recognition. We argue that account also needs to be taken of the materiality of student lives and the constraints they face.

Keywords Extracurricular activities · Curricular · Cultural capital · Staff conceptions · Gender

Introduction

This paper reports on findings from a larger project investigating extracurricular activities (ECA) in higher education (Cleggs et al. 2008).[1] There is very little research addressing the

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question of what constitutes ECA, the extent to which students engage in ECA, and how students experience and conceptualise benefits from their engagement. Unlike in the USA, with its liberal arts tradition and history of service learning, and explicit recognition of the service commitments of staff, debates in the UK have been more muted about both the curriculum, and ECA. The larger project explored both student and staff perceptions of ECA, and the range of student activities. In this paper we will concentrate on staff understandings. These understandings are crucial if learning from ECA is to be recognised, or at least accommodated, within the broader curriculum.

Our overall approach to the research was informed by a cultural capital approach. While there is very little literature which deals directly with ECA, the default understanding of ECA would appear to include campus-based cultural and sporting activities, and volunteering. We know, however, that many students work for economic reasons, continue their faith and caring activities, and continue to live at home. We were interested, therefore, in the possible differential recognition and valuing of activities undertaken by different groups of students by both students and staff. Our overall premise was the need to look more broadly at the whole area of ECA in order not to default to a more traditional common-sense definition based on an image of the student as full-time, funded, without caring responsibilities, and discursively positioned as white, able-bodied, normatively male and single.

We were particularly interested in how staff understood ECA, and whether and how these were recognised and valorised in the curriculum. Yosso (2005) has pointed out there is a danger of what she describes as 'deficit thinking', whereby the possession or lack of the relevant capitals prior to entry into higher education is seen as something to be compensated for in higher education systems that naturalise and normalise the epistemological privileging of only certain sorts of knowledge. She reminds us that the lens Bourdieu affords concerns the ways in which 'the knowledges of the upper and middle-classes are considered capital valuable in a hierarchical society' (Yosso 2005, p. 70). Some usages of cultural capital, therefore, risk seeing students without prior access to appropriate capitals as lacking. Yosso (2005) uses a critical race theory lens to argue for a recognition of outsider knowledge and, in particular, what she characterises as 'community cultural wealth'. We find her approach suggestive, since it raises the question of what is valued in educational systems and, in our study, whether particular forms of ECA which might be described as the traditional pursuits of the full-time, socially privileged undergraduate are recognised as contributing positively to the curriculum and to potential graduate outcomes, while other forms of activity, such as employment required to support study, caring responsibilities, or participation in ongoing based faith-based communities, might not. Yosso's (2005) critical race theory approach points to the ways in which the valorisation of cultural capitals is likely to be racialised as well as classed and gendered.

Yosso's (2005) approach suggests that we need to interrogate the ways in which curricular recognition of different activities might enhance both learning and longer term outcomes. In the UK debates about employability and Australasia debates about graduate outcomes there appears to be a *prima facia* case for seeing ECA as making a positive contribution to student futures. While both Barrie (2004, 2006) and Yorke (2006; Yorke and Knight 2006) among others acknowledge the possible relevance of ECA in discussions of employability and graduate outcomes there is a relative lack of research. Blasko (2002) suggests: 'involvement in extra-curricular activities was related to successful employment outcomes (especially for women)', while work by Chia (2005) among accounting graduates reports positive associations of ECA with interview success in a highly competitive context and focuses on the development of soft-skills and emotional intelligence as the

critical factors. The work by Yorke (2006) and Chia (2005) suggests that personal recognition of benefits is the key, which is why the issue of staff recognition is important in fostering the reflective abilities of students as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for future benefits. The little work that recognises the potential benefits of ECA, however, relies on an assumed common sense definition of extracurricular, and the boundaries between curricular and extracurricular activity are taken as obvious rather than analysed. Our research, therefore, aimed to explore these definitional issues.

