In the UK, Further Education (FE) colleges play a key role in providing literacy programmes. This paper draws upon a study carried out in a Further Education College based in the Northwest of England, which explored how 16 former Basic Skills learners have been shaped by the public domain and the private domain of their lives (Duckworth, 2013). An aim of the research is to investigate the motivation and impact of learners joining a basic skills programme and follow their subsequent progression routes. As their journey unfolds, the learners' 'world picture' and how they perceive their reality in relation to their identity in the public and private domain is explored. The focus is to tell a 'better story' which, according to Sarah Ahmed (2004) offers 'crucial mechanisms for the distribution of power'. To facilitate and empower this marginalized group of multi-cultural working class learners' to tell their stories, the power was driven forward by a shift from traditional discourses where representations of 'working-class' homes are seen as pathological or lacking by 'middle-class' observers, whom I would argue have minimal experience of 'working class life' and 'know very little about working-class culture and practices' (see, Walkerdine et al, 2001:83).

I argue that learners are positioned differently depending on the value of the literacy practices they bring with them from the private domain of home. Literacy experiences being influenced by the relationship between the literacies in learner’s everyday lives, the literacy practices that these entail and, most importantly, their respective identities. I conclude that New Literacy Studies (see Heath 1983; Street 1984 and Barton and Hamilton 1998) and critical approaches to education (Freire 1996; Barton et al. 2007) are important to challenging notions of literacies and empowering learners in both the public domains, for example work and educational settings and private domains, for example, family and home of their life.