Not only is there very little literature that deals directly with ECA but, as Barnett and Coate (2005) show, the term 'curriculum' is itself missing in much thinking about higher education. Unlike in debates in adult education, worker education, and within feminism where issues of the curriculum have been to the fore, the higher education literature has tended to focus on issues of pedagogy and process rather than curriculum as such. Barnett and Coate (2005) argue that policy thinking in the UK has been virtually silent on the meaning of the curriculum in higher education. At the course and programme level academic staff are required to specify learning outcomes and produce programme specifications which describe aims, objectives and outcomes and indicate the learning and teaching approach. These are in turn related to subject benchmarks at national level. Staff, however, are not invited to think explicitly about their conceptions of the curriculum. Conceptions of curriculum, consequently, remain largely tacit. It seems likely, therefore, that staff draw on the broader repertoire of values embedded in the discipline, and their own gendered academic identities (Clegg 2008a, b), and their own belief systems more generally in making judgements about what might, and might not, be of value. The model Barnett and Coate (2005) propose involves thinking about the curriculum as a form of engagement involving knowing, acting, and being, in relation to the kind of world that the higher education curriculum is preparing students for, which they characterise as fluid, fragile, complex, and uncertain.

Our study was not conceived as an enquiry into the curriculum as such, and we did not ask staff directly to describe their 'curriculum', rather we focused on investigating their conceptions of ECA. It became apparent, however, that the ways staff defined extracurricular varied widely depending on their implicit understandings of what they deemed to be the scope of the curriculum and, therefore, what is 'outside' or 'extra' about extracurricular. We found that the boundaries between curricular and ECA were blurred, overlapping and inconsistently applied. In order to enquire into our original questions concerning how staff understand and value different types of ECA we found ourselves, therefore, wrestling with the indeterminacy and instability of definitions, with variable knowledge, recognition, and course and disciplinary practices which were culturally variable in terms of their epistemic approach and social organisation. Moreover, as the study proceeded it became more apparent that recognition itself was complex since it encompassed mitigation and a recognition of those things which distract students from their study as well as potential benefits of engagement. We also found that issues of identity were engaged, and that we needed to take account of staffs' own racialised and gendered positions and their generational sensibilities, as well as those they attributed to their students. In this sense the subject of ECA became much more 'personal' than we had originally envisaged (see David and Clegg 2008).

Methodology

Our case study site was explicitly chosen as being in keeping with a conceptual interest in the range and definitions of ECA. We chose a site with a diverse student population, where

there are large numbers of less privileged students, and where staff are likely to encounter students who were undertaking paid employment for economic reasons, and students living at home who may have home based commitments and responsibilities. The case study site is a large, urban university (with over 52,000 students and 3,500 staff) with a polytechnic past which recruits significant numbers of its students from its locality and region. The University is the most popular destination for Local Authority resident students, especially those from the most deprived neighbourhoods.

We carried out 18 interviews with staff selected from across the range of university courses, and to reflect different length of experience, seniority, gender and ethnic composition. The sample was designed with diversity of experience in mind and was not intended to be representative. Nine of the interviews were with women and out of the total, fifteen self-defined as white and three as BME. Six respondents were at Principal Lecturer level or above. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how staff thought about ECA, to delve into their definitions and probe whether they saw some activities as more legitimate than others, and to explore if and how experiences gained through ECA were represented or acknowledged in any way in the curriculum. We also explored possible areas of tension and if and how they recognised commitments to ECA as legitimate sources of mitigation. After we had explored their unprompted responses we used a prompt sheet of possible ECA which included: paid work; art, drama, music; faith/cultural activities; family, domestic or caring activities; political activity; sport and/or other physical activity; and volunteering. The purpose of the list was to probe areas of activity that might be thought to have advantages in building the sorts of personal qualities associated with traditional engagement in ECA. The interview approach was to prompt until we were clear about meanings of ECA for the individual, and how individuals understood their curriculum in relationship to ECA.

The analysis was based on repeated reading and analytical coding based on this reading. We paid careful attention to the dissonances and nuances within the interviews and have attempted to capture these subtleties in our analysis. We also looked at how our respondents expressed their views as well as the content of their responses. In presenting the analysis we have been able to use direct quotations from half of our respondents, but the analysis was based on a close reading of all the transcripts and reflects the full spectrum of views. Our categories were inductively derived as there was such little previous work to draw on, although it rapidly became apparent that previous work on personal development planning and disciplinary orientations was relevant (Clegg and Bradley 2006) as disciplinary orientations and the cultural characteristics of courses described were varied. In this paper we concentrate on reporting the instabilities and blurring of curricular and extra-curricular activities, and the uncertainties of staff and their varying knowledge. We also report on the tensions staff identified which suggest that there might be limits to valuing of ECA, and that while recognition might be important there are material constraints on engagement with the curriculum for some students which limit their capacities to build on existing community cultural capital and their engagement in the curriculum (Stevenson and Clegg 2009).

Boundaries

The instability of the boundaries between the curriculum and definitions of ECA were apparent across the data. Some staff explicitly referred to activities which they offered and organised, but were outside a narrow lecture/teaching conception of the curriculum:

> I interpret the term, for me it's about doing something extra, over and above, providing something extra for the students, over and above the standard kind of 12 week teaching programme so we've got, over and above the theoretical aspects I suppose so that they can apply the theory to the industry.
> (Sf 2 Male, white, SL, Hospitality)

Here, extracurricular experience is directly organised by staff in addition to the formal curriculum which is understood in restricted terms as involving only organised classroom teaching. In the applied area of Hospitality paid work occupied a double position: extracurricular work experience in the industry organised by staff as work experience placements for the students; extracurricular casual work in the industry that students were doing out of economic necessity and was organised and initiated by them completely independently of the course. Both forms of employment were valorised by the member of staff as learning experiences in what is a heavily vocational area. The curriculum in this area involves what Bernstein (2000) would describe as a generic, projectional understanding of the curriculum; heavily externally orientated and where the content of the curriculum is generic in form with weak boundary maintenance (see Clegg and Bradley 2006). Students without the necessary experience of work were seen as at a considerable disadvantage in their ability to see the salience of the more theoretical aspects of the course. The distinction that was drawn between the two forms of work was not in relation to the potential for learning and the relationship to the narrowly conceived formal teaching curriculum, but rather in relationship to the amount of such activity students engaged in. Problems of 'greedy' and 'exploitative' employers in the hospitality industry who pressured student to work long hours, and who were unconcerned with developing students' skills, were described in the context of both placements and employment from economic necessity. These sorts of employment relations were reported as having a negative impact on study.

The blurring between curriculum and ECA activities described above where activities organised by staff (and arguably, therefore, part of the curriculum) were deemed to be extracurricular might be expected on projectional courses. However, it was not confined to them. Interjected singulars (Bernstein 2000; Clegg and Bradley 2006), which exhibit high boundary maintenance in terms of the curriculum, also provided examples of a merging of definitions curricular and ECA. In our data some Humanities courses exhibited these characteristics. We found examples of staff defining extracurricular as being initiated by staff—and as being seen as both 'extra' and simultaneously a curricular activity:

> One thing is that we've got a history of taking students on study trips … we've taken second-years on a study trip to Berlin and are planning to take them to Krakow this year so I see that as a kind of extracurricular activity where there's a kind of, we produce some teaching materials and we take them on educational walks and trips
> (Sf 3 Male, SL, Humanities)

Examples of staff initiated and organised activities being deemed extracurricular were common across the disciplines. We even found examples of credit-bearing activities being described as extracurricular. This suggests that definitions of curricular activity are extremely variable and that an investigation of ECA that simply operates with the binary curricular/ECA is likely to miss what might be important learning opportunities that students are being offered which could enable them to consolidate and build cultural capital.

The permeable boundary between curricular and extracurricular, and who initiates activity, relates in part to the characteristics of our study site. There is a high profile advocacy of volunteering and other community activities within the university. The sorts of

activities that might be seen to be classically ECA such as volunteering are promoted as a form of accredited community learning:

> … community based learning is curricular related, so if that's how students and staff are making their links with these low income, these organisations serving low income communities, they are doing it as part of their curriculum. When we try and motivate this … I always stress that…that it's very likely you are going to find this so interesting and so uplifting and such a development of your thinking and understanding and commitments, that you might well want to stay on after you have got your 15 credit points or whatever as a volunteer. Now if that happens, I guess you would call it, you know it goes from curricular to extracurricular…but wherever students are involved with us otherwise, yes they would see it as an add on, as something extra
> (Sf 10 Male, Manager, Sociology)

This boundary crossing activity is not unusual in modern universities and what constitutes the curriculum is likely to become more complex in the future not less so, with more employer led and influenced programmes and schemes which emphasise the values of experiential and work-based learning outside the university.

Not all staff, however, adopted this cross-over position. Some were very clear that ECA were in addition to the opportunities provided on the course (which included similar examples to the above) and that ECA were genuinely voluntary and outside the course:

> I envisage that it encompasses sporting activities, paid employment, work experience through students' choice. A range of non-academic work so anything extra to what they're expected to do within the university
> (Sf 4 Female, Lecturer, Sport and Leisure)

This respondent drew a very clear distinction between work experience which was part of the curriculum and additional ECA even where she helped students gain access to these opportunities:

> I do have some students that work with me on some of the projects that I do that are completely voluntary, that, I see that as an extracurricular activity. I currently am working alongside a local primary school [name], and we've set up a programme there, or we have a committee there that is looking at the healthy eating aspects of the school, school meals, packed lunches but also promotion of physical activity.
> (Sf 4 Female, Lecturer, Sport and Leisure)

She is clear that this activity is entirely voluntary on the students' part. So, although they are working alongside her, for both her and her students the activity is 'extracurricular'. There were other examples in our data of staff responding in terms of their own voluntary and professional activities outside the university which provide their students with opportunities. Academic identities are more porous than might be supposed under traditional definitions, and staff themselves recognise that their skills and dispositions: practical, intellectual, and moral, are part of their being and not limited solely to their actions within the university or within the curriculum (Clegg 2008a, b):

> The NMC [Nursing and Midwifery Council] would say that as specialist Nurses they need to shape policy so that they can be advocates for their client group and the only way of doing that is to become politically aware of the policy, aware of political drivers and have the skills and knowledge and competence to shape that policy and

> change the policy if necessary. So there's a lot of skills involved there and the students don't always see where they can get involved in that kind of thing. But there are lots and lots of opportunities as consultation papers come out through the government so I give them all the opportunity to show how they influence policy by at least taking part in a consultation and giving feedback.
> (Sf 11 Female, SL, Health)

This respondent described 'bombarding' her students with e-mails of opportunities which she forwards to them. It is clear that the students participate on an entirely voluntary basis, but the course requires a portfolio and these examples of ECA are therefore highly visible in the course. This respondent listed as examples of her students' ECA: captain of the ladies hockey team, working in a local children's home, working in a local hospice, Brownie and Guide leadership, and Church activities particularly among students of African origin. She valued all these activities as ways of demonstrating leadership and advocacy skills, and she herself is active in her local amateur dramatic society and uses her experiences to model the balancing act of domestic, leisure, academic and other activities to her mainly female, mature (post-qualifying) students. So although the ECA are voluntary they are seen to support the development of necessary professional qualities, suggesting another form of blurring of the curricular and ECA on the part of both staff and students, particularly on the sorts of professional course which are projectional but with a highly bounded curriculum tightly specified in terms of the profession.

Whatever their personal identities and their orientations towards students external lives and identities, all staff appeared to acknowledge that there are some tensions over time, particularly, though not exclusively, in relation to paid work and caring:

> the only time it can be disadvantageous is if there is, if the activity's paid and the student is desperately short of money and therefore they have to work to pay for their progress on the course and sadly, we have lots of students in that situation these days. Then of course that means that they sometimes are prevented from engaging in the course as much as they would like to or maybe as much as they should because they have to work. They have to work late and be up early for a nine o'clock lecture in the morning. That always saddens me because I remember when I was a student, the students on full-time courses were full-time students but things have changed a lot in recent years and that's rather quite sad. So that's, that's one area where I, or should I say one example where I think it could be a disadvantage.
> (Sf 5 Male, PL, Music technology)

His students were highly engaged and he worked hard to encourage his students to gain the full benefits of ECA for their graduate futures. Like most of our respondents, however, he recognised the real structural constraints on students' curricular engagement, and like many staff brought a time perspective based on a generational experiences to his reading of student lives. Many staff were frustrated and urged students to concentrate on their courses and recognised that absence was likely to be associated with less successful outcomes.

How staff dealt with these dilemmas in terms of their own values varied. Sympathy prevailed, but nonetheless the problems of excessive work, family or other domestic commitments (although definitions of excessive varied) were seen as invariably negative for curricular engagement. Any activity which distracted from the intellectual engagement with the course and created conflicting time demands were seen as causing difficulties, including some staff giving examples of excessive commitment to sporting activities (for students on both sport and non-sports courses). So while staff conceptions were blurred and

often unstable, a temporal boundary existed at the limit where ECA were seen not as contributing to but as in competition with the curriculum in terms of both time and place drawing students away from the campus and engagement.

Knowledge and identity

There was considerable instability and tentativeness in terms used to describe both curricular and ECA. Staff appeared to be using the interview to explore a previously unconsidered topic. This is not surprising, given that the term 'curriculum' is not in common usage and as Barnett and Coate (2005) argue, largely tacit. The tone of responses was often searching and tentative, respondents appeared not to be re-rehearsing opinions which they had already formed and were stable, but rather to be thinking out loud, backtracking and questioning whether that was what they really thought during the course of the interview. The quote below is illustrative:

> What will happen, it's quite true, you've made me think about things that I've not really questioned and thought about myself so I probably will, maybe not in two hours, but in two days or two weeks time, follow up a train of thought that you've started today. So that's good.
> (Sf 1 Female, PL, Design)

Staff changed positions as they debated and argued with themselves in the interviews. Some staff for example, started by saying they would not regard paid employment as ECA and then later in the interview spoke of the possible benefits and how work might be legitimately conceptualised as an ECA. Our participants also checked with us about whether they talking about the 'right' things and, as above, a number of them said they would go away and think about ECA more and perhaps also reconsider how they treated them in their teaching.

The interviews also provoked questions for staff about what they actually knew about their students, their own positionality and identity, including generational position, and some reflections about the increasingly depersonalised nature of higher education.

> I am conscious that our students are involved in other activities and, because a number of our students are from the region, they'll often do them at home. It's not far to go to go home. So yeah, they're involved in a range of activities at home but you know I don't have experience of students being … The thing is, we don't actually know what they do
> (Sf 6 Male, PL, Sport and Leisure).

Knowledge of students was also mediated through the academic's own personal interests and identities; a female Muslim member of staff felt that she was more aware of some students' activities based on her own religious and ethnic identity:

> Faith and cultural activities, again depending on which groups you're looking at, certainly the, from my point of view, because I am Pakistani, maybe I've got a greater awareness of what goes on in the Pakistani faith or the Muslim faith, and the Indian culture as well, I tend to know a little bit about that. So I think the Pakistani, the Muslim and the Indian students tend to be quite involved in cultural activities. I'm not sure whether that would be the same for other British students or not but

again that's probably my ignorance of what goes on outside of those cultures to be honest.
(Sf 7 Female, SL, Health)

Knowledge of students appeared to be highly gendered, with more male lecturers having knowledge of sporting activities and interests (of their male students) and more women lecturers giving examples of their students caring and other responsibilities. However, staff also reflected on institutional and organisational reasons for their relative ignorance or knowledge relating to the size and organisation of courses. Unsurprisingly smaller courses and course teams facilitated a greater feeling of knowing about students ECA activities, whereas large course limited their sense of knowing.

Small cohesive courses were a key factor in knowledge of the student as a person. There was a sense of ease among our women respondents on the health and design courses about handling professional boundaries, and they displayed considerable personal reflexivity in drawing on their own life experiences (see David and Clegg 2008). These forms of knowledge appeared to be highly gendered, and intertwined with discipline as, with the exception of design, they occurred in professional courses where women predominate. A member of the health staff (Sf 7 above) for example described drawing on the experiences of a student dealing with terminal illness and was happy to draw on the faith experiences of her black and minority ethnic students and involve these aspects of their lives in classroom learning. The woman designer also described the ways highly personal experiences could be creatively reworked in design practice. These women and the courses they described were more clearly oriented towards the ontological dimensions of the curriculum and operated with ideas about the sorts of persons they were endeavouring to create, whereas staff in the traditional humanities and in hospitality and technology appeared more concerned with the epistemological dimensions of the discipline. These differing emphases are also suggested by Barnett and Coate's (2005) distinction between knowing, acting, and being. The relationships between gender, other aspects of identity, and the curriculum in our data were, therefore, complex.

Discussion

One way of reading our findings might be to point to the lamentable lack of consistency, coherence and knowledge of staff about the meaning of curricular and ECA. However, we feel this would be a mistake. The tentativeness and openness of staff suggest to us that the qualities of experiences that students have might be more important than their exact relationship to the curriculum. However, the tacit nature of these understandings does have some drawbacks. Staff appeared to value the intrinsic characteristics of volunteering, for example, regardless of whether this was organised as part of community learning, featured in the curriculum, or was extracurricular in the more traditional sense. This finding suggests the need for a clearer articulation of the qualities that might inhere in different sorts of activities and a recognition that the broad categories of work, volunteering, or caring for example can involve radically different experiences. Benefits are not just a property of the activity as such but pertain to the varied meanings staff and students imbue them with. This suggests the need for the curriculum and the intended graduate outcomes to be properly debated and specified within the fields made up by the different disciplines/professions. This work could include consideration of both the curriculum and the extracurricular and might produce definitions of ECA relevant to the field. Barrie (2004, 2006) for example has

described how the University of Sydney project is building on research insights to inform an institution-wide framework within which the disciplines articulate the routes to the achievement of agreed graduate attributes.

There are, however, limitations to such approaches which are primarily conceived as debates within the disciplines, and within existing institutional and dominant governmental framings of the relevant outcomes from education. We would suggest, following Yosso (2005), that community cultural knowledge and issues of epistemic access are important and that this involves widening the range of activities which might be seen to have value, and a recognition of the ways valued capitals preserve the interests of those in power. There have been debates about the curriculum in adult education, and within the various critical pedagogic frameworks, Freirian, feminist, and critical race theory (e.g., Darder and Torres 2002; Hooks 1994; Trifonas 2003). Little of this, however, has made its way into the mainstream higher education literature or indeed impacted on the discursive framing of policy thinking about higher education, which remains technicist and wedded to learning and teaching not curriculum debates. Moreover, work which recognises some of the likely benefits of ECA has not engaged with notions of performativity and the ways more areas of experience have come to be assessed, audited, and made visible (McWilliam 2004, 2007). There are dangers that if the extracurricular as well as the curricular come under the normative gaze of the institution then even more of the student becomes opened up to neo-liberal regulatory practices. The debate about the boundaries of the curricular and extracurricular, therefore, is neither value neutral nor is it a matter of simple technical rationality. The instability we have pointed to in our data is part of a broader set of considerations with regard to the purposes and functioning of contemporary education systems and the ways they 'make over' the subject (McWilliam 2004).

There are, moreover, material limitations to the extent to which these meanings are malleable. Staff recognised the significance of time in relation to benefits and also recognised elements of constraint or freedom in choosing activities, work and caring being the most obvious examples. We need an awareness of the materialities of students' lives as well an orientation to valuing their concerns. As well as the epistemic recognition and respect, suggested by Yosso (2005) and in Freirian, and feminist pedagogies, we need to attend to those structural inequalities which cannot be dissolved through pedagogical strategies. Being subjectively on the side of students or in favour of social equity requires us to recognise that:

> marked inequality in economic distribution cannot help but imply unequal recognition or render attempts at equal recognition shallow and illusory (Sayer 2005, p. 172).

Some of the tensions identified by staff, particularly those in regard to employment out of economic necessity which is related to socio-economic circumstances, and the continued gendering of caring responsibilities, are not capable of easy pedagogical resolution. Engaging with these issues requires a different sort of social action.

We believe that the gendered patterns in our data are an important area for further investigation and that intersectionality of race, gender and other forms of difference warrant more attention (see Mirza 2006). It is not just traditional definitions of ECA that tend towards normative masculinity and whiteness, but also that the ease with which members of staff can draw on their own cultural, intellectual, and moral resources in recognising what students bring is shaped by the multiple identities. Academic identity (Clegg 2008a, b) is important in understanding what is valued in the curriculum, and what is recognised as extracurricular. The sorts of blurring in our data might be immensely

positive in re-imaging the relationship between curricular and ECA. However, that re-imagining might be impeded if only a narrow version of academic identity is engaged which ignores the gendered, racialised and other experiences of staff as well as students. Greater diversity among staff can be important in thinking about the development of cultural capital for students. We also need to recognise likely constraints. The practices that flourished on smaller intimate courses enhanced the possibilities of staff knowing their students; course structures in other areas involving limited contact and time on campus impede these relationships and staff identified socially inscribed temporal and spatial distance as a barrier (see Adam 1995).

We suggested in the course of our analysis that curricular and other activities are likely to become more blurred, not less so, with the greater emphasis on employer engagement and more recognition of learning outside traditional higher education. As UK, Australian and other universities look to the USA with their traditions of service learning there is also likely to be an increasing awareness of a broader range of student activities. Our study of ECA suggests, therefore, that there are many more questions to be asked. We are not seeking to generalise our findings beyond our context, but our hope is that if and when higher education institutions in the UK and elsewhere debate more widely about the nature of the curriculum and possible contributions ECA the range of questions included will encompass some of the ideas presented here.

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